

Resilient and Optimistic Thinking

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EOSDN

Today's Fun

- Resilience
- Optimism
- AIM
- Take care of yourself



Resilience



What are the first words or phrases that come to mind when you think of resilience?

What is “Resilience”?



The ability to:

- 1) bounce back from setbacks.
- 2) thrive, grow and be effective in the face of adversity, challenges and change.

Resilient people *think differently*. They have a level of psychological capital and mental toughness that enables better performance and leadership under stress.

What are some misconceptions?



Myths and Misconceptions



- It means always having it together.
- It means never crying, blowing up, or doing anything that doesn't "look resilient."
- It means having all the answers.
- You are either born with it or you aren't.

The truth about resilience

Fall seven times and
stand up eight.

- Japanese Proverb -



Why do we need resilience?



- Because stressors caused by change and adversity are inevitable.
- The need for resilience is real whether you (or someone you care about) are dealing with bad traffic, a frustrating boss or a major challenge such as a new baby, negative health diagnosis, job loss, divorce or financial setback.

Without stressors, resilience cannot be tested! The need for resilience comes when you face an adversity or challenge.

Notice “new baby” – stressors can be positive events.

What empowers resilience?

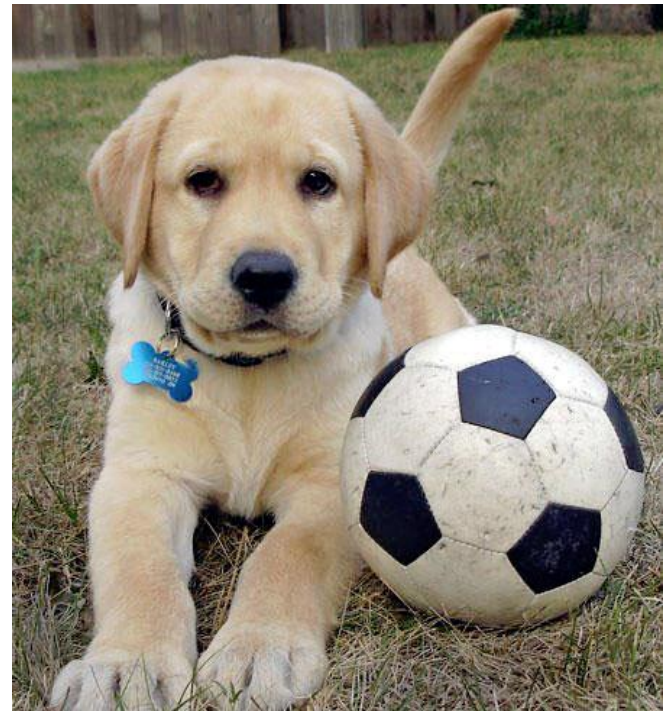


Personal Resources

- Genetics (For example, some have a natural predisposition towards positivity and optimism, underlying pathologies, etc.)
- Your support system (relationships, resources, community environments)
- **How you think**

My Resource Map

- Who / What can help when times are tough?
 - At work?
 - In my personal life?
 - Professional services?
 - Activities?
 - Others?



Remember, in times of change...

- You aren't alone
 - What resources / support do you have?



The Truth about Resilience



- Resilience can, and often does, look “messy.” In other words, it may involve falling seven times – but if you get up eight, you survive!
- Resilience can be taught and learned.
- Resilience is largely about *how you think*.

The concepts in this course are adapted from Dr. Karen Reivich’s book *The Resilience Factor*.

Skill #1: Building Self-Awareness



- You take the last Sunday night flight to Chicago for a Monday morning meeting. Dressed in jeans and t-shirt, you are relaxed. The flight lands on time at 10:05 pm and you head to baggage claim. You wait for 20 minutes as all other passengers grab their luggage, but yours never comes off the conveyer belt. Then the belt stops moving. No more luggage. Your suitcase didn't make it! You have to leave the hotel by 7:30 am for the meeting and the next flight doesn't get in until 8:15 in the morning.
- In the heat of that moment, what are you thinking? What are the unfiltered thoughts going through your mind?



