



10th Annual Conference
6th - 8th May 2010
Robinson Executive Centre Wyboston MK44 3AL
www.theabp.org.uk



You and Your Clients' Critical Thinking Processes : an introduction to IFRAME

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What is Critical Thinking ?



Definitions

Critical Thinking

A vigorous and focused probing and challenging of those assumptions, and forms of knowledge that inform our inner thoughts, behaviours and the logic of our beliefs through the use of collaborative inquiry – conversations and relationships

Critical Self-reflection

Identifying the premises that inform our ‘taken for granted assumptions’ (the truth we take for granted), exploring them for any distortion and dependency producing constraints, false assumptions and/or perspectives ; modifying, restructuring or sustaining the assumptions ; testing the outcomes ; and taking *transformative action* in response



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What is Critical Thinking ?

Definitions

Transformative Action

is the outcome of the process of critical thinking and critical self-reflection, whereby a manager makes more fully explored choices

The Goal = Critical Consciousness

Critical Consciousness

Is the awareness of the consequences of how our individual biographies (influenced by values, culture, and social norms) determine what assumptions we use, how we think and perceive choices we have in our actions

What is Critical Thinking ?

Definitions

Critical Thinking is NOT

- destabilising
- disagreement
- domination of people or situations
- nit-picking / quibbling
- about traumatic change
- being dispassionate

Critical Thinking is



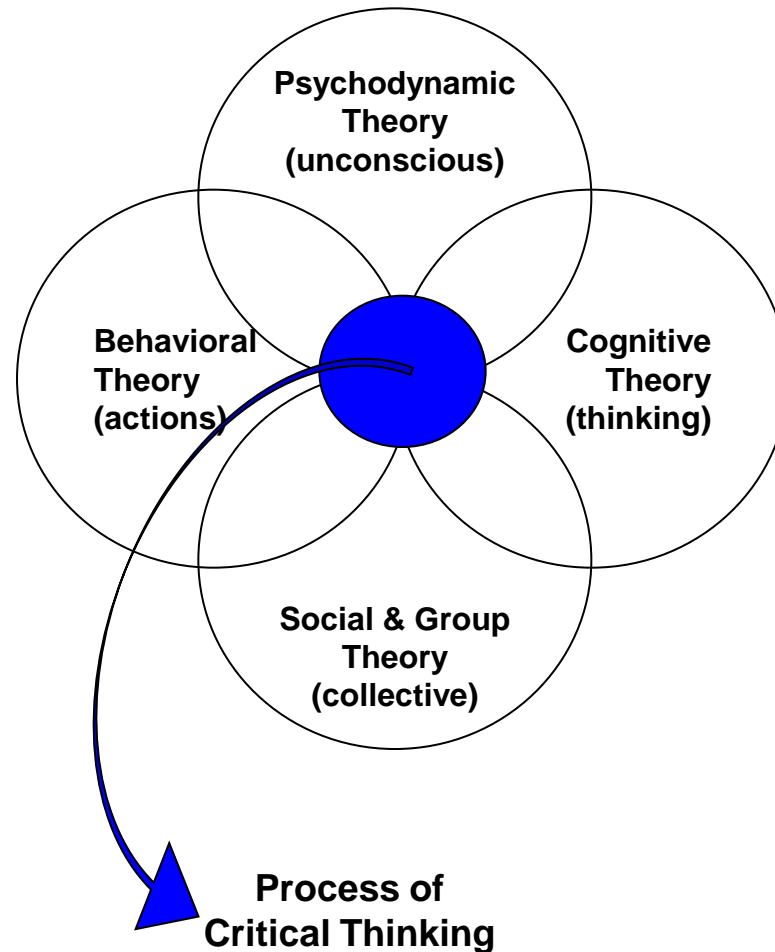
- **subjecting our beliefs to scrutiny by probing the contradictions and inconsistencies that inform our views and corresponding actions as a manager**
- **identifying the paradoxes of the work environment and analysing the underlying logic and assumptions informing them**
- **testing choices and decisions against new or differing assumptions by seeking new environments, situations, and relationships to test the impact**
- **a change in one's inner world**
- **an efficient approach to dealing with problems, questions and issues within personal and professional environments**
- **a key leadership and management competency**
- **highly emotive (at times)**



