



# The Ladder of Inference and the Drama Triangle: Keys to Understanding and Managing Complex Business Relationships

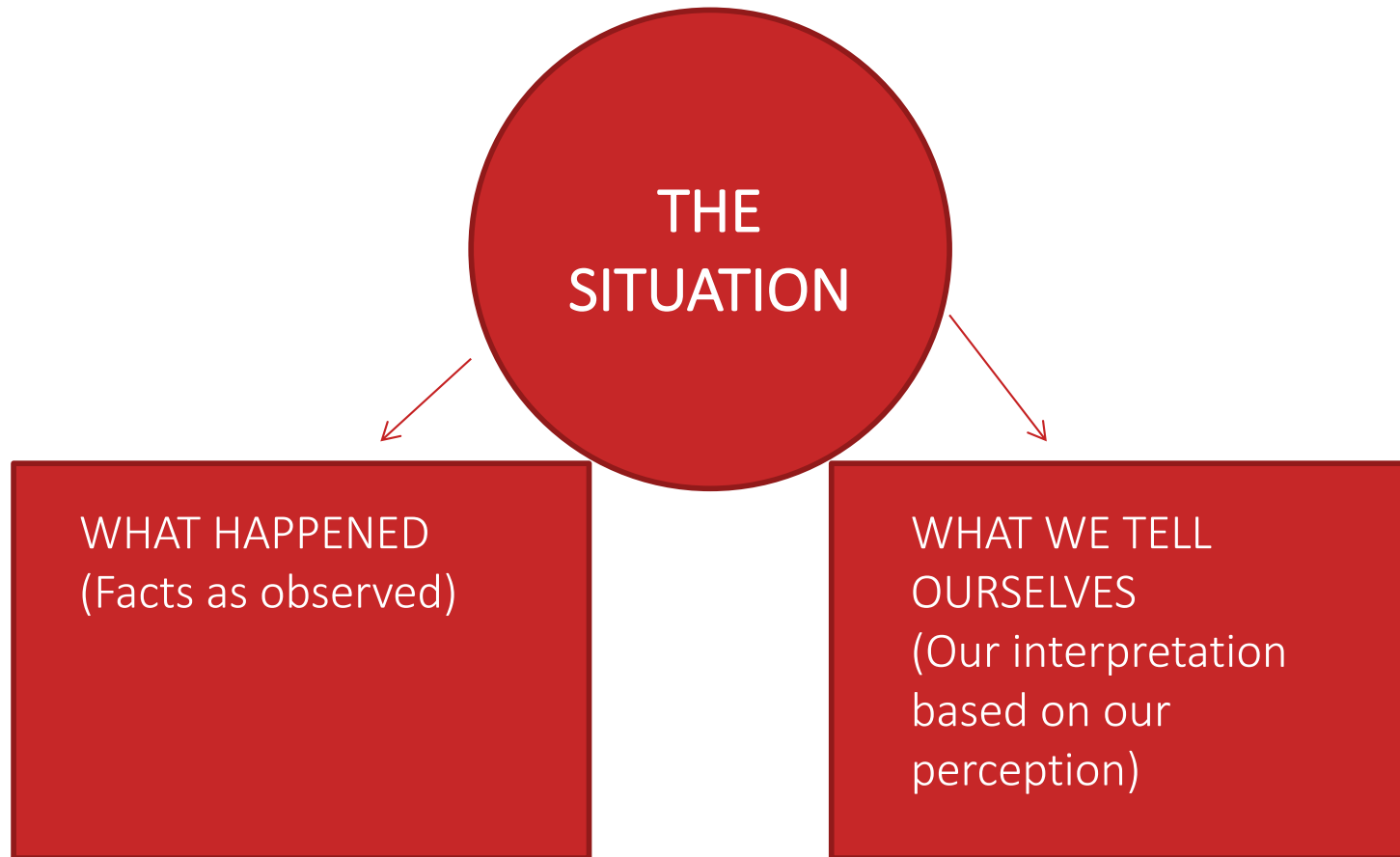
Laurie Gray  
VP, Customer Experience  
RGP Consulting  
April, 2018



