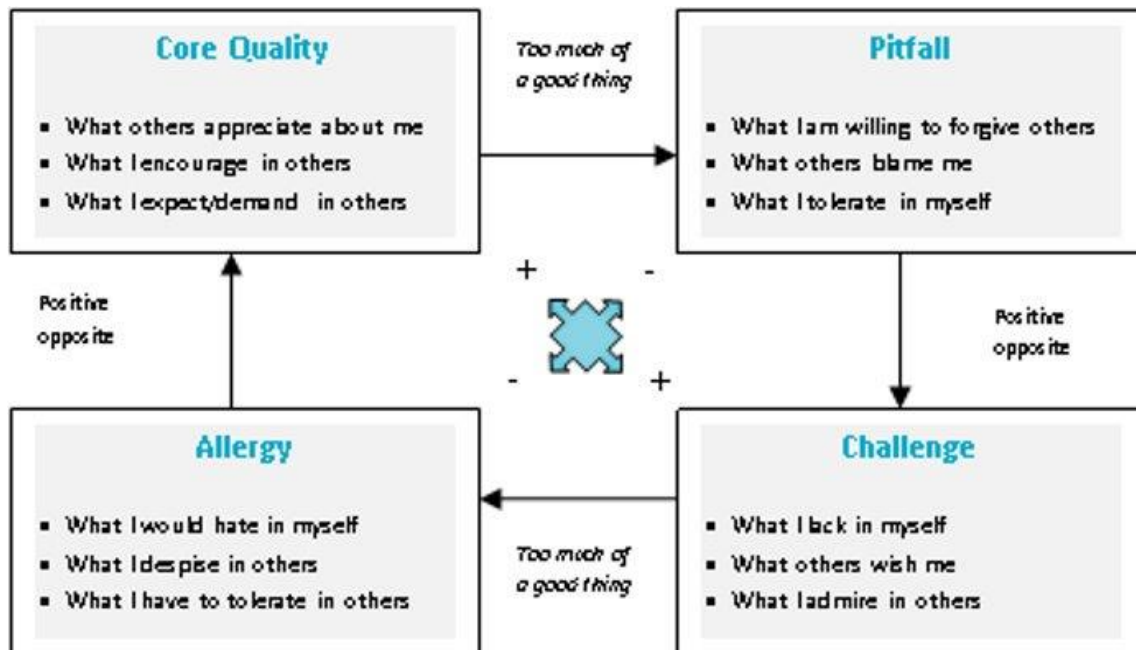## OFMAN CORE QUALITIES

"You can learn the most about yourself from people you dislike."

This statement might sound complicated, but it follows from Ofman's model. Let's break it down step by step.

Core Quality

- What others appreciate about me
- What I encourage in others
- What I expect/demand in others

Too much of a good thing

Pitfall

- What I am willing to forgive others
- What others blame me
- What I tolerate in myself

Positive opposite

Allergy

- What I would hate in myself
- What I despise in others
- What I have to tolerate in others

Too much of a good thing

Challenge

- What I lack in myself
- What others wish me
- What I admire in others

Positive opposite

Source: https://www.arteveldehogeschool.be/spotlight/node/93

Information Value:

Through this assignment, the client becomes aware of their core qualities, pitfalls, challenges, and sensitivities. This model aids the client in gaining insight into their core qualities and the forces that obscure these qualities. The client can also identify their focal points or challenges to bring their core qualities to the forefront optimally. Furthermore, this assignment provides the client with a more realistic perception of themselves.

Objectives:

1. The client can identify 2-3 core qualities, pitfalls, challenges, and sensitivities

2. The client is aware of the influence of their behaviour on their core qualities

3. The client possesses a realistic assessment of their capabilities

Description:

Ofman is the founder of the Core Quadrant. A Core Quadrant consists of an individual's Core Quality, Pitfall, Challenge, and Sensitivity. The Core Quality and Challenge are fundamentally positive qualities. In contrast, the distortion in the Pitfall and Sensitivity leads to the negative colouring of a characteristic. These four concepts (core quality, pitfall, challenge, and sensitivity) are inextricably linked and form the so-called Core Quadrant. The Core Quadrant helps individuals become aware of their existing and potential qualities. The quadrant also provides insight into the mechanism that causes these qualities to become less visible. It is important to note that this mechanism is often managed by the individuals themselves, typically unconsciously. By becoming conscious of these processes, the individual gains self-awareness. This means that the individual can determine and exert influence on whether or not to showcase their core qualities. After all, if you understand how something works, you can control and manage it.

