

Ladder of Inference

You give Mary a dirty look the next time you see her.

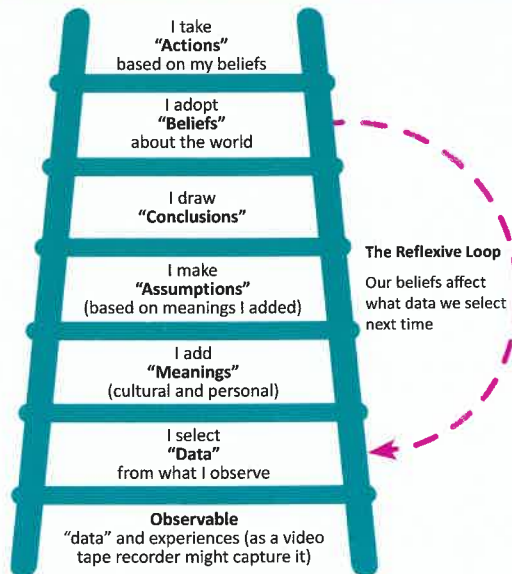
You look for other examples of how she is trying to make you look bad.

Next time Mary wants help I won't help her.

Mary is trying to sabotage you – she never liked you.

Mary doesn't respond so you leave a voicemail and conclude she is avoiding you because the last time you saw her you had disagreements.

You are working on a project and need help from Mary – you email her.



by Chris Argyris, Harvard

Source: Senge, P. *The 5th Discipline*, New York, NY: Doubleday, 1990.

Meet with Mary and through the process of **humble inquiry**, gain deeper insight into the situation.

Mary may have a reason why she didn't respond to requests for help.

Mary has been helpful in the past.

Test your assumption: "Mary are you mad at me?"

Test the data you have selected: "You haven't returned my emails or phone calls." (She may respond she was on vacation!)"

Dealing with Resistance Through Reflection

- **Continue the Paragraph**

Anticipate the next statement that has not yet been expressed by your colleague

"This week had you considering leaving the unit."

- **Double-Sided Reflection**

"so on the one hand you think it will be tough to cut down on your workload and on the other hand it would be an important move for you and your family."

- **Metaphor/Simile**

used as a reflection

"It's like the whole building nearly collapsed this week."

- **Amplified Reflection**

turn up the heat, exaggerate the intensity

"So you think it is impossible to introduce a checklist"

- **Reflection of Feeling not Directly Verbalized**

"Sounds like the dissension in the team meeting kind of scared you."



Additional strategies:

- Avoid taking a position
- Avoid arguing
- Avoid saying "should," "need to," or "but"