Dan McGee Photo



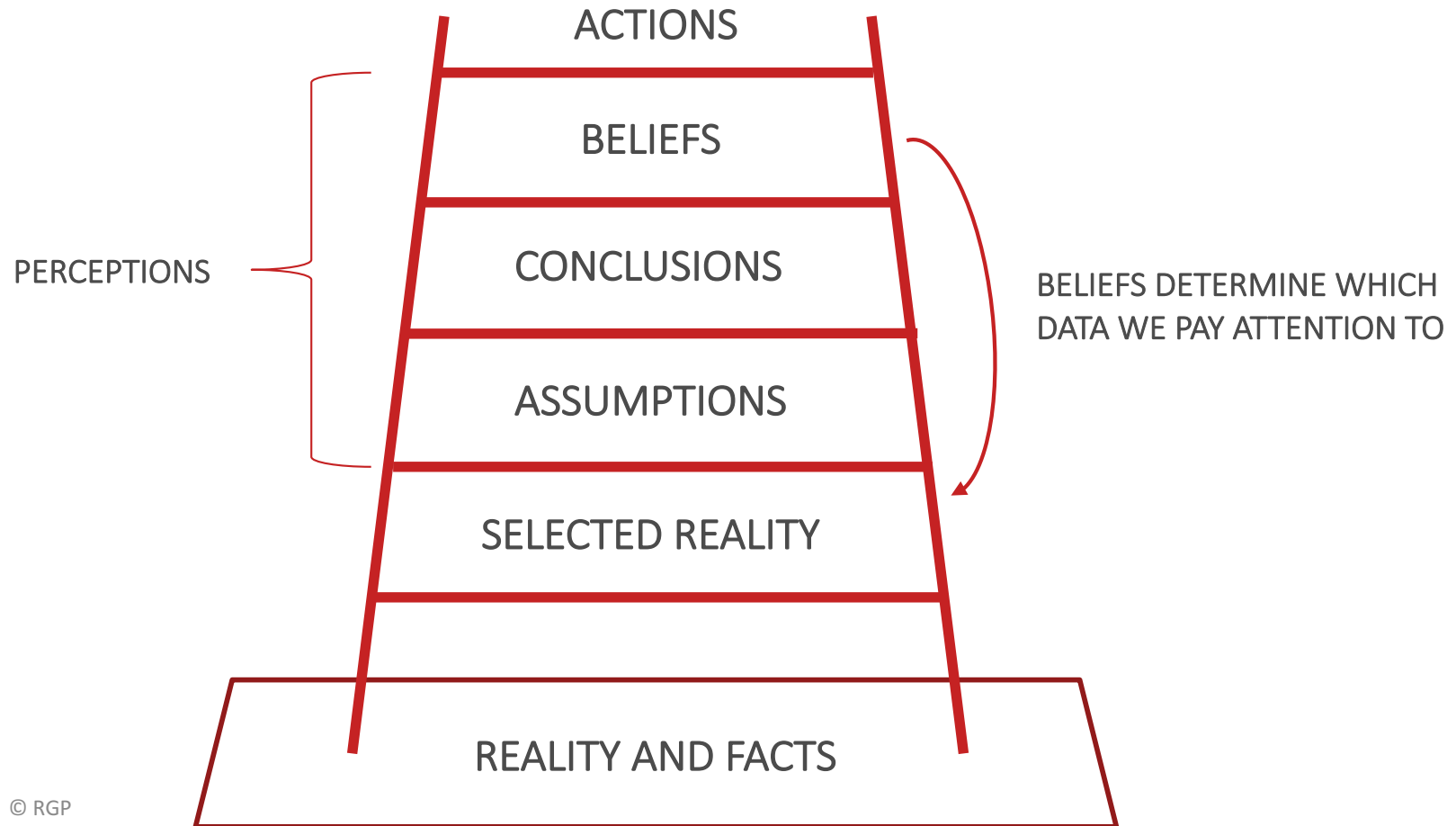
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHG9-of\\_WtQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHG9-of_WtQ)





**People only see what they are prepared to see.**  
*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

# THE LADDER OF INFERENCE



## THE LADDER OF INFERENCE – THE DOCTORS EXAMPLE

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Shock, dismay, panic?

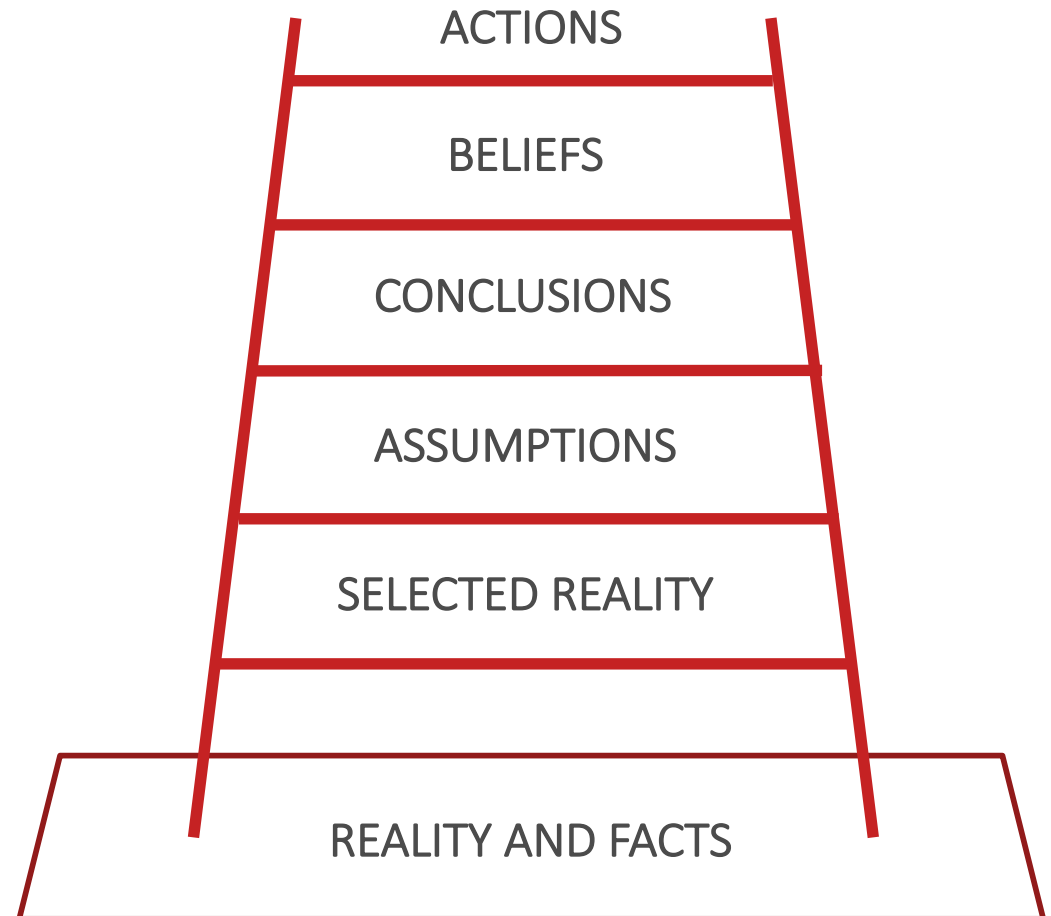
Nothing good ever happens in hospitals.

