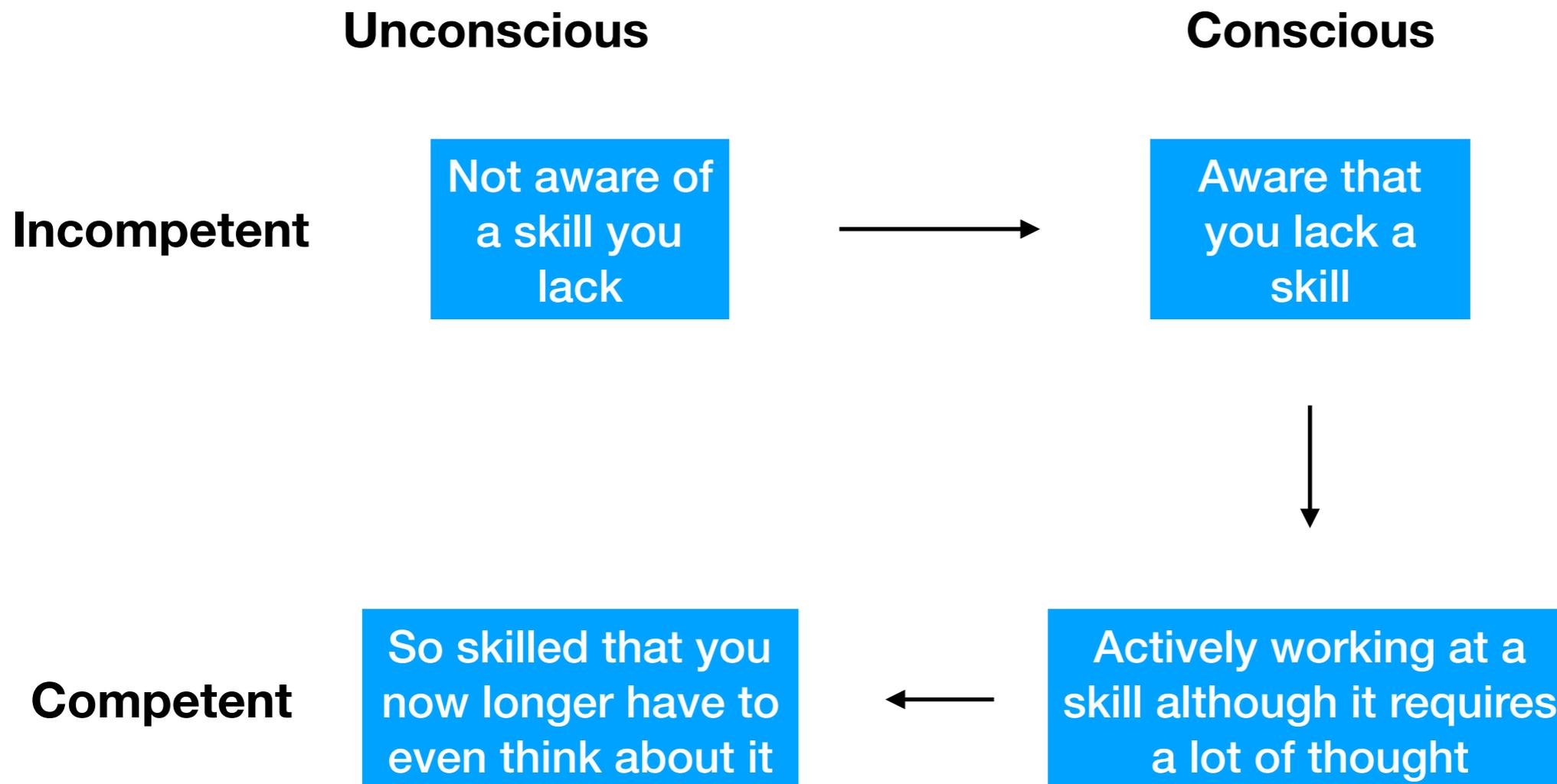


Four stages of competency psychological states involved in transforming skill incompetence to outright mastery.

