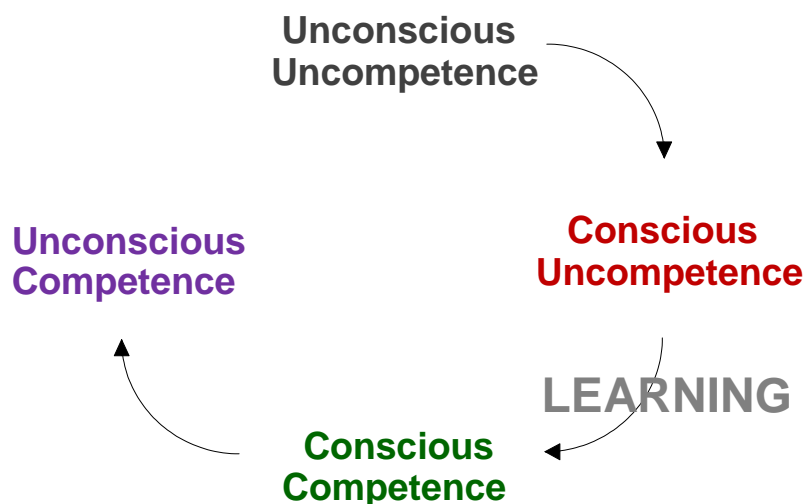


Learning and **Conscious** - **Unconscious** Competence

The process of learning a skill can be divided into four stages.

1. **Unconscious Uncompetence** - not only do we not know how to do something, but you don't know that you don't know.
2. **Conscious Uncompetence** - the stage when we become aware that we have limitations, and begin to recognise the questions that we don't have answers to. Some people find this stage can affect their sense of self esteem. *The critical factor at this stage is not the ability to do the skill, but the ability to learn and practise.*
3. **Conscious Competence** - we have learned the skills, but not yet mastered them.
4. **Unconscious Competence** - the patterns of behaviour we have learned coalesce and form a habit.



In terms of learning about NLP, we all already have learned ways of communicating with ourselves and with others which we operate unconsciously. To learn different approaches and new skills we need to return to Conscious Uncompetence and learn and practice until we again reach Unconscious Competence. For some, the experience of Conscious Uncompetence can be uncomfortable, especially if our self esteem is strongly linked to our ability. One way we learn is by consciously mastering small pieces of behaviour and combining them into larger and larger chunks, so they become habitual and unconscious.