The patient is dead!

Wife and daughter think doctors are talking about the patient.

Whose death? Wife and daughter can't see the fly.

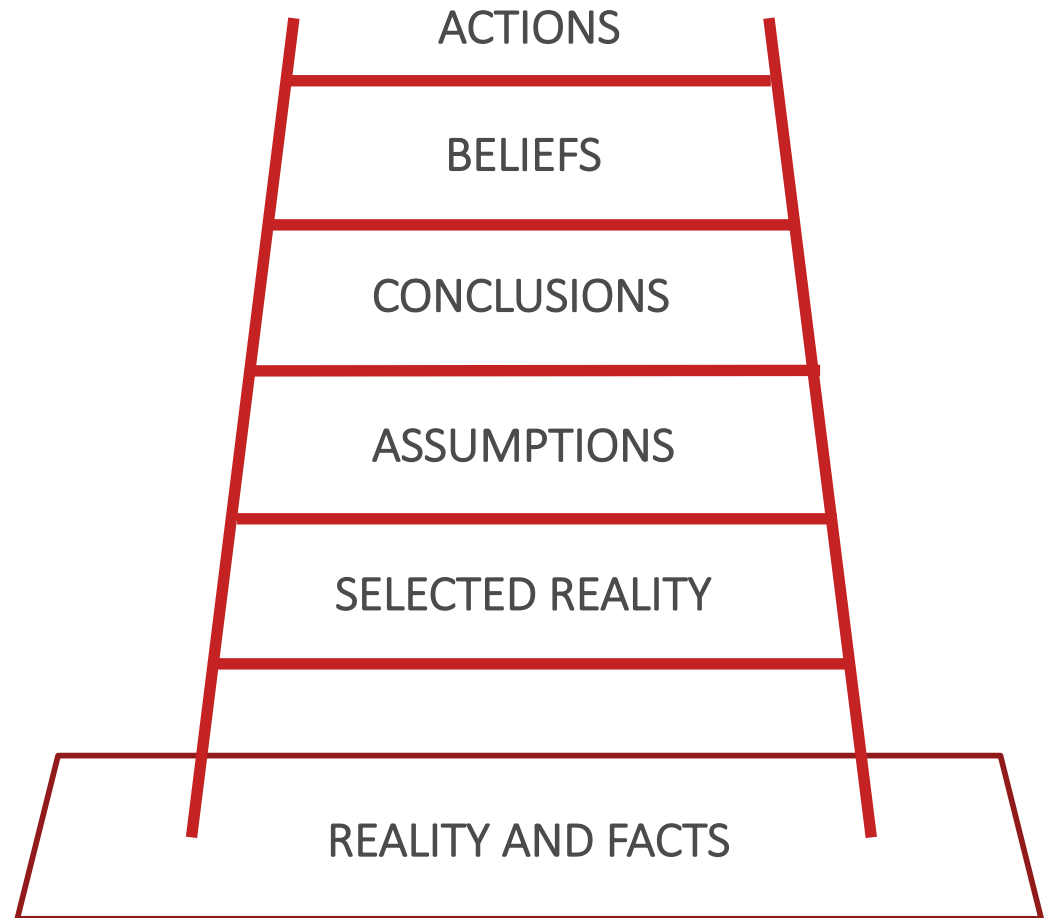
Doctors holding paddles, announcing a death; patient isn't awake or moving.



## THE LADDER OF INFERENCE – YOUR OWN EXAMPLE

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6. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
1. \_\_\_\_\_





## THE VALUE OF TELLING YOURSELF 3 STORIES

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Questions to help you get to your three stories:

- What information am I missing?
- What decisions did I make about which information to include or exclude from my observation?
- Could your assumptions have taken you to a different location?
- What other conclusions exist beyond the one you accepted?
- What information or perspective do others have that I don't?
- What other choices/courses of action could I have selected?

## HELPING OTHERS TO NAVIGATE THE LADDER

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“What action did you take?”

“What action do you plan to take instead?”

“How does this fit with your beliefs?”

“How did other options challenge your beliefs?”

“What conclusion did / do you draw from this?”

“What other conclusions might apply?”

