

# LADDER OF INFERENCE - EXERCISE

## Connecting to experience

In a small group, think about the following situations. Feel free to add a couple of additional situations from your own experience that your group can relate to.

- A colleague did not greet you back in the morning
- You are waiting in your car for 5 minutes now for a friend who is constantly late
- You are preparing to park your car and someone cuts you off and steals the spot
- Your team is presenting a new project. Your boss takes his phone out and starts typing.
- Your family/community has put a lot of efforts to prepare dinner for a colleague you have invited. When served dessert he comments saying: "hmmm... this is interesting"

## Thinking about our thinking

How do these experiences make you feel? (Emotions and physical reactions).

- What are your likely behaviours in these situations?
- In each case, what underlying assumptions were at play?
- What meaning did you give to each situation?
- What conclusions did you reach based on the previous assumptions?

## Sharing with the group

- Share your insights and thinking/feeling processes with the group.
- As you are listening to each other sharing personal interpretations, what are you learning about yourself? About other perspectives?
- In these situations, what can you do to avoid jumping into conclusions too fast?

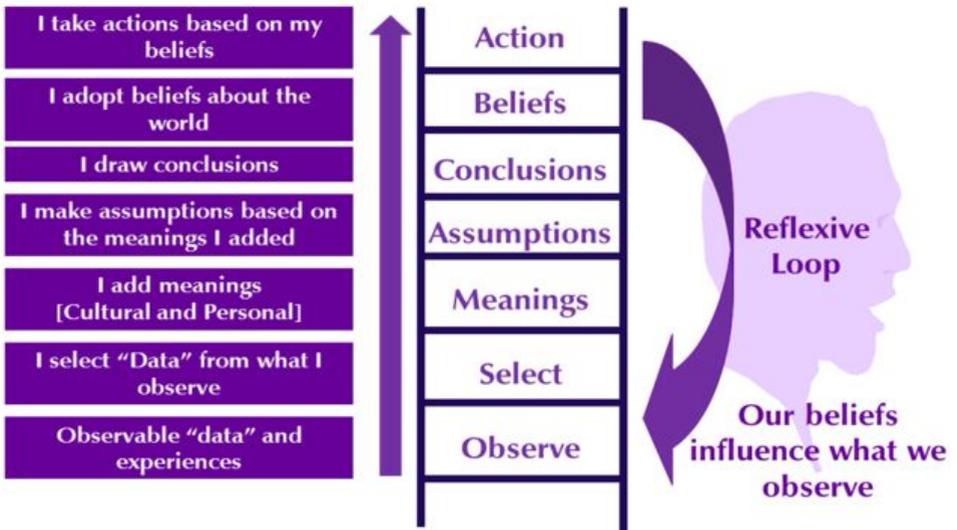
# LADDER OF INFERENCE - INPUT

## INTRODUCTION

The Ladder of inference was first proposed by Harvard professor and organizational psychologist Chris Argyris and used by Peter Senge in his book *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*.

## FRAMEWORK

### The Ladder of Inference



Source: *Critical Thinking - First step to effective decisions - Jim Yates (2011) Pivotal Thinking*

## MAIN IDEAS

Outlining thinking stages as rungs on a ladder, this tool:

- Describes the thinking process we go through, usually without realizing it, to get from a fact to a decision or action
- Invites us to consciously examine the assumptions and conclusions we make in a given situation and brings us back to hard reality and facts
- Helps us avoid jumping to wrong conclusions and better manage our emotional response and behaviour. Thus, allowing us to gather solid information in order to reach the right conclusions

The downside is that this requires time and patience which is not always available when we are under stress. Moreover, it requires us to have certain empathy or self-knowledge in order to understand where others' actions are arising from or where are our own actions arising from (e.g. if we do not know what beliefs we hold, we will have more problems understanding our actions).

You are invited to watch the videos and read the articles in the resources section to deepen in this topic.

## EXPECTED LEARNINGS AND OUTCOMES

1. Introducing a tool to help you examine your thinking process and meaning making
2. Examining our assumptions by staying grounded in reality and facts
3. Increasing likelihood of skillful action and healthy interaction by expanding awareness

# LADDER OF INFERENCE- RESOURCES

## GENERAL LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

Title	Author	Publisher	Year	Link
Rethinking thinking	Trevor Maber	TED-ED	2012	<a href="#">Link</a>
The Ladder of Inference	Ed Muzio	YouTube - Ed Muzio	2011	<a href="#">Link</a>
The Ladder of Inference	Mindtools	Mindtools		<a href="#">Link</a>

## QUOTES