

Michigan Credit Union League & Affiliates

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#mculace

Handling Difficult Conversations

Using the Ladder of Inference to Make Sense of Situations

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www.mcul.org



www.uniteforgood.org

Introductions

- Turn to the person next to you ...
 - I am ... from ...
 - I am here because ...
 - One thing I hope to learn today is ...



Video

- Watch the video
- Make notes in your workbook
 - What do you see?
 - What “cues” did you use to identify what you were seeing?
- Please form groups of 3
 - Share what you saw in the film.
 - How many saw exactly the same things in the video?
 - How many saw some things the same and some things differently?
 - How many nothing the same?



Zea

- What did you see?
- What “cues” did you use?
- Why do you think these cues were particularly important to you?



The Ladder of Inference

- We have many self-generating beliefs which remain largely untested.
 - Based on conclusions.
 - Inferred from what we observe.
 - Added to our past experiences.
- We often believe that:
 - Our beliefs are *the* truth.
 - The truth is obvious.
 - Our beliefs are based on real data.
 - The data we select are the real data.



The Ladder of Inference

- I started with observable data - Sam asked for a full report.
- I selected some details about Sam's behavior to pay attention to. (His glance away from me, his apparent yawn.)
- I added some meanings of my own, based on my interpretation of the culture. (Sam wants me to move on.)
- I moved rapidly up to assumptions about Sam's current state (he's bored).
- I concluded that Sam, in general, thinks I'm incompetent. In fact, I've also labeled him as a "power-hungry politician" - and "clueless".
- Thus, as I reach the top of the ladder, I'm plotting against him.



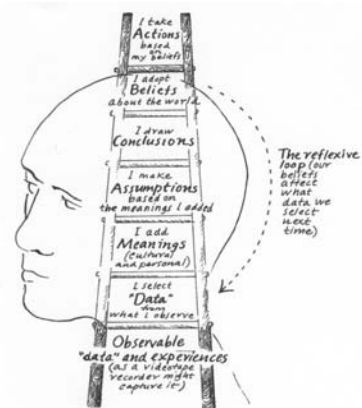
Definitions

- How long did it take me to move up the ladder?
- How conscious was I that I was doing so?
- What was visible to Sam or others in the meeting?



The Ladder of Inference

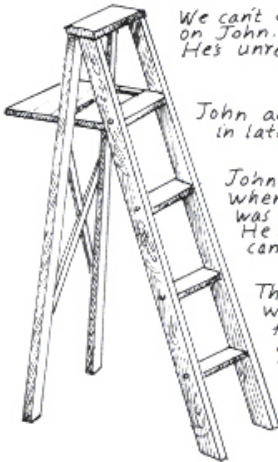
- The ladder of inference is a tool for "reflection" - becoming more aware of how we think and how we frame situations.



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The Ladder of Inference

Some ladders of inference :



We can't count on John. He's unreliable.

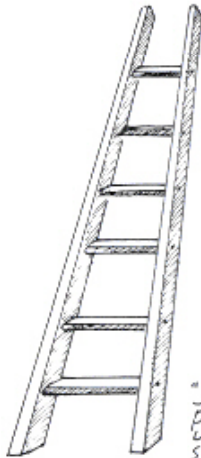
John always comes in late.

John knew exactly when the meeting was to start. He deliberately came in late.

The meeting was called for 9 AM and John came in at 9:30. He didn't say why.



The Ladder of Inference



This boss shouldn't be supervising women.

He picks on Jane because she's a woman.

The boss thinks Jane's work is unacceptable.

The boss is chewing Jane out.

"Jane, your performance is not up to standard," says the boss.



The Ladder of Inference



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The Ladder of Inference



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Using the Ladder of Inference

- You must be able to add meaning or draw conclusions in your life!
- You can improve communications and handle difficult conversations more effectively by using the ladder of inference in these ways:
 - Become more aware of your own thinking and reasoning (reflection).
 - Make your thinking and reasoning more visible to others (advocacy).
 - Inquire into others' thinking and reasoning (inquiry).



Reflection

- What is the observable data behind my statement?
- Have I considered all of the data?
- How did I get from that data to these abstract assumptions?
- What other assumptions have I made?
- What leads me to conclude that?



- State your assumptions and describe the data that led to them.
 - Here's what I think, and here's how I got there.
- Explain your assumptions.
 - I assumed that ...
- Make your reasoning explicit.
 - I came to this conclusion because ...
- Explain the context of your point of view.
 - Who will be affected by what you propose, how they will be affected and why.

- Encourage others to explore your model, your assumptions and your data.
 - What do you think about what I just said?
 - Do you see any flaws in my reasoning?
 - What can you add?
- Reveal where you are least clear in your thinking.
 - Here's one aspect which you might help me think through differently.
- Encourage other points of view.
 - Do you see it differently?

- Gently walk others down the ladder of inference.
 - What leads you to conclude that?
 - What data do you have for that?
 - What causes you to say that?
- Use unaggressive language.
 - Can you help me understand your thinking here? (Not: “What’s your proof?” or “What do you mean?”)
- Draw out their reasoning.
 - What is the significance of that?
 - How does this relate to your other concerns?
 - Where does your reasoning go next?

- Test what they say by asking for broader contexts or examples.
 - How would your proposal affect ...?
 - Is this similar to ...?
 - Can you describe a typical example?
- Check your understanding of what they have said.
 - Am I correct that you’re saying?

Fact or Not?