According to Ofman, a hallmark of a Core Quadrant is that it is not situationally determined and thus stands independent of the circumstances. The core quality that emerges from a Core Quadrant is the quality to which a person naturally has easy access. A core quality can be recognized by an individual's unique skill or ability that they may say, "Doesn't everyone do this?" However, not everyone can, and if you were to remove the underlying core quality, you wouldn't even recognize the person anymore. As an illustration of this, consider the following example:

"Mrs. V. is always there for others. She goes grocery shopping with her neighbour because he has difficulty walking. In community activities, others can always rely on her when something needs to be done. For instance, she helps organize neighbourhood gatherings and playdays for the neighbourhood kids. At work, colleagues can turn to her when something needs to be done or researched. She is willing to work longer if a task needs to be completed quickly. A rush job doesn't seem like too much to her."

The core quality 'helpful' can be attributed to Mrs. V. Try to imagine that this woman is not helpful, and you get a completely different person. You could confidently say that Mrs. V is no longer herself.

Ofman's Core Quadrant is, by design, an empty model meant to promote awareness of one's core qualities, pitfalls, challenges, and sensitivities. An 'empty' model provides the opportunity to fill it in as desired, requiring reflection. There is also a game based on Core Quadrants available, in which a person can learn about their own and others' core qualities through cards. The drawback of the Core Quadrant game is that it relies to a much lesser extent on self-reflection. In a way, you react to what you see before you. The same applies to the CD-ROM 'Core Qualities and the Core Quadrant.'

The Core Quadrant can be used in various situations to clarify the forces that influence an individual or an organization's actions. By understanding how something works, you can (learn to) control and manage it. In the context of career guidance and this handbook, we focus on the client's self-awareness of their core qualities, pitfalls, challenges, and sensitivities. These findings

are used in a later stage to help the client make an appropriate career choice. The clearer the client's image of their core qualities, the more consciously they can radiate them in their (new) work.

Working with core qualities is valuable for clients who generally have a negative view of themselves and others: they learn to see things from a different perspective, which can help them regain a sense of perspective. This model can also be used when a client struggles with their 'shadow side'; they have difficulty accepting certain less positive aspects of themselves. In both cases, the person's talents are not (fully) recognized. In various employment situations, they get stuck in relationships with others (fellow students, teachers, colleagues, bosses, etc.). There are recurring patterns, for example, in team functioning, relationships with superiors, and similar issues with specific personality types. The client becomes hardened (or is at risk of hardening) in one-sided behaviour (more of the same) and becomes bitter or disappointed in others. Working with core quadrants can help the client gain insight into the power dynamics that influence their behaviour. This can help the client gain insight into and understanding of themselves, their situation, and the behaviour of others. These insights can help the client look at their situation differently and adjust their response patterns. By seeing their core quadrants, the client can gain a more realistic self-image. These insights help the client make a more suitable career choice.

