

RENEW counseling: Skilled staff; Nutrition-focused

Try the activity on your own or with others from your agency.

RENEW Review Activity:

Judgment and Assumptions

A basic principle of providing participant centered and trauma informed services is to avoid being judgmental. But why is it so hard to avoid? Sometimes we can't even tell that we are being judgmental. We explored the role of **implicit bias** and judgment in the [February RENEW Review Activity](#).

Making **assumptions** is often another part of being judgmental. The **Ladder of Inference** is one way to look at how our assumptions can lead us to making a judgment that may be inaccurate.

1. Watch a video about the ladder of inference. Here are several good options:
 - a. [Rethinking thinking](#) / Trevor Maber / TedEd
 - b. [Ladder of Inference – listening skills](#) / Christina Gardner
 - c. [Ladder of Inference Tool of the Month](#) / Labor Management Initiatives
2. The Ladder of Inference describes how we take what we see and hear and then tell ourselves a story that makes sense of the information that we have taken in. It is human nature to do this, but it can sometimes lead us to incorrect conclusions. Have you heard the saying “Don’t judge a book by its cover”? Think of a situation where what you assumed was true turned out to be wrong. What led you to make that assumption to begin with?
3. Once you realize that you may have made an assumption, try these 3 steps to avoid being judgmental. Each step might help you climb back down the Ladder of Inference. How would these steps have affected the situation you thought of earlier?
 - a. Ask yourself if there could be any other reason for what you see or hear.
 - b. Don’t take it personally. You probably aren’t the reason for the persons actions.
 - c. Use your PCE skills to explore what has happened to the person.
4. [Watch this video](#) about the internal struggles that may influence how someone acts, then use the activity on the next page to practice checking your assumptions.

Case studies: Checking your assumptions

- A. Kara comes into your office with her baby and her toddler. She is constantly looking at her phone and doesn't seem to be paying any attention to you or your questions. She seems distracted. When you smile and say hello, she asks you how long this will take.
- Thinking of the ladder of inference, what might be your assumption about Kara and her phone? What judgment might you make about her? How might you take it personally?
 - What might be another reason for Kara's focus on her phone?
 - What PCE skill might you use to explore what has happened to Kara?
- B. Silas brings his step-son Bradley to your office for an appointment. Silas is wearing dirty jeans and smells like cigarette smoke. He isn't the second cardholder and gets angry when he is told that we need to contact Bradley's mom to verify information and add him as a second cardholder. Silas says "I'm a lot more of a father to this kid than the deadbeat dad!"
- Thinking of the ladder of inference, what might be your assumption about Silas? What judgment might you make about him? How might you take it personally?
 - What might be another reason for Silas' frustration?
 - What PCE skill might you use to explore what has happened to Silas?
- C. Mindy brings in her 3-year-old daughter Taffy for a certification. This is the third time this certification has been scheduled. Taffy has sticky hands and a messy face, evidence of a recent candy bar. Taffy is whiny and keeps begging mom to give her a drink of the soda that Mindy has with her. Mindy tells her no, but eventually gives her the soda.
- Thinking of the ladder of inference, what might be your assumption about Mindy? What judgment might you make about her? How might you take it personally?
 - What might be another reason for Taffy's face and the soda?
 - What PCE skill might you use to explore what has happened to Mindy?

Quotes from Jodi Pfarr at the 2018 WIC Statewide Meeting:

"If we don't understand, we react or judge."

"James Comer says, 'No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship', and there will be no relationship if someone feels judged."