Building Self-Awareness (“TTR”)



1. Trigger

(The adversity, event, conversation, or challenge that causes the stress or problem)

2. Thoughts

(What you say to yourself in the heat of the moment)

3. Reactions

(What you feel and what you do / say)

“Trigger”



- In our example, the trigger is the challenge, adversity, or event you face at the airport. It is “who, what, when, where” – not why.
 - Who? **YOU**
 - What? **Without your luggage, which contains clothes and other items you need to prepare for your meeting.**
 - When? **The night before an important meeting.**
 - Where? **At the airport in Chicago, far from home.**

You don't need to solve the challenge here. You just need to understand the key facts of it. It is neutral.

“Thoughts”



- Your thoughts are the unfiltered in-the-heat-of-the-moments beliefs you tell yourself about the situation. For example:
 - “I’m screwed.”
 - “This is a nightmare!”
 - “I’m going to lose this client and my career will be over!”
 - “Those idiots at the airline! I can’t believe they lost my bag. Someone is going to pay!”

Your thoughts are not the same as feelings. They are simply what you say to yourself in the moment. If your thoughts were a billboard, what would the broadcast?

“Reactions”



- Reactions are your emotions and your actions – what you feel and what you do (including what you say). They are DIRECTLY tied to your thoughts. For every emotion or action, there is a thought that preceded it. For example:
 - What might be your “reaction” after having this thought?:
 - “Those idiots at the airline! I can’t believe they lost my bag. Someone is going to pay!”

Let's try this!

