LADDER OF INFERENCE

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The Ladder of Inference reminds us that often we make judgements and beliefs in the blink of an eye, grabbing a sliver of information and then move to what action needs to happen next. Sometimes that is useful - other times it is not. When we put assumptions and bias ahead of seeking to understand more about a situation, the outcomes are often miscommunication, lack of trust and lack of clarity.

Ways to use the Ladder of Inference to help your Authentic Dialogue:

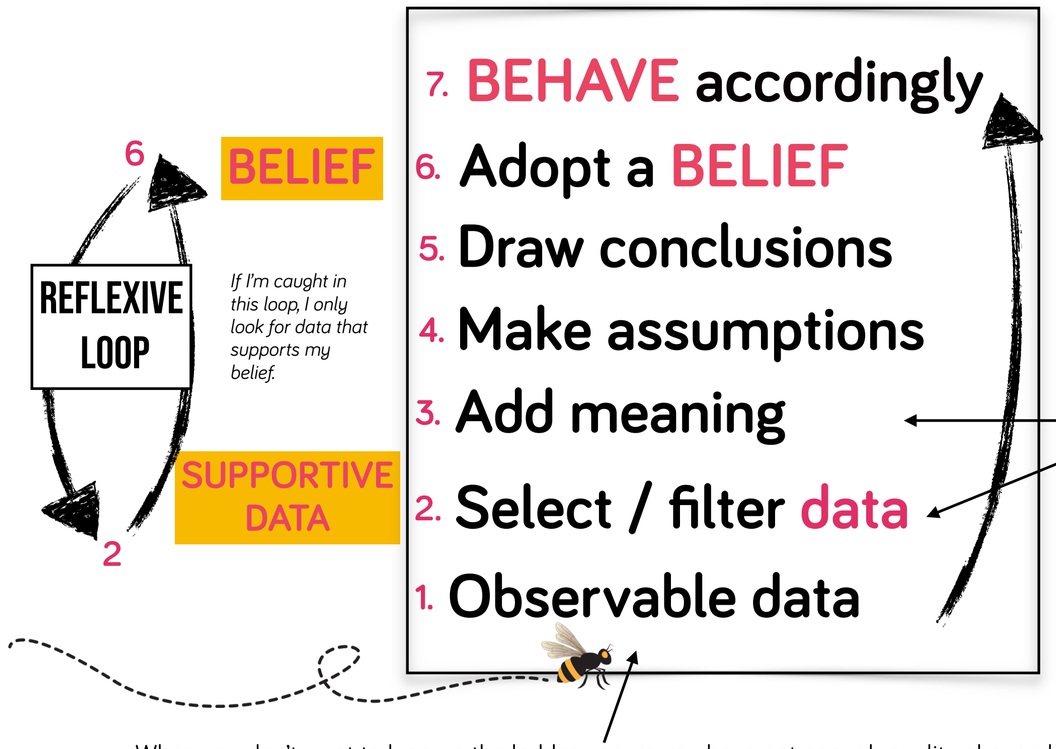
Self reflection and awareness: where have I made assumptions based on little real or relevant data? Is a strongly biased filter and meaning making led me astray? Where could I get more observable data?

Investigating beliefs and traditions: Why do we do a particular thing? For what purpose? What lead us to that belief? What meaning do we place on things that happen in our environment?

Making informed balanced decisions: Have we got the right information for the next steps/ decisions/ behaviours?

Deeper understanding of position/ clearing up misunderstandings:
Walking people up or down the ladder from where belief stems and making the thinking process transparent:
'This is what I believe and how I got to that outcome.' Ask them to do the same. Listen deeply to the different perceptions and evidence used.

School principles / Team principles:
Principles are beliefs in action. What is the supporting data and the meanings that make our school values and principles? Apply the same to team norms and practices.



When you don't want to leap up the ladder, ensure you have got enough quality observable data.

Use the Double Click technique to find out more. Like clicking on a digital folder and finding more files and folders that lie beneath, we can use the same approach to understand more:

Tell me more about that?
What does that look like?
How do you see this?
What is your understanding?

Tracey EZARD

- Original source Ladder of Inference from: The Fifth Discipline by Peter Senge