Humans are originally oblivious of their incompetence. Once they are aware of their ineptitude, they try to develop a skill that they can utilize along the way. As time progresses, this acquired skill is effectively used without conscious contemplation. It is in this stage when a human develops mastery – also known as unconscious incompetence.



Stage 1: Unconsciously Incompetent “I don’t know what I don’t know.”

Before an individual undertakes an activity that is novel to him, he trudges through the state of unconscious incompetence. During this stage, an individual lacks the skills, knowledge and capacity to do a certain skill excellently. *The stage of unconscious incompetence can linger for years.* In order to learn a new skill, it is important for a person to recognize his inability in order to perform a skill perfectly. The burden of informing the pupil about his wrongdoings lies on the teacher – or an expert in the said skill. An example of unconscious incompetence is this: you are in a yoga class and the instructor asks you to execute the “Lord of the Dance” pose. You try to do it – and you look like a sick praying mantis – but you continue with it anyway because you do not know that you are doing it all wrong. The instructor then tells you that you are executing the pose incorrectly. The acknowledgement of this mistake paves the way for the second stage of competence, which is...

Stage 2: Consciously Incompetent “I know what I don’t know.”

The second stage of proficiency, the phase of conscious incompetence starts when you develop consciousness about the things you do not know. In this state, you plant yourself with hopes and aspirations. Most view stage 2 as the most uncomfortable phase, because you recognize the fact that you are a failure in a certain activity. The only difference it has with stage 1 is that you do not pursue the thing you ‘suck at.’ (Shame and acknowledgement of your shortcomings can be attributed to this.) While this can be embarrassing, the acknowledgement of your incompetence prods you to move and train – so you can be competent in it, eventually. Just like stage 1, you might linger in stage for a prolonged period of time. The duration of your stay in the conscious incompetence stage depends on your learning determination, as well as the acceptance and acknowledgment of your incompetence. The most important hallmark of this stage is your ability to perceive and recognize the keys to competency – ones that are exhibited by other more capable individuals. Continuing with the example of stage 1, you know you have reached the stage of unconscious incompetence when you see yourself in the mirror and realize that you have been doing the pose wrong. Because you are conscious of your wrongdoings, you try to undertake measures that can help you improve your pose.

Stage 3: Consciously Competent “I grow and know and it starts to show.”

Slowly taking over the role of the facilitator, an individual lodged in the third stage begins the adventure towards utmost competency. A consciously competent individual dedicates himself in the improvement of the craft by undertaking repeated practice, participation and formal training of the said skill. The development of competence is faster than the development of consciousness, as an individual “grows and knows and it starts to show.” Proceeding with the example, you know you arrive at stage 3 or conscious competence when you engage in activities that will help you perfect the pose. This can include practicing at home, watching video streams of yoga, or spending more time at yoga class.

Stage 4: Unconsciously Competent or Mastery “I simply go because of what I know.”

As you build experience and expertise, you reach the stage of unconscious competence – wherein you do not have to think about the activity you are very good in. Unlike the first two stages, the journey to unconscious competence does not take a lot of time – as it happens quickly with constant practice. However, one can go in and out of unconscious competence, depending on his mastery of skills. As an unconsciously competent person, you are summoned because of what you know. You deem it to ‘feel right,’ that is why you go ahead with the activity. You prove to be good at it – without exerting too much effort. Unconscious competence or mastery means that you have finally reached the pinnacle of the skill. Thanks to your dedication in learning and perfecting the yoga pose, you can finally do it without much thinking or contemplation. You can accomplish the “Lord of the Dance Pose” perfectly in as simple as 1-2-3. And because you do not have to dwell too much when performing this pose, you just continue with the skill because it feels good and right.

Stage 5: Conscious Competence of Unconscious Incompetence

While this is not included in Burch’s original model, many experts are campaigning for the inclusion of this fifth stage. In this phase, a ‘master’ can influence other persons to develop unconscious incompetence. This ability paves the way for the learning of new skills in people who are otherwise deemed ‘incompetent’ of the said skill. Learning a new skill might be a hard task – but you can eventually do it! By acknowledging the states of competence – especially the ones you are in – you can perfect a certain activity after a few trainings.