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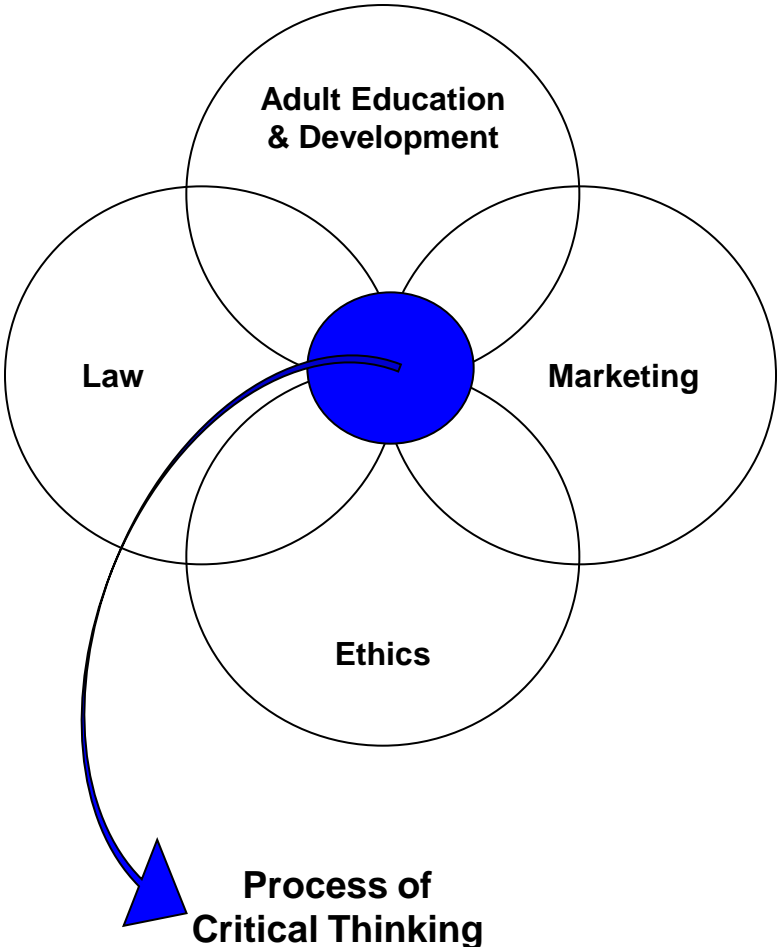
The Origins of Critical Thinking



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The Origins of Critical Thinking and Business Practice