The Core Quadrant is structured as follows:
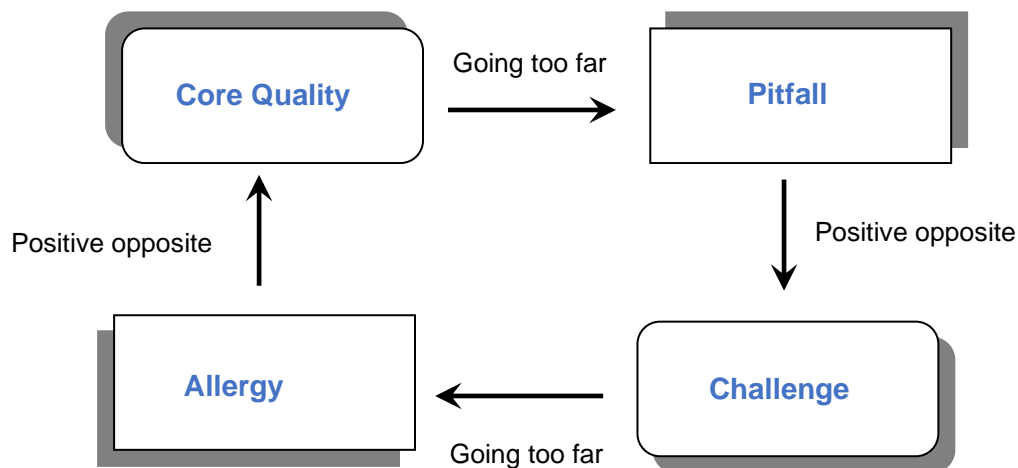
According to Ofman (1992), individuals possess Core Qualities that constitute a person's essence. These Core Qualities permeate their actions and give "colour" to a person, qualities that immediately come to mind when thinking about that person. Examples of Core Qualities include decisiveness, caring, diligence, courage, receptiveness, orderliness, empathy, flexibility, creativity, and so on. Core Qualities originate from within, unlike skills that are acquired from external sources. Core Qualities are qualities that come naturally to the person.
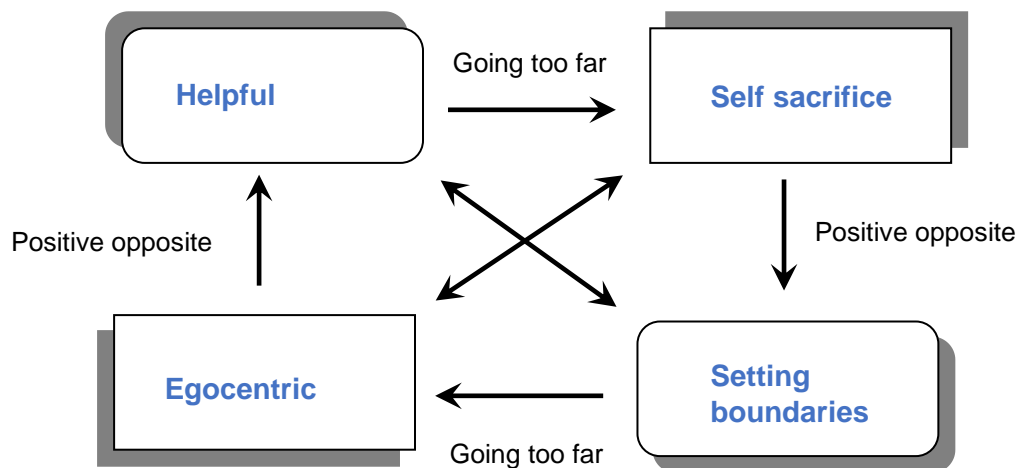
However, every Core Quality has its pitfalls (shadow side). When we overemphasize the Core Quality, we end up in our Pitfall. Our Pitfall consists of an excess of a good thing, where we engage in 'more of the same,' a distortion of the Core Quality. It is a subjectively experienced Pitfall, which can be named differently for each individual. This essentially means that someone's quality can also be their Pitfall. For example:

| Patience | → Going too far → | Passivity |
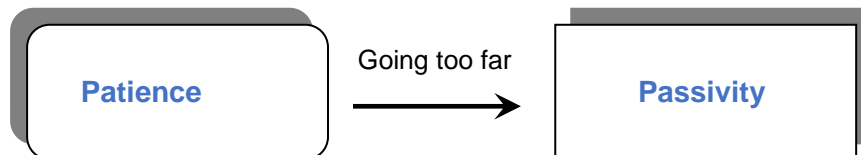
To avoid falling into the Pitfall, there is a Challenge for every Core Quality. The Challenge is the positive opposite of the Pitfall. This also relates to the individual's perception. For example:

| Helpful | → Going too far → | Self-sacrifice |

Great addition

Positive opposite

Setting boundaries
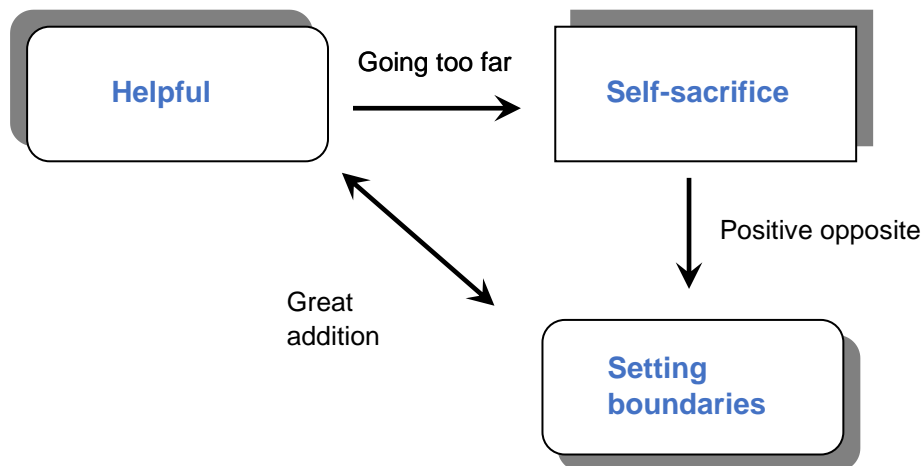
When we unilaterally exhibit too much of our Challenge, we end up in our Allergy. It is called an allergy because, in a way, we are allergic to individuals who exhibit this trait. The Allergy and the Pitfall are distortions of (latent) qualities. They form negative opposites of each other. For example:

Helpful	→ Going too far →	Self sacrifice
↑ Positive opposite	✕	↓ Positive opposite
Egocentric	← Going too far ←	Setting boundaries

From the Allergy, we can discover our core quality by reversing the allergy into its positive opposite. In this example, this means that the positive opposite of the allergy 'Egocentrism' becomes the core quality 'Helpfulness.' This completes the core quadrant. The final step makes the core quadrant 'rounded.' To check if it 'fits,' you can see if the formulated allergy is the negative opposite of the core quality.

According to Ofman, a formulated core quadrant should give a person a sense of "what to do," it should 'touch' them. They discover something new, something that was previously 'hidden.' If this feeling is present, it likely means that the core quadrant is accurate for that person.

In the example above, someone with the core quality 'Helpfulness' is allergic to people they perceive as 'Egocentric.' Disdain for people is usually a sign that someone is confronted with their allergy. This irritation arises from the confrontation with our own Challenge, but we see the 'overblown' distortion of it! This means that when facing our allergy, we can question which quality we perceive as 'excessive.'

When the individual combines the core quality and the challenges, a balance is created: they become two complementary qualities. In the Pitfall, you deny a part of yourself and go against your core quality. Disdain for people is usually a sign that someone is confronted with their allergy. This irritation arises from the confrontation with our own Challenge, but we see the 'overblown' distortion of it! This means that when facing our allergy, we can question which quality we perceive as 'excessive.'

Finally, when we encounter an egocentric person, we are inclined to step more into our own Pitfall (thus sacrificing ourselves more, putting ourselves in the background). Another way is to discover the hidden core quality in this person (what is behind the allergy?). According to this theory, we can learn the most from people we don't get along with.

Each of the four corners can be chosen to construct a core quadrant. For example, in a work situation, one might consider who they are most annoyed by (the allergy). Then, they could try to name what exactly annoys them. This could be "know-it-all behaviour." By working backwards, one might 'discover' that know-it-all behaviour could be an overly expressed form of 'being willing to express their own opinion.' In this way, they have found their own Challenge. 'Being willing to express their own opinion' is the positive opposite of being too reserved: the person's Pitfall. Finally, by working backwards, they arrive at their core quality: humility.

