

The Intentional Leader

Module 3: Communicating Effectively

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

- Commonly attributed to George Bernard Shaw, Playwright

Learning Objectives

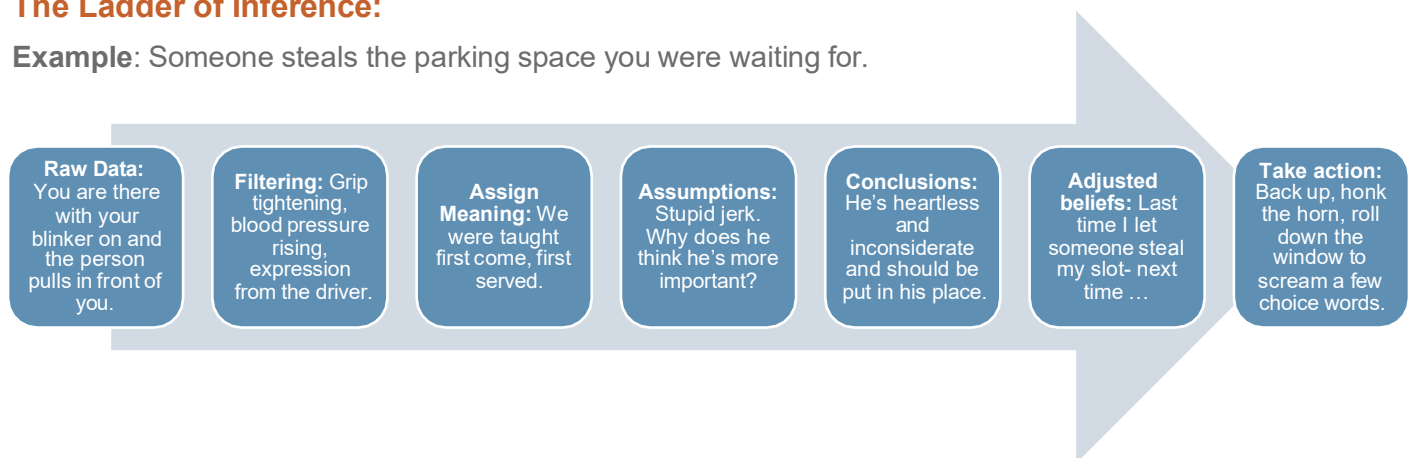
1. Learn the components of effective communication
2. Discuss the Ladder of Inference and practice with this model
3. Discover how to overcome the root causes of difficult conversations
4. Learn how to make meaningful requests and commitments

Effective Communication:

- **Consider your worldview:** Frog/Horse illustration...you will see the world differently from the way other people see it.
- **The Art of Listening:** Make someone *feel* heard. Having a safe place to “empty the bucket.”
- **The Three Cs:** Be consistent, clear, and concise.
- **Adapting to your audience:** Consider the person’s communication style, timing, and modality.
- **The 7-38-55 Rule:** Our tone, facial expression, and body language has a greater impact than our actual words especially during difficult conversations and when there is a mismatch between our verbal and non-verbal language.

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	Assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A measurable, observable fact. True or false. Not influenced by mood, emotion, or beliefs.• “John didn’t come to the last two meetings.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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 Intention vs. impact
4. Communicate requests and commitment

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.

The role of blame and how to avoid it:

- Contribution Shifters: Everything is someone else’s fault vs. Contribution Absorbers: Everything is my fault.
 - The goal is to focus on joint contributions to problems rather assigning blame to promote understanding and constructive dialogue.
- 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...”

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...”

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