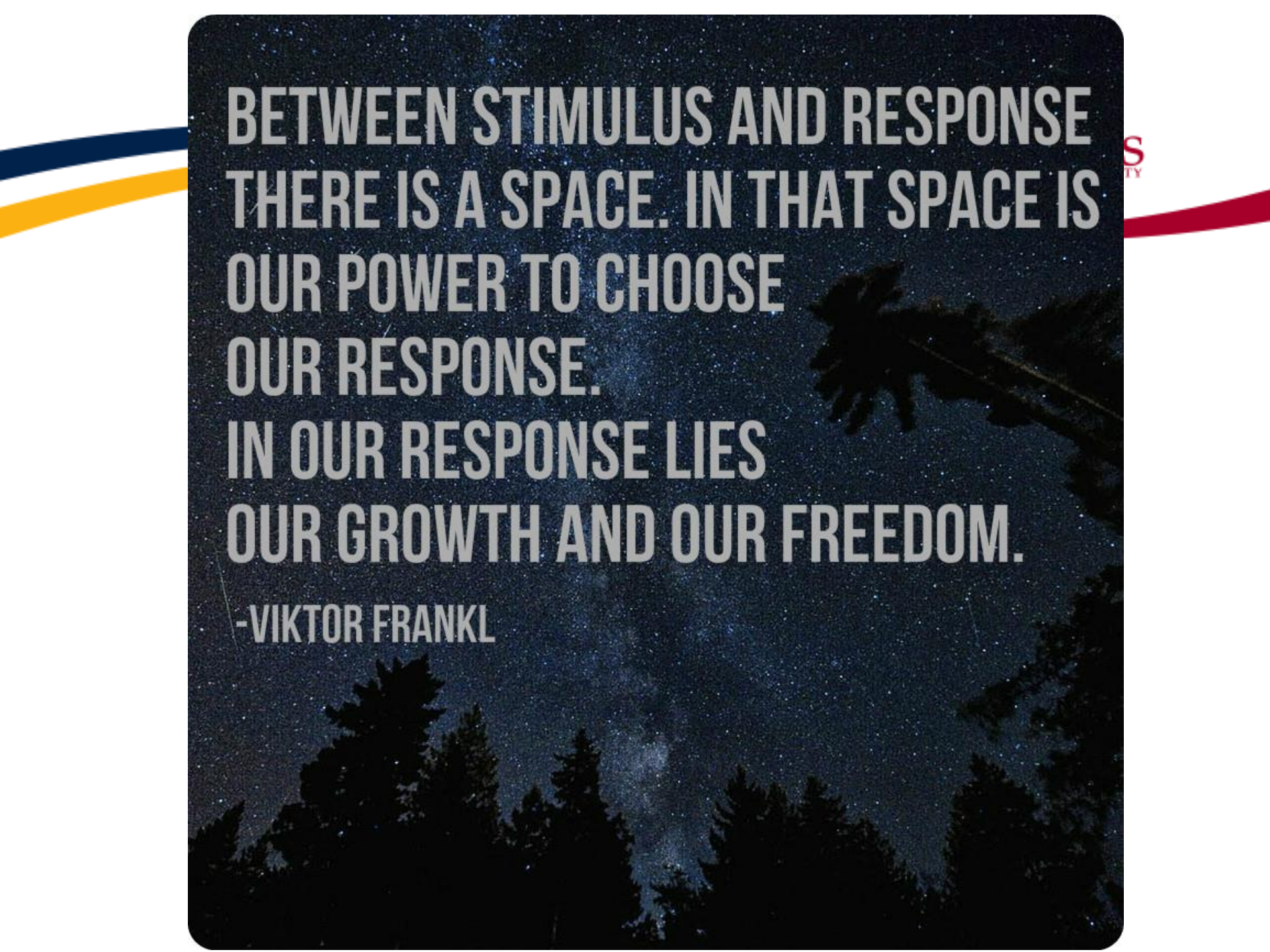


- Turn to a partner and share a recent, vivid, specific event that caused stress, anxiety or counterproductive thinking?
- Let's listen and define:
 - The trigger
 - The thought(s)
 - The reaction(s)

Discussion



- Why is “TTR” or building self-awareness important? How might it be helpful?



**BETWEEN STIMULUS AND RESPONSE
THERE IS A SPACE. IN THAT SPACE IS
OUR POWER TO CHOOSE
OUR RESPONSE.**

**IN OUR RESPONSE LIES
OUR GROWTH AND OUR FREEDOM.**

-VIKTOR FRANKL

Q & A



Skill #2: Avoid Thinking Traps



You've worked in your current job for ten months. You get along well with your boss although he has given you feedback for how to improve. You've made a couple of mistakes and are actively improving. Your boss has also given you some great compliments lately on your work. You come in tomorrow morning and read an email sent 15 minutes ago, "I need you to come to my office as soon as you get this." You immediately say to yourself, "I must be in trouble for another mistake."

Common Thinking Traps



- Jumping to Conclusions:
 - Making assumptions without relevant data.
- Personalizing
 - The tendency to always attribute problems to one's own doing
- Externalizing
 - The tendency to always attribute the cause of problems to something or someone else.

Common Thinking Traps



- Overgeneralizing
 - Making “always” and “everything”, “never” and “nothing” explanations about something
- Mind reading
 - Believing you know what others are thinking and then acting accordingly
- Emotional reasoning
 - Drawing conclusions about the world around you based on your current emotional state.

What Thinking Traps do you see?



You've worked in your current job for ten months. You get along well with your boss although he has given you feedback for how to improve. You've made a couple of mistakes and are actively improving. Your boss has also given you some great compliments lately on your work. You come in tomorrow morning and read an email sent 15 minutes ago, "I need you to come to my office as soon as you get this." You immediately say to yourself, "I must be in trouble for another mistake."

How do you avoid thinking traps?



Think accurately.

Jumping to conclusions: Slow down. Ask, what evidence is your conclusion based on? Are you sure or just guessing?

Overgeneralizing: Is my assessment fair? Is this about someone's character or just a specific event?

How do you avoid thinking traps?



Think accurately.

Personalization: What else contributed to this situation?
What are the external factors?

Externalizing: What role did I play in this situation? How much is me and how much is others?

How do you avoid thinking traps?



Think accurately.