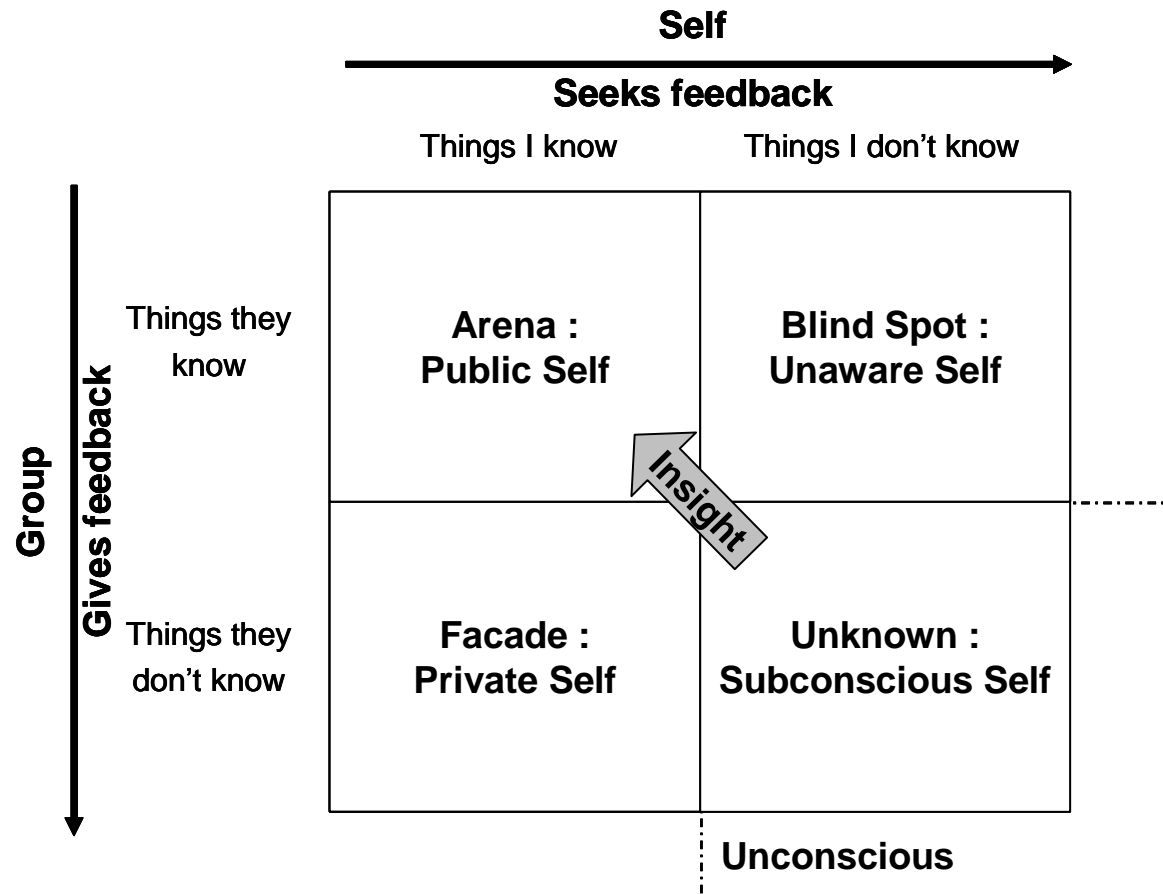
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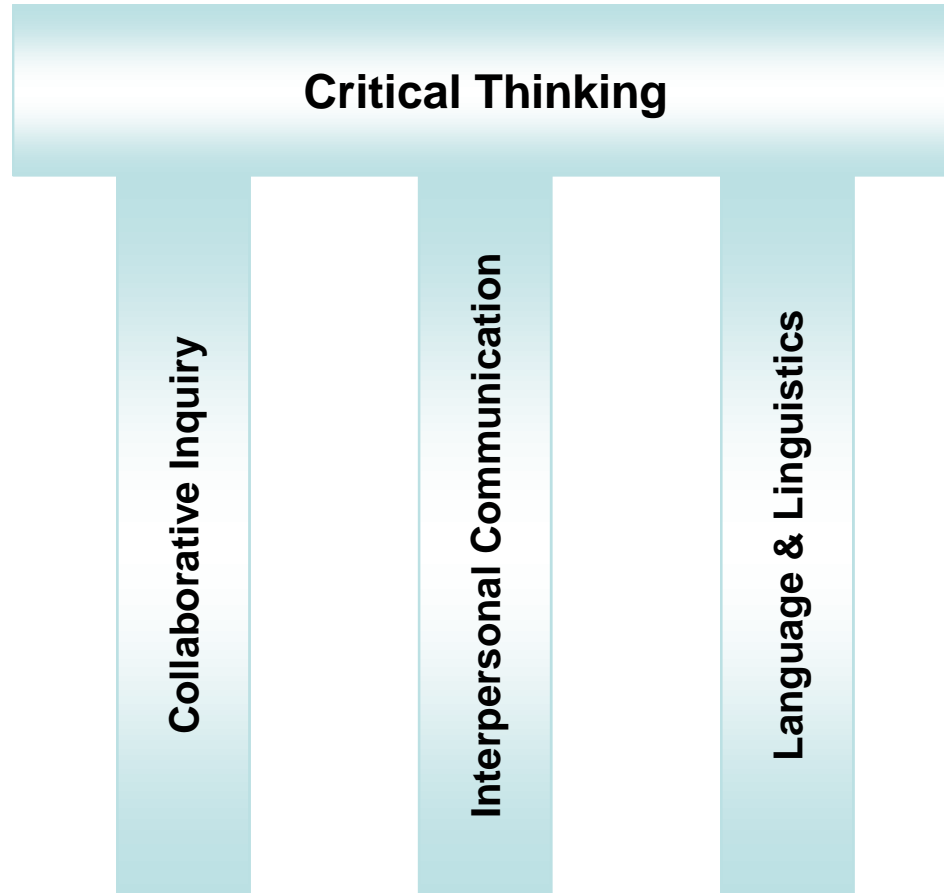
At the core of Critical Thinking is 'the Self'