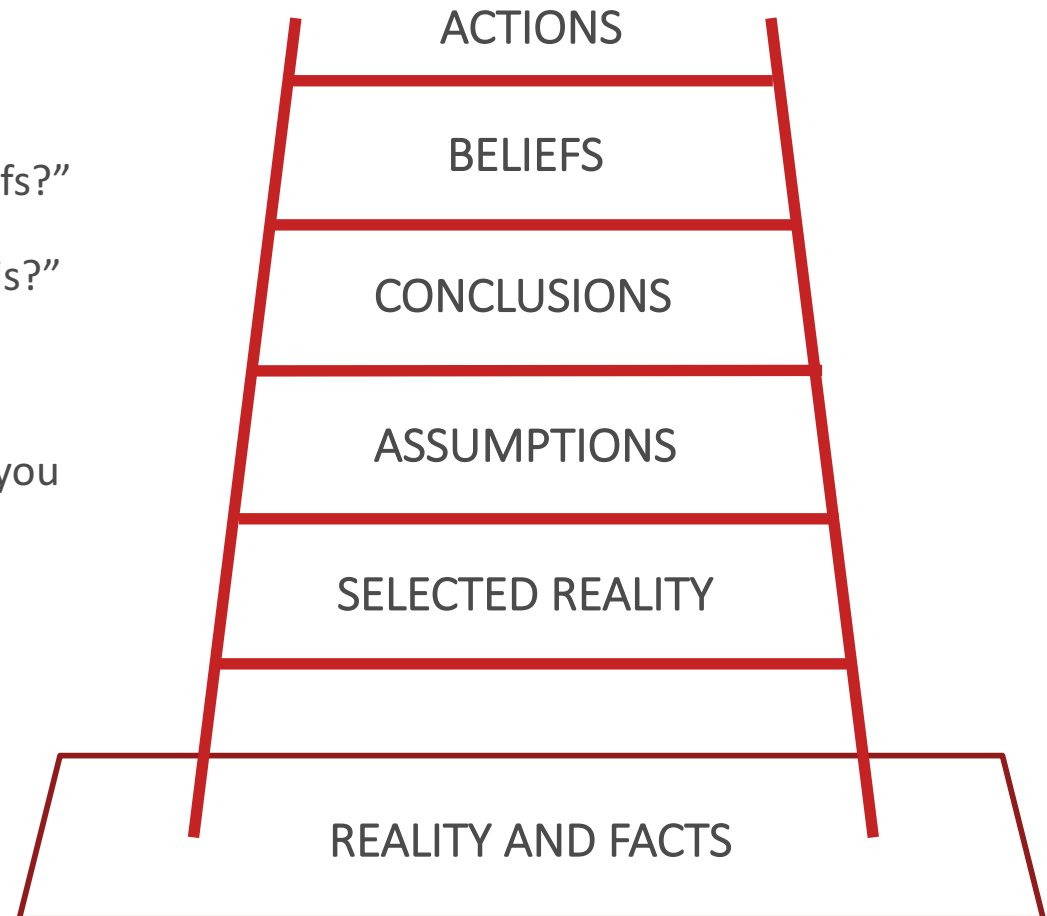
“What did you assume this meant?”

“Are there any other plausible assumptions you could make?”

“What data did you choose to focus on / create?”

“Tell me about the facts you observed.”

“Were there any others?”



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON THE LADDER OF INFERENCE

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TED ED presentation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KJLqOclPqis>

Article: [https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC\\_91.htm](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_91.htm)

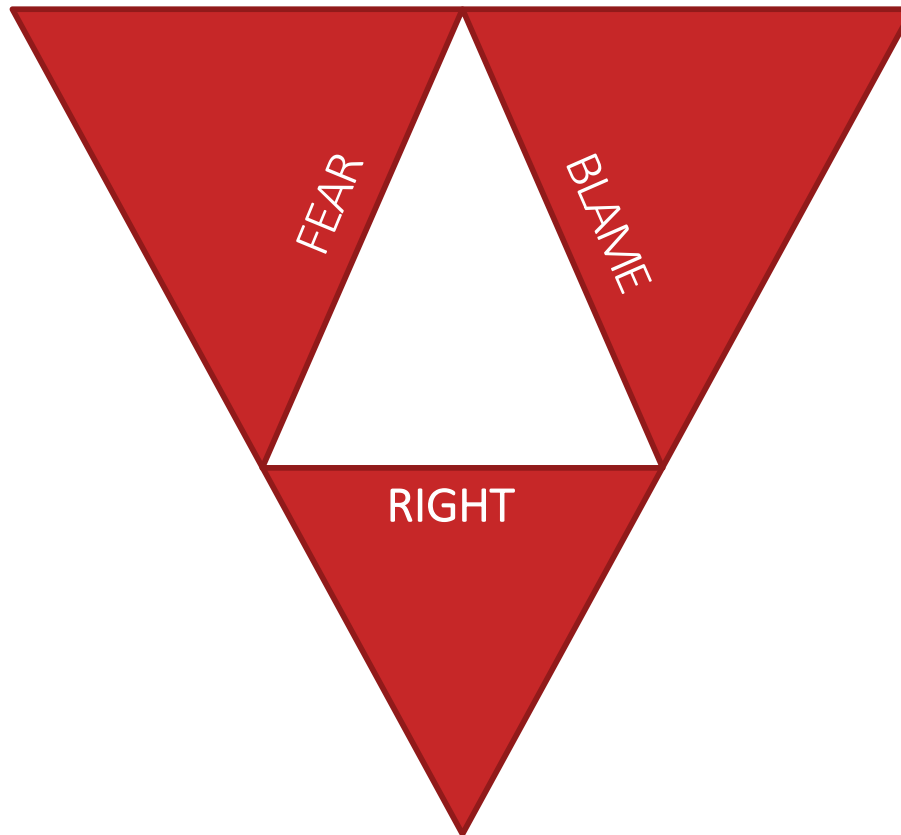
Article: <https://thesystemsthinker.com/the-ladder-of-inference/>

Other educational materials: <https://www.pon.harvard.edu/tag/ladder-of-inference/>