- Read through the handout.
- Put a check (✓) beside those statements that are facts.



Fact or Not?

- In pairs, review each of the statements on the handout.
- If a fact, create at least 6 alternate interpretations for that fact.
- If an assumption or conclusion, identify:
 - What type of data might lead you to a similar conclusion?
 - What other conclusions could be drawn from the same data?



Walking Down the Ladder

- Go back to the story about Sam.
- In small groups, identify what I might have done differently to test my assumptions and find out how Sam was reacting to my presentation?
- Report back.



Questions?

- For more information
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Using the Ladder of Inference to Make Sense of Situations

Handling Difficult Conversations

The Ladder of Inference

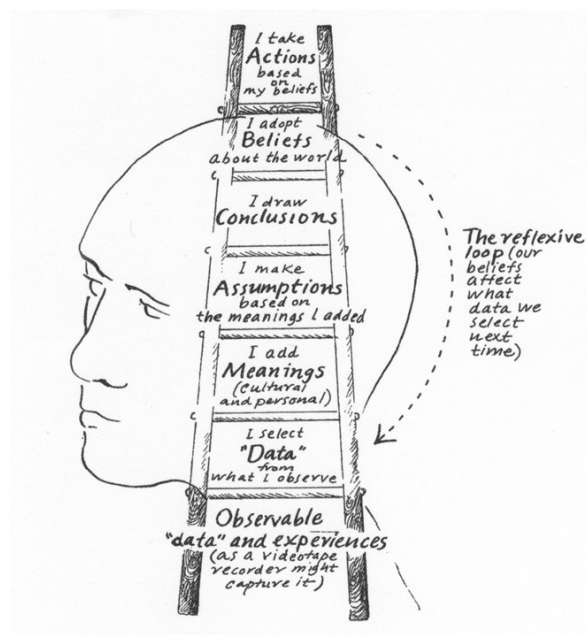
Using the Ladder of Inference

- You must be able to add meaning or draw conclusions in your life!
- You can improve communications and handle difficult conversations more effectively if you use the ladder of inference to help you become more aware of your own thinking and reasoning, make your thinking more visible to others, and inquire into others' thinking and reasoning.

We have many self-generating beliefs which remain largely untested. They are based on conclusions, inferred from what we observe, and added to our past experiences.

We often believe that our beliefs are *the* truth, the truth is obvious, our beliefs are based on real data, and the data we select are the real data.

The ladder of inference is a tool for "reflection" - becoming more aware of how we think and how we frame situations.



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Reflection—The Starting Point

- * What is the observable data behind my statement?
- * Have I considered all of the data?
- * How did I get from that data to these abstract assumptions?
- * What other assumptions have I made?
- * What leads me to conclude that?



Keys to Effective Advocacy

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * State your assumptions. * Describe the data that led to your assumptions. * Explain your assumptions. * Make your reasoning explicit. * Explain the context of your point of view. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Encourage others to explore your model, your assumptions and your data. * Reveal where you are least clear in your thinking. * Encourage other points of view. | <p><i>"Here's what I think and how I got there."</i></p> <p><i>"I assumed that"</i></p> <p><i>"I came to this conclusion because...."</i></p> <p><i>"What do you think about what I just said?"</i></p> <p><i>"Do you see any flaws in my reasoning?"</i></p> <p><i>"What can you add?"</i></p> <p><i>"Do you see it differently?"</i></p> |
|--|--|---|



Inquiry that Works

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Walk others down their ladder of inference (gently). * Use unaggressive language. * Draw out their reasoning * Test what they say by asking for broader contexts or examples. * Check your understanding of what they have said. | <p><i>"What leads you to conclude that?"</i></p> <p><i>"What data do you have for that?"</i></p> <p><i>"What causes you to say that?"</i></p> <p><i>"Can you help me understand your thinking here?"</i></p> <p><i>"What is the significance of that?"</i></p> <p><i>"How does this relate to your other concerns?"</i></p> | <p><i>"Where does your reasoning go next?"</i></p> <p><i>"How would your proposal affect ...?"</i></p> <p><i>"Is this similar to ...?"</i></p> <p><i>"Can you describe a typical example?"</i></p> <p><i>"Am I correct that you're saying ...?"</i></p> |
|--|---|---|



Observations on the Video

What do you see?

What cues did you use to identify what you were seeing?

Why were these cues particularly important to you?

Fact or Not?

Read the following examples and put a check (✓) beside the ones that are facts.

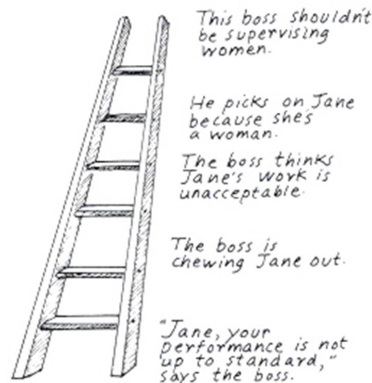
- 1. Sara left the meeting before it ended.
- 2. This project was poorly organized.
- 3. There is no timeline for completing of tasks on this project.
- 4. My boss doesn't like me.
- 5. I bored people with my presentation and some of them walked out.
- 6. My boss accepted a phone call while I was in her office.
- 7. A co-worker is undermining my authority.
- 8. Carol is mad at me.
- 9. A co-worker did not return my phone call.
- 10. John's work is sloppy.

Alternate Interpretations

“What other conclusions could I draw?”

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Some ladders of inference:





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Handling Difficult Conversations

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