A Window on Yourself



The Three Pillars of Critical Thinking



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Collaborative Inquiry

Fostering a Critical Thinking Environment



There are 3 essential tasks :

- **Foster relationships or communities that supports discussions of ideas and beliefs that inform thinking and action (supports Critical Thinking)**
- **Support the use of relationships to scrutinise the impact of our individual biographies and basic assumptions underlying the foundations of those actions (supports Critical Consciousness)**
- **Seek out environments, settings and relationships to test, revise and re-test new ideas and assumptions (supports Critical Self-Reflection)**



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Giving Personal Feedback



1. **Focus on behaviour rather than personality**
2. **Be specific, not general**
3. **Consider the needs of the other person**
4. **Give feedback on something over which the person has control**
5. **Encourage others to solicit feedback rather than impose it**
6. **Give feedback at the right time**
7. **Once you give the feedback, realise that it is usually sensitive information and subject to distortion**
8. **If possible, check the feedback with others**

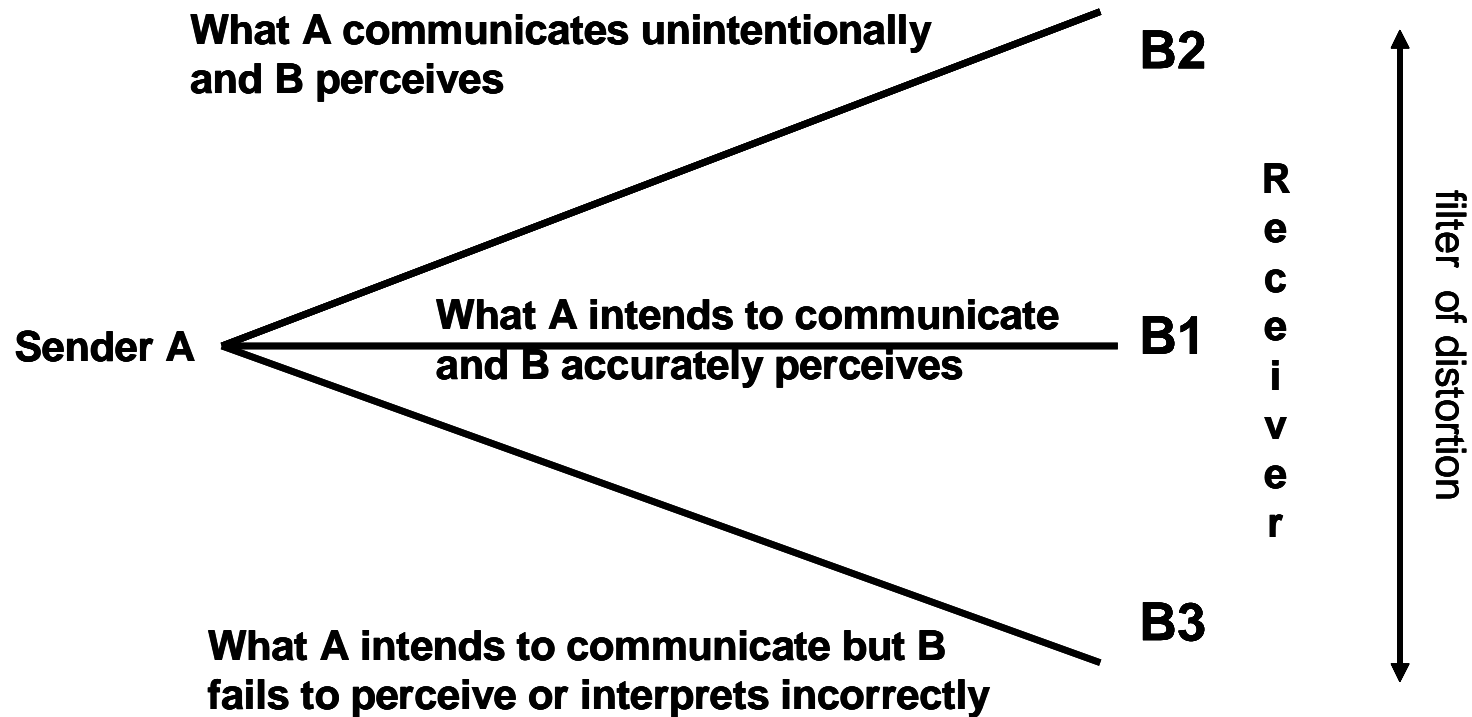
Recognise ineffective messages



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but ... Communication can be distorted -



Language and Linguistics



In the process of Critical Thinking there is a natural unconscious process of

- **Deletion** – we do not say what we think or feel
- **Distortion** – the presuppositions where what we believe to be the ‘truth’ is taken for granted
- **Generalisations** – the tendency to make absolute statements

All interaction consists of surface structures and deep structures

Surface Structure = what we say

Deep Structure = what we mean



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Language and Linguistics



Key points:

- There is a difference between what happens in the world around us and our experience / perception of it
- Language is a way of *representation* of the world
- Conversation, discussion, collaborative inquiry incorporate reciprocity and persuasion, exchange of views and inquiry into ideas, cooperation and mutual respect, formality and informality of behaviours
- When a person espouses a position they commit to exploring and questioning even the most widely accepted ideas and beliefs.



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Key points re language and linguistics and critical thinking *cont'd*

- Agreement is not essential. Conversation about the differences stimulates exploration and an opportunity to clarify one's assumptions and views