## THE DRAMA TRIANGLE: THE PLOT

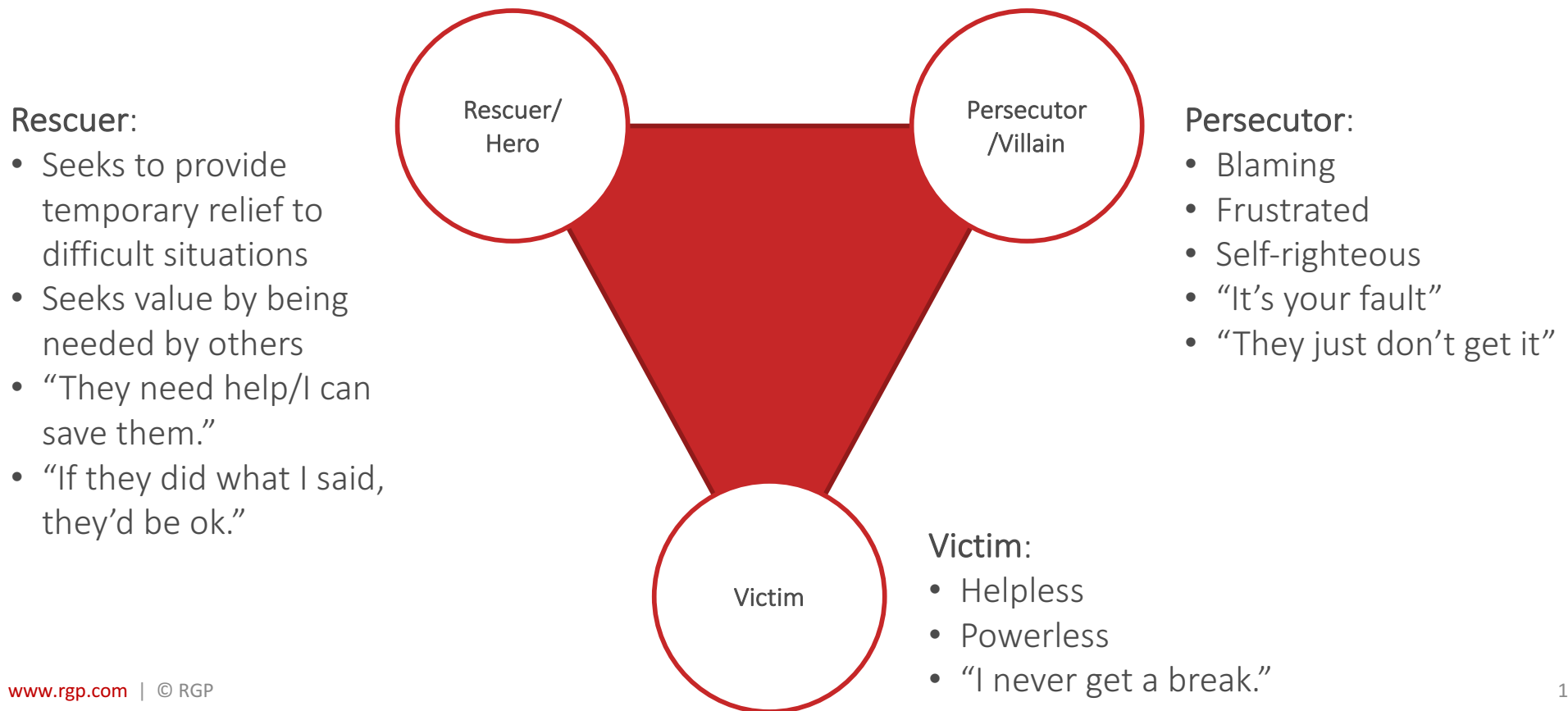
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At the core, driven by powerful beliefs/fears that when played out, halt information transfer in the workplace.



## THE DRAMA TRIANGLE

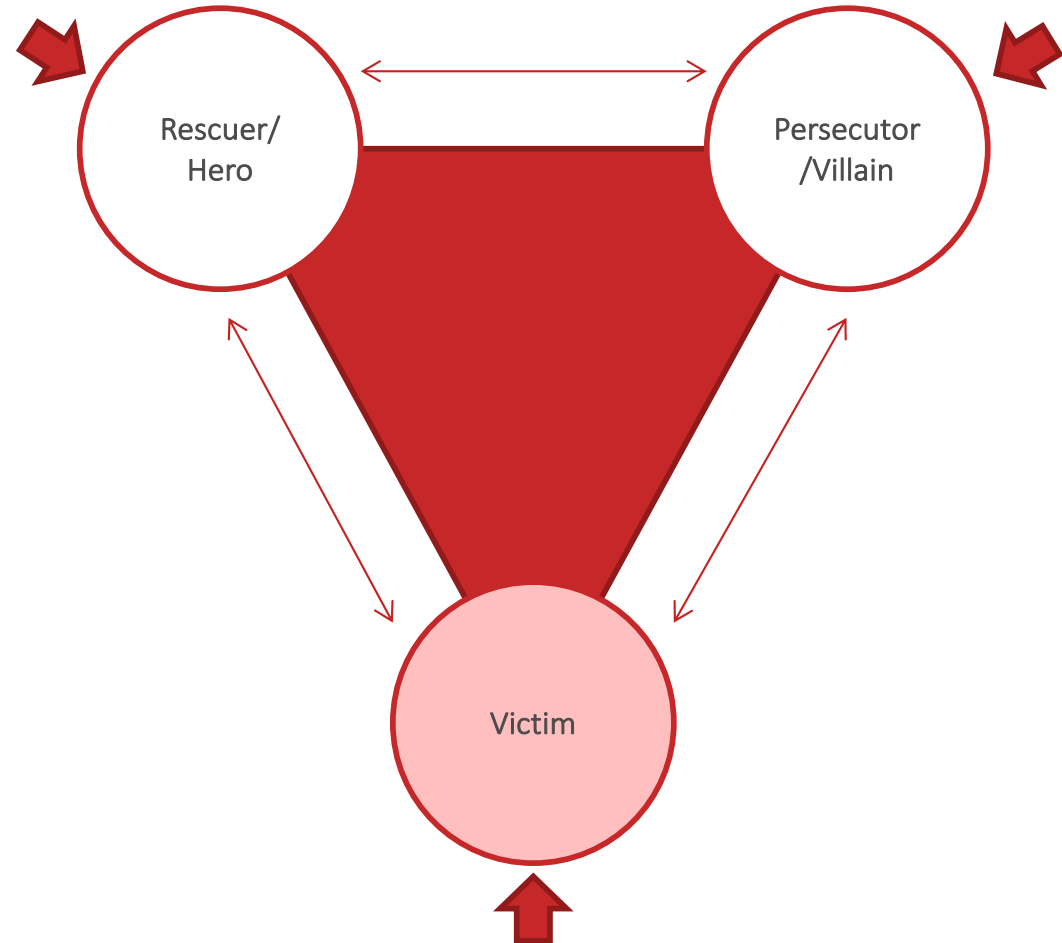
This drives us to adopt certain “scripted roles” and exhibit certain behaviors



