

# The Intentional Leader

## Module 3: Effective Communication

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

- George Bernard Shaw, Playwright

### Learning Objectives

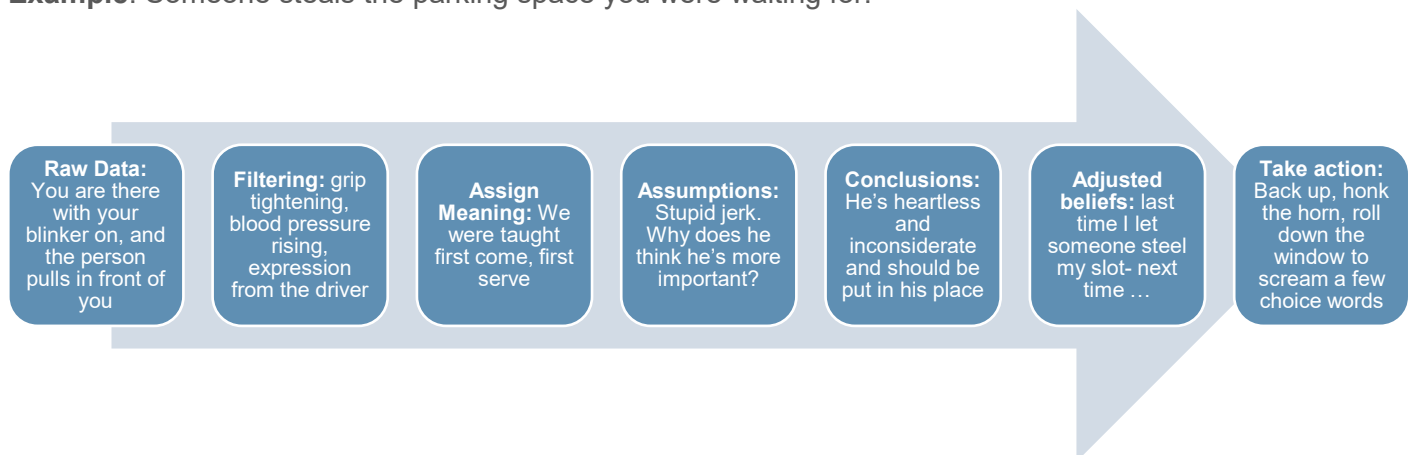
1. Learn the components of effective communication
2. Discuss the Ladder of Inference and practice with this model
3. Discover how to overcome the root causes of difficult conversations
4. Learn how to make meaningful requests and commitments

### Effective Communication:

- **The Three Cs:** Clear, concise, consistent
- **Consideration of audience:** Who are they? What do they want? What motivates them? What is the most effective form of communication for them? Consider your behavioral style and yours.
- **The 7-38-55 Rule:**
  - 7% of meaning is communicated through spoken word
  - 38% is through tone of voice
  - 55% percent through body language
- **Active listening:** Effective communication is two-way. Listen with openness and curiosity – stay out of judgment. When people feel heard and not judged, it fosters connection and engagement. Key actions you can take:
  - Removing any distractions, especially phones
  - Trying not to interrupt, asking open-ended questions when in break
  - Focusing on the present moment, asking the other if you miss the details
  - Don't be afraid of silence; both can use those moments to think and have a more thoughtful conversation.
- **Handling difficult conversations:** At the root of difficult conversations lies fear, judgment, anger, and assumptions. There are ways to have productive conversations even when there is no agreement about the subject.

### The Ladder of Inference:

**Example:** Someone steals the parking space you were waiting for.



*What if you knew the guy's wife was in labor and needed to pick her up and take her to the hospital?*

**To Climb down the ladder:** Know the difference between assertions and assessments.

### Assertion

- A measurable, observable fact. True or false. Not influenced by mood, emotion, or beliefs.
- “John didn’t come to the last two meetings.”

### Assessment

- One’s opinion, judgment, or story we tell ourselves about that fact.
- “John doesn’t care about what our department is doing.”

**“An organization’s results are determined through webs of human commitments, born in webs of human conversations.”** - Fernando Flores

### Making Difficult Conversations Productive:

1. Maintain Curiosity
2. Avoid blame
3. Understand impact
4. Clearly communicating requests and commitments

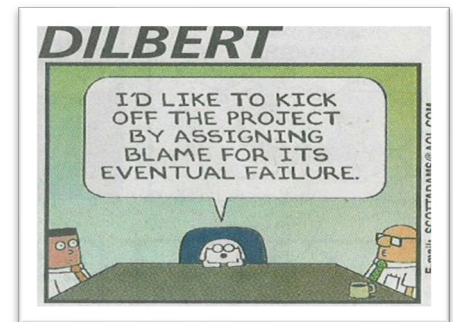
### Maintaining curiosity – the shift from “!” to “?”

Instead of asserting our opinion, get into the mode of being curious.

Not only will this give you more data, but it will also give the other person the opportunity to express themselves and feel heard (as we talked about earlier, this brings down their resistance), which will automatically bring down the stress level.

### Conversation starters to explore conflict responsibly:

- “Please help me to understand your (action/point of view, etc.)”
- “Here are other data we should try to reconcile with yours.”
- “Say more about that...”
- “Here’s what I’m confused about...”
- “Something significant to me is... and here’s why...”



### The role of blame and how to avoid it:

- Contribution Shifters: Everything is someone else’s fault
- Contribution Absorbers: Everything is my fault
- Starting statements to help avoid “the blame game”:
  - “I’d like to try to figure out how we got here so that we can figure out what we each need to do differently to ensure this doesn’t happen again.”
  - “There are some things I wish I’d done differently here...”
  - “Going forward, it would really help me if you would...”

### Intention vs Impact:

- Other people’s intentions are not visible to us
- We make up attributions about intentions based on the impact on us
- We often assume the worst
- As a leader, we need to share more about our intentions so that people do not fill the “vacuum” with assumptions based on our impact

### Requests and Commitments:

If we want to avoid resentment, we need to learn how to make clear requests.

- Give a timeframe
- Check for understanding
- Ask for agreement
- Get a firm commitment