- Learning is transformative when we can confront, ponder and probe contradictions in our (work) environment and choose different or revised actions as a result
- Interaction brings into awareness the different linguistic, cultural and philosophical traditions that can help and / or hinder choices and actions

Facts versus Inferences

IFRAME

Critical Thinking Process



I	Incident	Inciting incident leads to an observation through paying attention
F	Feeling	Emotional response / triggers that allow surfacing of inner thoughts or discourse
R	Reflection	Self analysis / critical self reflection on response to observation or problem through questioning methodology
A	Assumptions	Surfacing of assumptions and checking of those assumptions using incisive questions leads to heightened awareness / level of reflection
M	Meaning	Interpet the meaning, explore its consequences
E	Execution	Action planning / self regulation to close the loop



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IFRAME : Critical Thinking Process



		What do I do ?	What happens next ?
I	Incident	I <i>pay attention</i> to an inciting incident that happens to me or that I trigger on my own	An <i>inciting incident</i> significantly upsets the balance of forces in my life
F	Feelings	I have an <i>emotional reaction</i> to the incident, either positive or negative	I experience a <i>physical, mental, or spiritual reaction</i> to what has happened
R	Reflection	I ask myself and others <i>probing questions</i> to understand my response to the incident more fully	I get to the bottom of <i>where</i> my assumptions, biases, and reactions are <i>coming from</i>
A	Assumptions	I <i>bring my assumptions about the incident to the surface</i> to verify their validity and analyze their consequences	I get honest with myself and <i>look for trends and patterns</i> in my biases and assumptions
M	Meaning	I <i>interpret the meaning</i> and apply this heightened awareness to new or existing incidents in my work and personal life	I <i>challenge my assumptions</i> and explore new ways of thinking about the incident
E	Execution	I <i>formalize the process</i> with action planning so that I can apply it to future incidents	I <i>implement</i> a disciplined strategy to achieve new critical thinking outcomes



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I – Incident : inciting incident leads to an observation through “paying attention”



An event occurs where you are surprised, curious, puzzled, confused, unable to reach a resolution, solve something or otherwise focus on something new or different. Stop and pay attention to your reaction to the event and the response. Document by writing a narrative or by using bullet points. Be as specific and detailed as possible.

