

The Ladder of Inference

An Effective Tool for Improving Awareness and Behavior

We wake up with beliefs and ideas that influence our assumptions.

We then filter our experiences by telling a story about them – and it is in the **STORY STAGE** that we determine how we feel and what actions we will take.

It is our response, our story, that will always determine our outcome – and by being aware of and changing the story we tell ourselves, we can reframe our experiences and improve our feelings, behaviors, and outcomes...

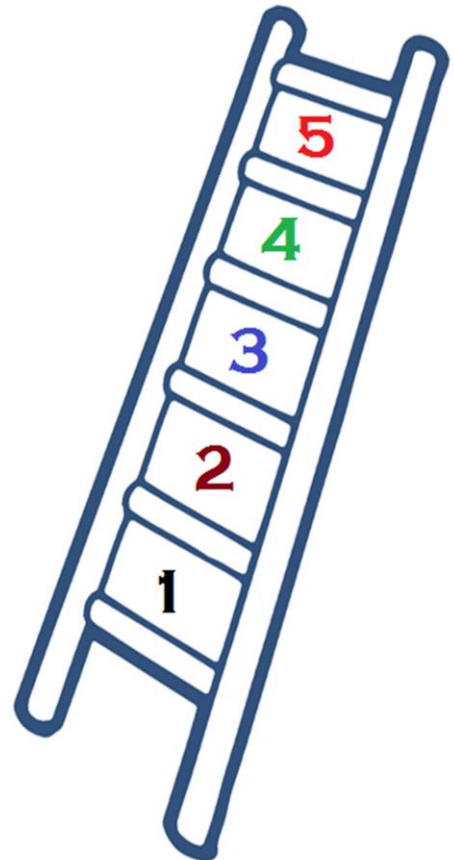
1. Beliefs and Perceptions We Have

2. What We See and Hear

3. The Story We Tell Ourselves*

4. The Feelings We Experience

5. The Actions We Take



How to Use the Ladder of Inference

This step-by-step reasoning process helps you remain objective and identify how your story has been influencing the feelings and actions you are choosing. When you feel yourself getting upset or angry or disappointed, try working through your reasoning or even discussing it with a friend to confirm your assumptions are sound.

If you are challenging someone else's behaviors, it is especially important to be able to walk through this ladder of inference to determine why they chose to do what they did.

One Example:

You get cut off in traffic by a lady talking on her phone in a new Mercedes sedan.

How could that spoiled soccer mom do that? Does she really think that because she drives a nice car, that she owns the road and can just cut anybody off? I'll show her!

You feel disrespected and fed up with privileged people.

You slam on the brakes and scream out your window at her rude and reckless behavior, and then speed up in an attempt to pull up beside her at the red light to give her an earful of rage.

When you get to the light, you see that instead of looking careless or rude, the woman is crying as she talks. She then rolls down the window to beg you for directions to the hospital.

She says her mother was taken there by ambulance, and she is rushing to check on her.

DID YOUR FEELINGS CHANGE? WHY?

HAVE YOU MADE PREVIOUS ASSUMPTIONS THAT WERE INACCURATE?

WHAT CURRENT CONFLICT MIGHT YOUR STORY BE GETTING IN THE WAY OF?