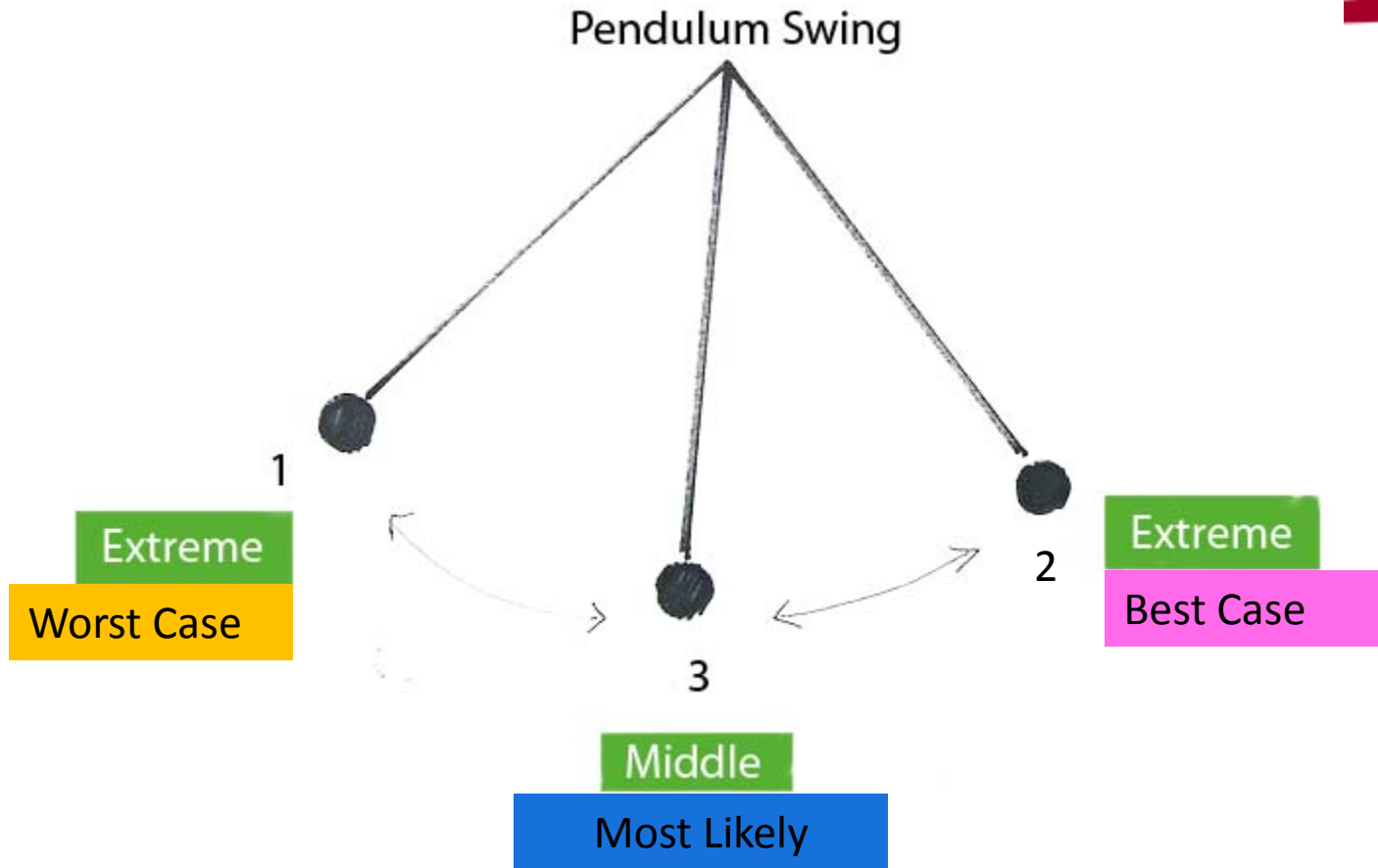
Mind readers: Speak up. Ask questions. Have/did I make my thoughts known? Am I expecting others to know what I want without me telling them?

Emotional reasoning: Separate your feelings from the facts. Is it possible my feelings don't reflect the situation accurately?

Q & A



Skill #3: Shift your perspective



Why is “SYP” important?



- Stops irrational thinking that prevents true contingency planning
- Saves time wasted on scenarios unlikely to happen
- Reduces anxiety
- Increases productivity

Skill #3: Shift your perspective



Your 16-year old has never missed her 11 pm curfew. It is 11:05 pm and you have not heard from her. She is not answering her cell phone, which is odd because she always has it with her.