## THE DRAMA TRIANGLE

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- We can start anywhere in the triangle
- Our roles can and do shift.
- We tend to move toward an unconscious desire to “be the biggest victim”.



## THE DRAMA TRIANGLE ROLE PLAY

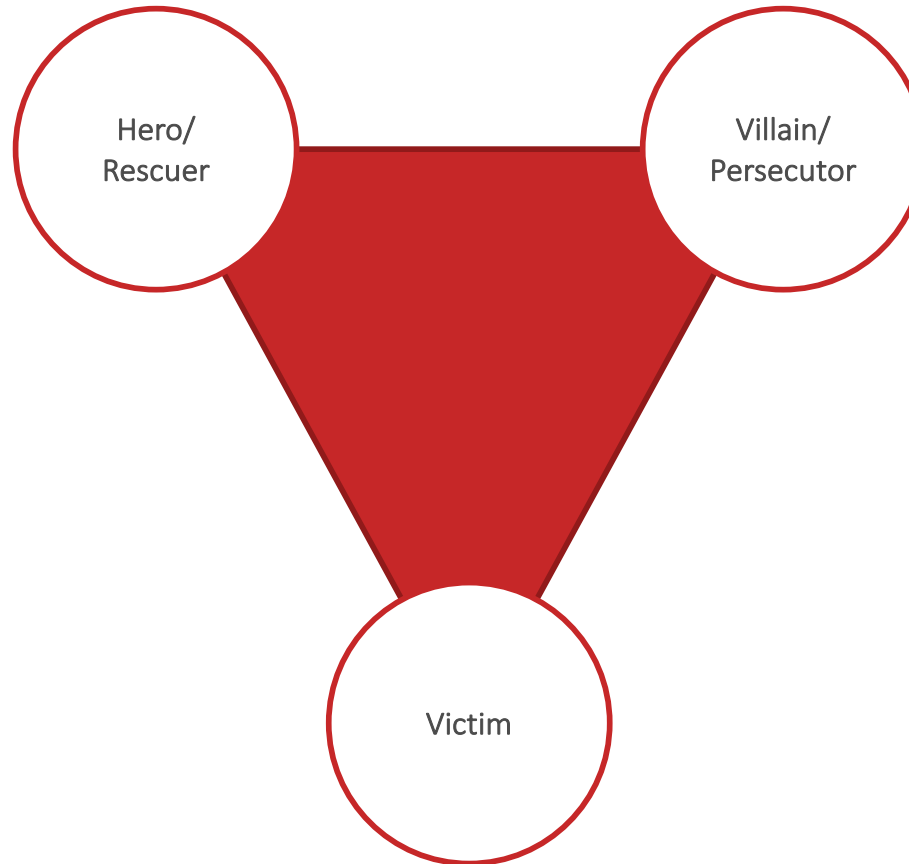
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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F7pBYF8qxYk>

## THE DRAMA TRIANGLE – WORKPLACE EXAMPLE

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“Think, act, and speak as if the role isn’t real”

## SHIFTING AWAY FROM THE DRAMA TRIANGLE

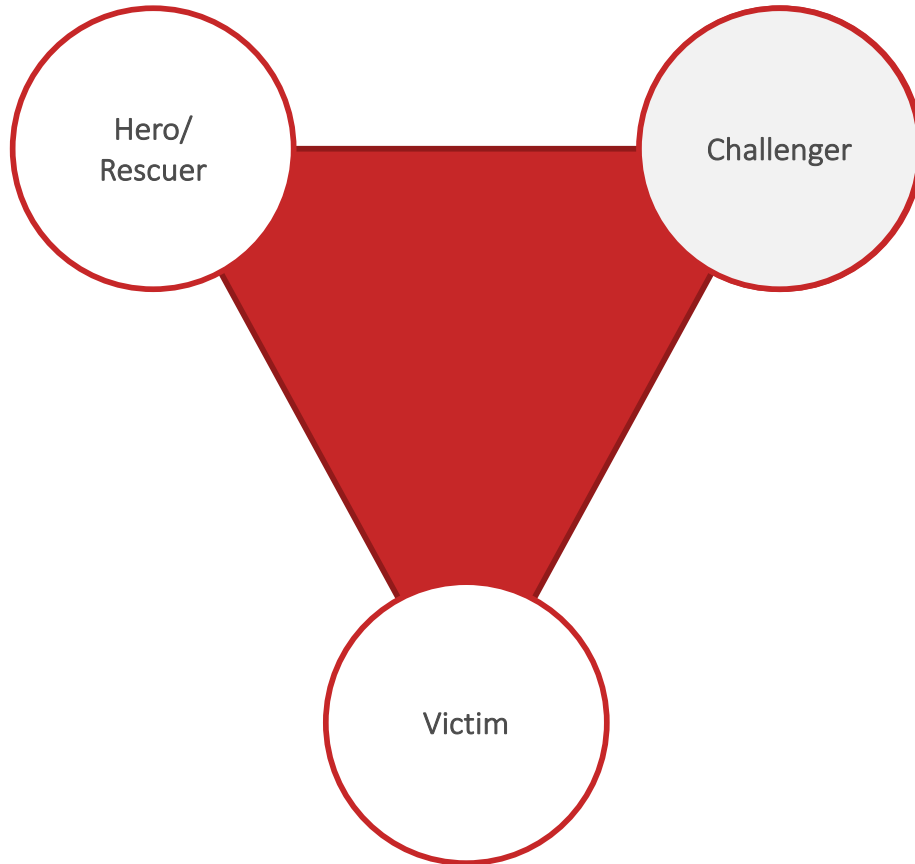
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Start by taking a few deep breaths or consider getting up from your desk and walking around as you ponder the answers to these questions:

1. What am I feeling at the moment and where in my body am I feeling it? (Getting in tune)
2. What is the single most important thing I can do to take care of myself? What is the key thing I truly need, want, and/or desire right now? (Identifying your needs)
3. What positive actions can I make in my life right now that would assist me to accomplish this? What can I do to support my process that allows me to get back to a point of equilibrium? (Planning for change)
4. What are the most important actions I can take RIGHT NOW to get me moving in a positive direction? (Choosing the path)
5. Take positive action right now. Retain focus on where you would like to/plan to go, not where you have been. (Taking action)

## MOVING BEYOND THE DRAMA TRIANGLE: BEING IN PRESENCE\*

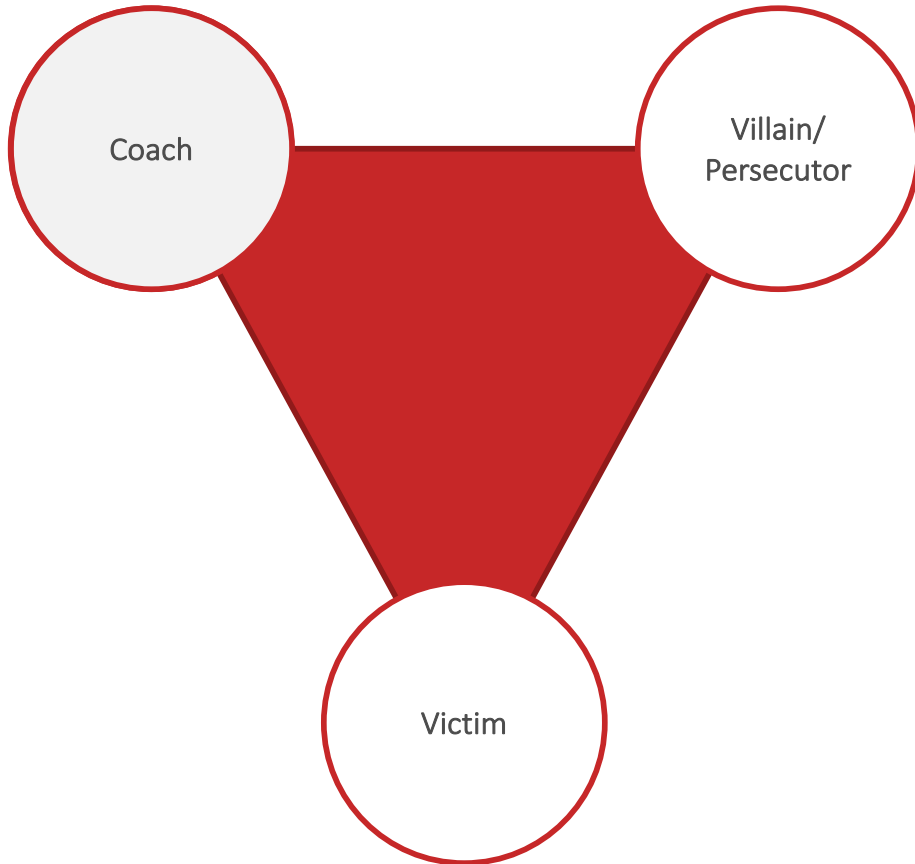
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### Challenger:

- Brings healthy pressure to the creator to help and support their progress
- Aiming for breakthroughs
- No blame or criticism
- “We can do better”