Incident >

Incident
<p>Example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Important client meeting. Must end well.• Director of sales makes presentation, client group is fidgeting and not paying attention• Sales Director asks for questions• Complete silence with no questions after presentation



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F - Feeling : emotional response / triggers that allow surfacing of inner thoughts or discourse



Three Levels of Discourse

Automatic

Internal

Unconscious



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F - Feeling : emotional response / triggers that allow surfacing of inner thoughts or discourse



Incident > Feeling >

Incident	Feeling (Automatic Discourse)
<p>Example Complete silence after a presentation by Sales Director</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I am confused by the silence• The client is resistant to the plan• The client is now unhappy• I feel uncomfortable for them



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R - Reflection : self analysis / critical self reflection on response to observation or problem through questioning methodology



Types of Questions

- **Evidentiary**
- **Clarification**
- **Expectation**
- **Opposing**
- **Hypothetical**



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R - Reflection : self analysis / critical self reflection on response to observation or problem through questioning methodology



Reflection questions may also be more general in nature :

- **Why is this tree trunk round ?**
- **What attracts accountants to working with numbers ?**
- **What makes some drugs legal and others illegal ?**
- **Where does the brain get its electric impulses from ?**
- **What keeps us from going back in time or into the future ?**
- **How do I know what is the 'truth' ?**



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R - Reflection : self analysis / critical self reflection on response to observation or problem through questioning methodology



Example : Incident > Feeling > Reflection >

Incident	Complete silence after a presentation by Sales Director
Feeling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I am confused by the silence. • The client is resistant to the plan. • The client is now unhappy. • I feel uncomfortable for them.
Reflection	
Question(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is confusing to me? (clarification) • What might be driving lack of questions? (cause and effect) • How did I expect the client to react? (expectation) • They are accountants so therefore will always be resistant to this plan? (begging question).
Answer(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silence and disinterest. • Client worried about the impact on staff, the time it will take, the political power vacuum it creates, and the cost of the implementation. • I did not expect them to be so resistant to the idea, nor the frustration he showed. • Accountants will be resistant due to paperwork.

A - Assumptions : surfacing of assumptions and checking those assumptions using incisive questions leads to heightened awareness/ level of reflection



Three kinds of assumptions :

- **Facts – subjective and not subjective perceptions**
- **Possible fact assumptions – objective (like facts)**
- **Taken-for-granted assumptions – the ‘truths’ we take for granted, or the supposed forms of knowledge that inform our thinking**



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A - Assumptions : surfacing of assumptions and checking those assumptions using incisive questions



Two Step Process :

1. Surfacing assumptions

What are common themes?

2. Identifying assumptions by asking incisive questions

If I knew/was aware
how would I respond/what
would I do?

Identify Assumptions your are
prone to believe



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A - Assumptions : surfacing of assumptions and checking of those assumptions using incisive questions leads to heightened awareness / level of reflection



Example : Incident > Feeling > Reflection > Assumptions >

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Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify common themes in answers to reflective questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disappointment in response of team - Discomfort with silence - Who has power • Identify assumptive thinking by asking Incisive Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If I knew I would be disappointed, how would I have responded ? - If I was aware of my discomfort with silence, what should I have done ? - If I had information on who holds the power in the meeting, what did I need to do to use that power in my favor ? • What are the assumptions then that I am prone to believe? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People should respond in some manner to a presentation - My own team should show support - Power resides in being organized and anticipating what people will do - Silence is awkward - Paperwork breeds resistance



M - Meaning : consequences and application on-the-job or in real life



- Challenge assumptions by hypothesising their opposites
- Identify the “consequences” of your new assumptions by asking yourself

“what are the possible consequences to myself and others of acting on these new assumptions?”