1. Worst case irrational fear
2. Best case irrational optimism
3. Most likely scenario

Q & A



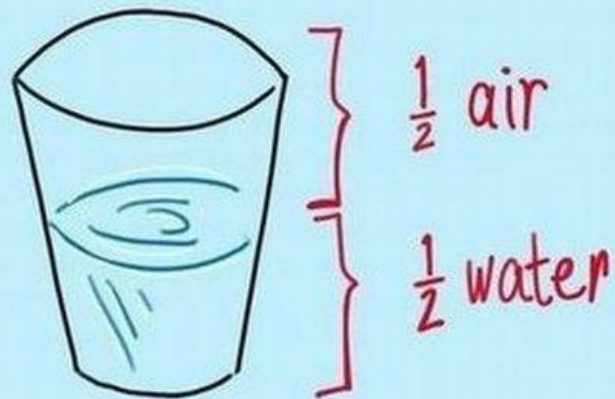
Let's use what we've learned!



- What is coming up that might cause you stress or concern?
- Share with a partner.
- Listen and use what we've learned so far to coach them by identifying:
 1. Their resources / support network
 2. TTR (Trigger, Thoughts, Reactions)
 3. Thinking traps (What thinking traps are they falling into?)
 4. Shift your perspective – let's walk them through the process of shifting their perspective (Worst case, best case, most likely)

Discussion





**technically,
the glass is always
full.**

Write a short story about...



Raise your hand if...



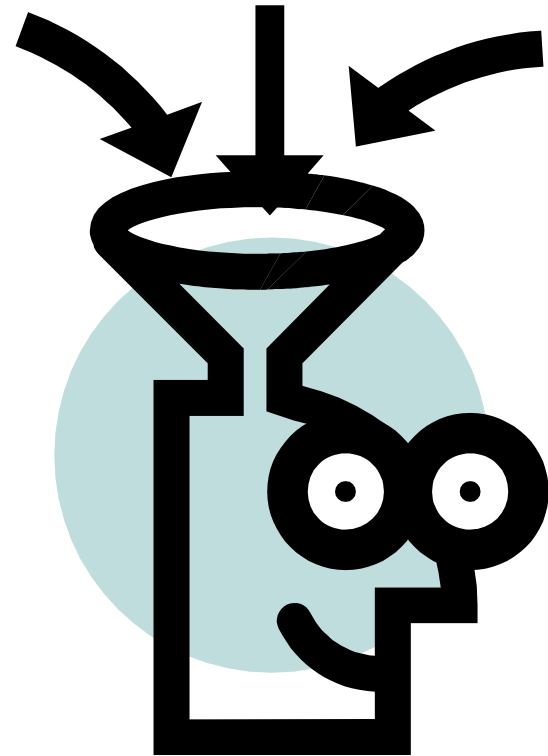
Benefits of optimism



- According to research, optimists:
 - Have better health
 - Live longer healthier lives
 - Have better relationships with others
 - Get more promotions at work
 - Get higher salaries
 - Get better performance ratings
 - Are more liked by co-workers

Benefits of optimism

- So how do I get me some of that?
- Good news: skills-based



Optimistic explanatory style



- How do you explain events that happen to you? (*Seligman – Learned Optimism / Authentic Happiness*)
 - Permanent
 - Personal
 - Pervasive

Permanent

- The explanation endures over time
- Ex: You fall down the stairs:
 - I'm clumsy. (high)
 - I was having a sleepy morning. (low)



Personal

- The explanation pertains to the individual
- Ex. You fall down the stairs:
 - I'm clumsy (high)
 - The stairs were slippery (low)



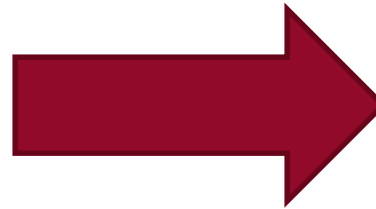
Pervasive

- The explanation transcends space and affects other aspects of life
- Ex. You fall down the stairs:
 - I'm always doing things like that (high)
 - I fell down the basement stairs (low)



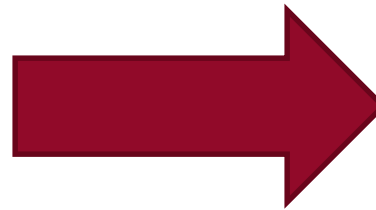
Optimists:

- See **positive** events as
 - Permanent
 - Personal
 - Pervasive
- See negative events as:
 - Temporary
 - Not personal
 - Isolated



Pessimists:

- See **negative** events as
 - Permanent
 - Personal
 - Pervasive
- See positive events as:
 - Temporary
 - Not personal
 - Isolated



Optimistic thinking skills



- Self-talk: ABC(DE)
- A = Activating Event
 - The bad thing that happened
- B = Beliefs
 - What do you believe to be true about the bad thing that happened?
- C = Consequences
 - What happens as a result of (B)?

Example



- A = I didn't get the job
- B = I messed up in the interview. I said all the wrong things. I'm no good at interviews.
- C = I feel horrible and stop applying for jobs at that company.

- How helpful is that?

- D = Disputation
 - What evidence do you have for your Belief?
 - What are some alternatives to your Belief?
 - What are the implications, even if your original Belief is correct?
 - What is the usefulness of holding onto that original Belief?

Applying D & E



- Review B: I messed up in the interview. I said all the wrong things. I'm no good at interviews.
 - Evidence?
 - Alternatives?
 - Implications?
 - Usefulness?
- E = Energization – moving on with better thoughts and feelings, and possibly a plan

Q & A



AIM

- Attention
- Interpretation
- Memory



Attention



Interpretation

First that jerk cut me off in traffic, then he stole my parking space, and THEN his stupid car got paint on my key!



som^{ee}cards
user card

Memory



BONUS: Ladder of Inference (Chris Argyris)



Queen's
UNIVERSITY

Actions: I take actions based on my conclusions.

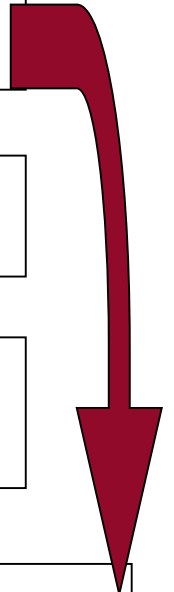
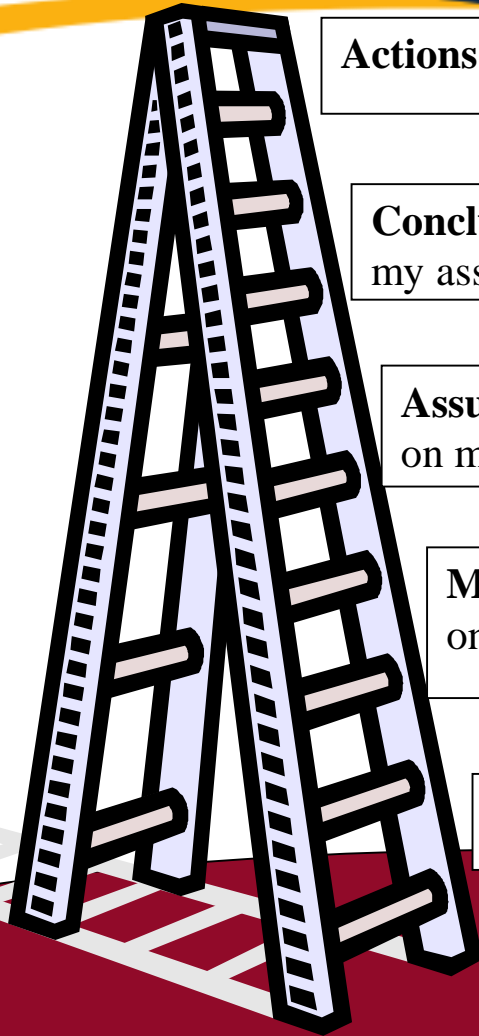
Conclusions: I draw “obvious” conclusions from my assumptions.

Assumptions: I make “logical guesses” based on my meanings.

Meanings: I add meanings to the data based on cultural and personal experiences.

Selection: I select “data” from what I observe.