## MOVING BEYOND THE DRAMA TRIANGLE: BEING IN PRESENCE\*

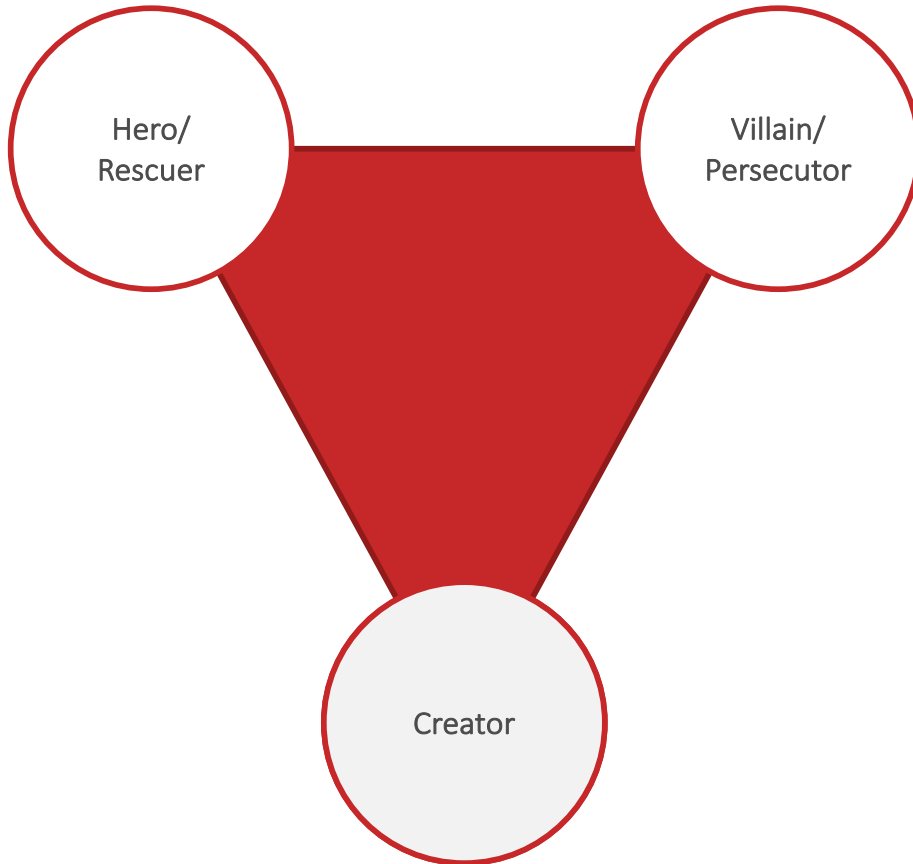


### Coach:

- Views all as fully empowered creators
- Focused on the “what if”
- Shifts the “work” to the owners

## MOVING BEYOND THE DRAMA TRIANGLE: BEING IN PRESENCE\*

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### Creator:

- Think like a problem-solver
- “What do I want?”
- “How can I get what I want?”
- Taking responsibility
- Not complaining
- Getting it done

## BENEFITS THAT TEAMS IN PRESENCE ENJOY

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- More creative
- More engaged
- More closely aligned
- Energized
- More fun
- Get more done
- Alert to options
- Problem-solving

## ASSESSING RECENT EVENTS

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Think about a recent event where you and your team were caught up in a drama triangle:

1. What was the situation?
2. What role did you begin playing?
3. What was the outcome you wanted?
4. How did your role impact the situation?
5. How were you feeling?
6. Knowing what you know now, how could you have shifted to presence and changed the outcome?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES ON THE DRAMA TRIANGLE

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Video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovrVv\\_RICMw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovrVv_RICMw)

Article: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/fixing-families/201106/the-relationship-triangle>

Article collection: <http://powerofted.com/articles/>

Worksheets and handouts: <http://printableworksheets.in/worksheet/drama-triangle>



**THANK YOU**

# HANDOUTS

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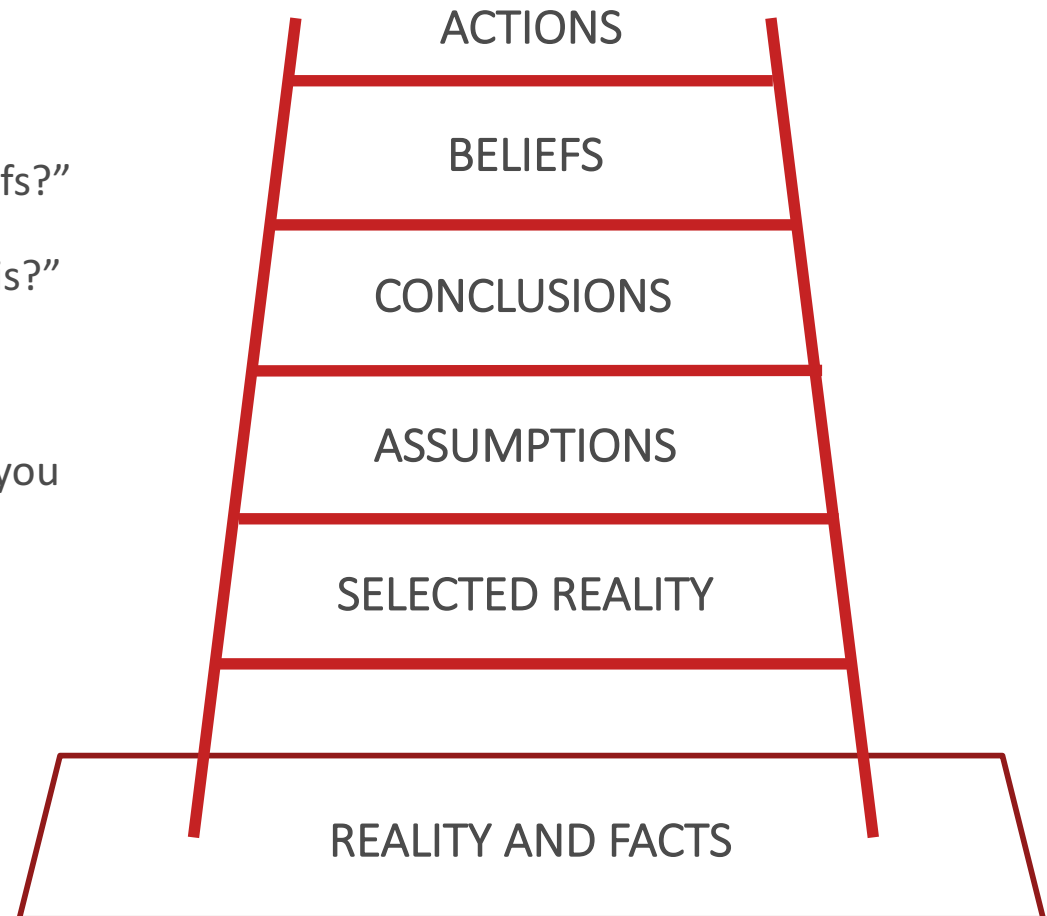
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