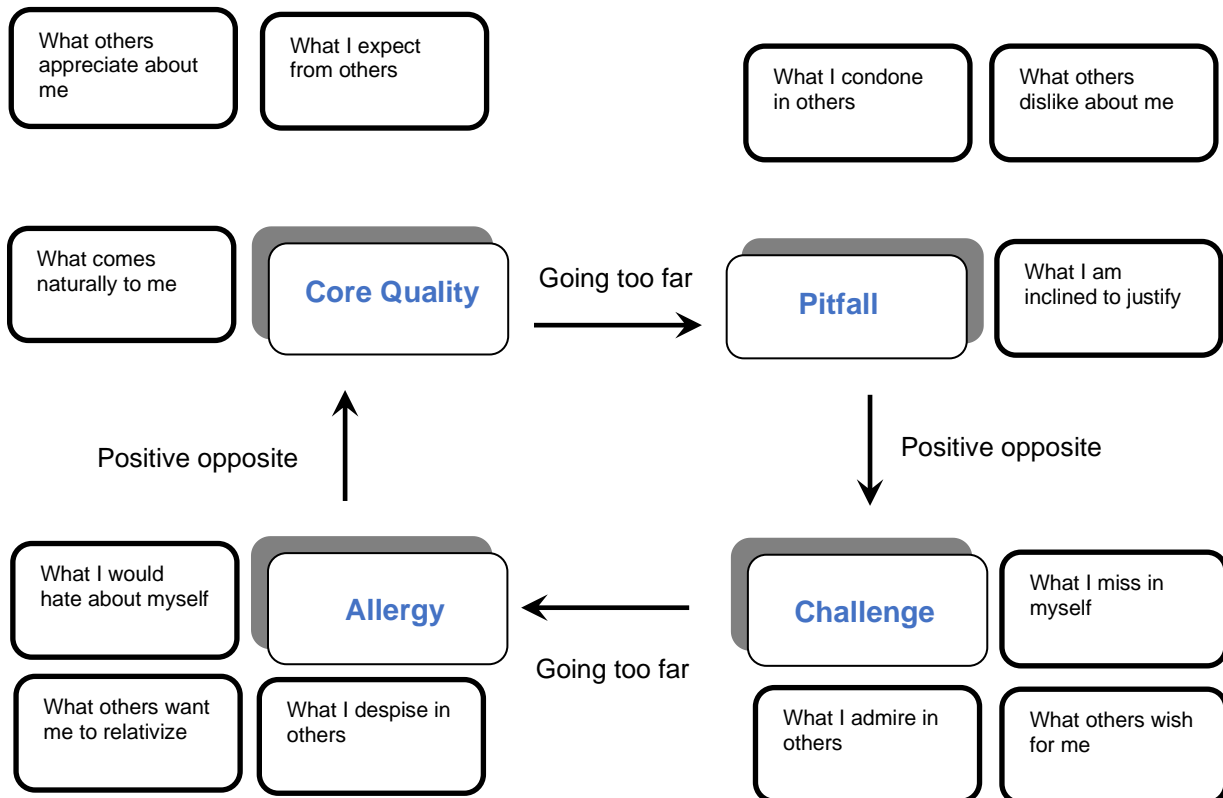**Know-it-all** → **Expressing opinion** → **Reserved** → **Humility**
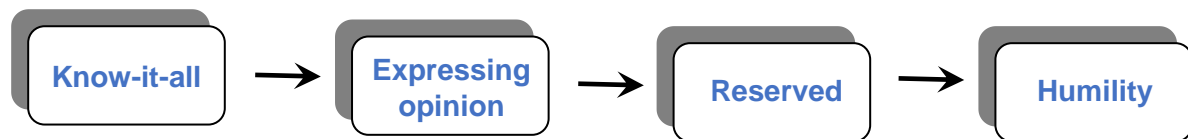
The entrance of the Allergy is often the easiest entrance for most people to work on a core quadrant. It's often not difficult to indicate what you can't stand or what irritates you (in others). Working from this entrance allows for double-checking the accuracy, as that quality or distortion must align from three directions.

The entrance of the Pitfall is also often seen as an easy entrance. Throughout our lives, we have learned to pay attention to things that are not good or could be better. Listen to what others regularly say about us, and there is the Pitfall. The quadrant can be completed from here.