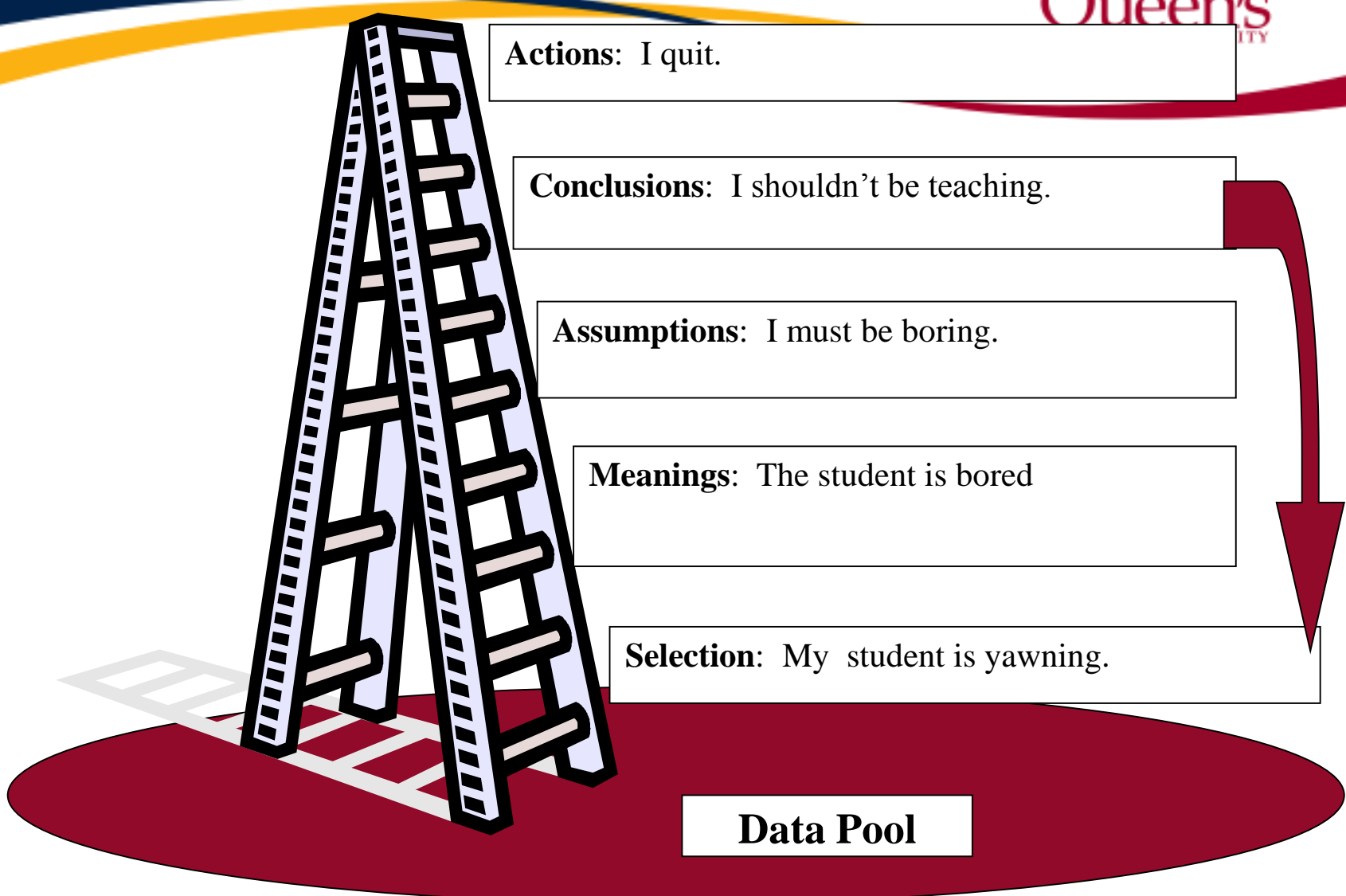
Data Pool



Ladder of Inference v.1



Queen's
UNIVERSITY



Actions: I quit.

Conclusions: I shouldn't be teaching.

Assumptions: I must be boring.