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M - Meaning : consequences and application on-the-job or in real life



Example : Incident > Feeling > Reflection > Assumptions > Meaning >

<p>Assumptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify common themes in answers to reflective questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disappointment in response of team - Discomfort with silence - Who has power • Identify assumptive thinking by asking Incisive Questions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If I knew I would be disappointed, how would I have responded ? - If I was aware of my discomfort with silence, what should I have done ? - If I had information on who holds the power in the meeting, what did I need to do to use that power in my favor ? • What are the assumptions then that I am prone to believe? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People should respond in some manner to a presentation - My own team should show support - Power resides in being organized and anticipating what people will do - Silence is awkward - Paperwork breeds resistance
<p>Meaning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People should respond in some manner to a presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposite : <i>People should not respond in any manner to a presentation</i> Evidence : <i>Where is it written or believed that people should respond? People have a choice to respond or not, not to be forced.</i> • My own team should show support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposite : <i>My own team does not need to show support.</i> Evidence : <i>Just because I am a member does not mean they agree</i> • Power resides in being organized and anticipating what people will do <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposite : <i>Power does not reside in being organized or anticipating what people will do</i> Evidence : <i>Power involves more than being organized. Power is in the mind of the team.</i> • Silence is awkward <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opposite : <i>Silence is not awkward</i> Evidence : <i>Silence gives a chance to think and reflect. It shows comfort with self and others</i> <p>What are the consequences of my assumptions ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team members have a choice whether or not to respond to a presentation, despite my discomfort - Teams do not have to agree to be supportive - Power is difficult to manage - Silence has some advantages <p>What are the consequences to myself ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I need to relax and not be so alarmed when my team does not respond as I would wish - A team may have valid reasons for lack of response to a presentation - I am unsure of how to manage the power of a team and need to look at better stakeholder assessment - I need to let silence prevail at times - it might be a good thing for a team and a presenter.



E - Execution : action planning/self regulation to close the loop



Four steps :

- **Continuous “honest” assessment of likely impact of new assumptions on self and others**
- **Collaborative review of outcomes and consequences by describing taken-for-granted assumptions and new assumptions for clarity**
- **Development of action plan to act on new assumptions, addressing following questions :**
 - What must change ?**
 - What must stop ?**
 - What must be created ?**
 - What must be modified ?**
 - Who must I engage to make this happen ?**
- **Take action**



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IFRAME Worksheet

Incident > Feeling > Reflection > Assumptions > Meaning > Execution



Incident		Inciting Incident leads to an observation through paying attention Describe in detail the occurrence / event
Feeling		Emotional response / triggers that allow surfacing of inner thoughts or discourse What was my automatic discourse? (immediate response)
		What is my internal discourse? (Feelings/Reflections)
Reflection	Question(s)	Self analysis / critical self reflection on response to observation or problem through questioning methodology Ask at least 4 different types of question : - Evidentiary - Clarifying - Open - Expectation - Extension - Hypothetical - Cause and Effect - Summary - Begging
	Answer(s)	Provide opposing or reflective questions : - Why should I be / not be surprised ? - What did I expect / not expect? - How did I reach this conclusion ? Why did I not reach a different conclusion ? Statement of the issue
Assumptions		Surfacing of assumptions and checking of those assumptions leads to heightened awareness / level of reflection - What biases do I have that inform my view of the issue ? - What common themes emerge in my answers? - What assumptions am I prone to believe then? - What are the consequences of my assumptions? - What are the consequences to myself? Identification of assumptions - If I knew how would I ... (Incisive Question)
Meaning		Consequences and application on-the-job or in real life - Assumption - Opposite - Evidence
Execution		Action planning / self regulation to close the loop - What must change ? - What must be created ? - What must stop ? - What must be modified ? - Who must I engage to make this happen? 1 to 3 things I want to remember (daily reflection guide)