The entrance of the Challenge is often a difficult one. The question, "Which quality could you use to become a more balanced and complete person?" is somewhat in line with the entrance of the core quality. A helpful tool can be to consider which quality you generally admire in others. This is often a challenge for oneself.

The entrance of the Core Quality is often the most challenging because people, in general, find it difficult to say something positive about themselves. We are better at naming what we don't do well than what we do well. This entrance is often less usable.

Each entrance in the quadrant can be approached or checked in three different ways. This is schematically represented below:

What others appreciate about me	What I expect from others	What I condone in others	What others dislike about me

What comes naturally to me

Core Quality → *Going too far* → **Pitfall**

What I am inclined to justify

Positive opposite ↑   ↓ *Positive opposite*

What I would hate about myself

Allergy ← *Going too far* ← **Challenge**

What I miss in myself

What others want me to relativize

What I despise in others

What I admire in others

What others wish for me

Creating a core quadrant requires the client to honestly look at themselves as they are in essence, not as they behave or appear because their behavior can stem from factors like self-preservation or fear. An apparent quality can be a disguise or a mask for someone's pitfall. For example, the apparent core quality "calm" might be a mask for the pitfall "stubbornness," while the true core quality is "assertiveness." By wanting to hide the pitfall, the person also hides their core quality. This is one reason why identifying core quadrants takes time. Creating core quadrants is a process; a process of moving from the external (behaviour) to the internal (true nature).

It's important to emphasize that the filling of the quadrants is subjective. The wording of "the excess" and "the opposite" is highly personal. There is no right or wrong. The wording of a word should come from the client themselves; only then does it become meaningful to the client and provide insight. Others can provide feedback and help someone on their way, but ultimately, the client decides what their core qualities, pitfalls, challenges, and allergies are.

Procedure/Instructions:

Step 1: Have the client read the task or explain it verbally (10-15 minutes).

Step 2: Confirm if the client has understood the task.

Step 3: Determine if the client can work on this task independently and provide the client with the task to take home. If the client struggles to complete the core quadrants independently, collaborate with the client to get a head start on their core quadrants. You can use the questions below for support. Let the client think about the concepts that are relevant to them. Creating core quadrants often takes time. Ideally, discuss the value of the outcomes in the next meeting, allowing the client time to complete their core quadrants and answer the follow-up questions (approximately 60 minutes).

Step 4: Debrief the task with the client. During this step, you can use the sample questions mentioned below. During the debrief, connect it to the purpose of this task. Also, refer to the worksheet "Questions Arising from Your Core Quadrants." Once the objective(s) have been achieved, the task is considered complete (approximately 30 minutes).

Possible Questions for (Post) Discussion:

Possible questions to approach each quadrant:

Entry Point: Core Qualities

- What do others appreciate about you?

- What do you consider very ordinary?

- What do you encourage in others?

- What do you stimulate in others?

- What do you demand from others?

Entry Point: Pitfalls

- What do you relativize in others?

- What do others accuse you of?

- What do you sometimes get thrown at you?

- What do you justify in yourself?

- What do you tend to do when you're under pressure?

Entry Point: Challenges

- What do you feel is missing in yourself?

- What do others wish for you?

- What do you admire in others?

- What are you occasionally envious of?

- What do you need to be a more complete human being?

- What do you need to be more in harmony with yourself?

Entry Point: Allergies

- What irritates you about others?

- What can't you stand in others?

- What do you disdain in others?

- Who do you look down upon? What behaviour does the other person exhibit? What characteristic does the other person display?

- What behaviour makes you (at times) feel disheartened?

- What makes you angry?

- What would you abhor in yourself?

- What do others sometimes tell you that you should look at more rationally?

Sample Questions for Task Conclusion:

- What did it evoke in you?

- What insights have you gained?

- What would you like to reflect on further?

- What questions has it raised for you?

- What can you do with this model in the future?

- What has it contributed to your career-related inquiry? What career questions remain unanswered?

Other Applications:

The core quadrant can be further applied to promote personal growth, in conflict mediation, or performance reviews. This model can also be used to evaluate and improve operations within organizations. For more information on using core quadrants, we recommend Ofman's book.