Meanings: The student is bored

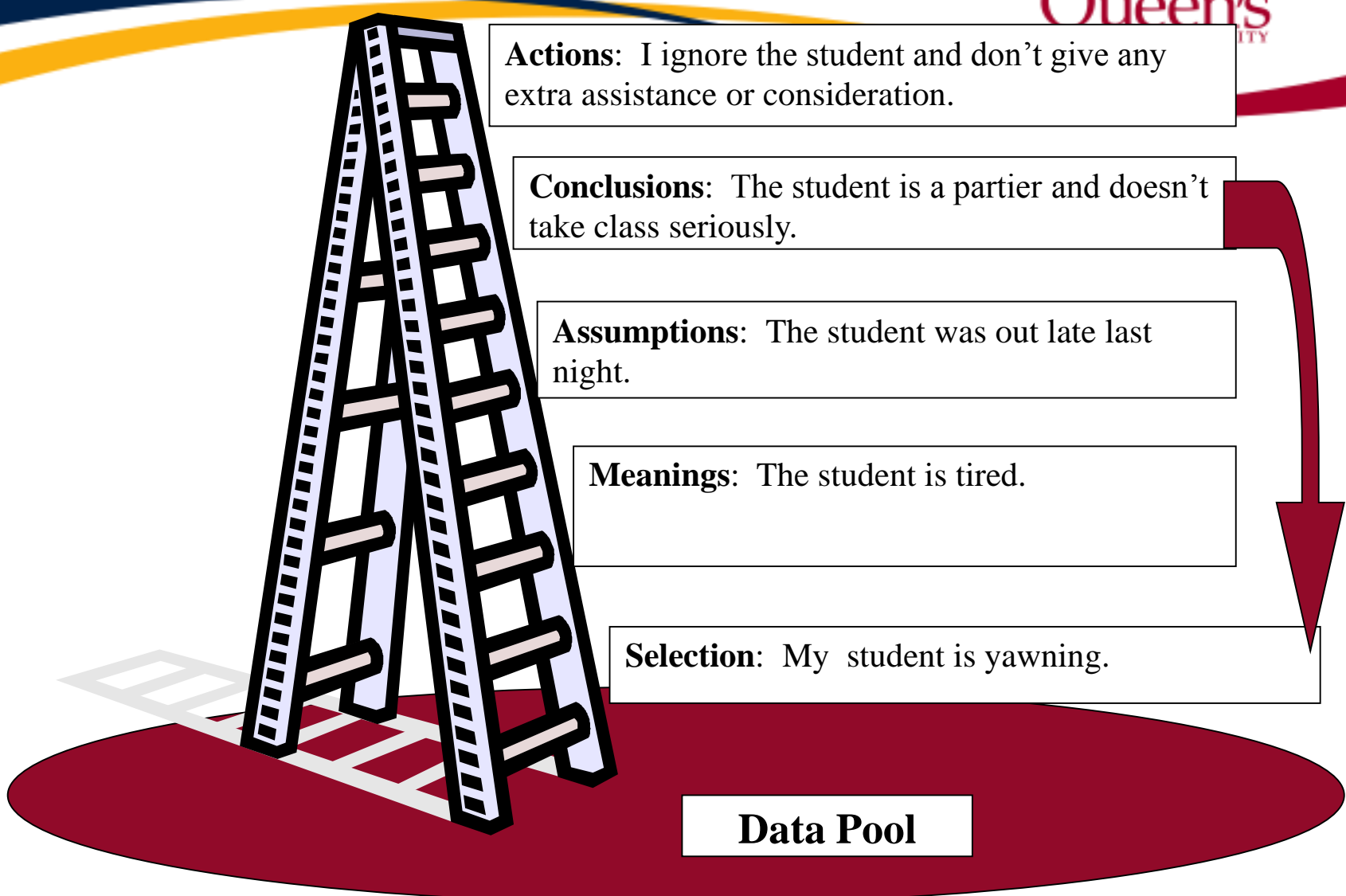
Selection: My student is yawning.

Data Pool

Ladder of Inference v.2



Queen's
UNIVERSITY



Actions: I ignore the student and don't give any extra assistance or consideration.

Conclusions: The student is a partier and doesn't take class seriously.

Assumptions: The student was out late last night.

Meanings: The student is tired.

Selection: My student is yawning.

Data Pool

Ladder of Inference v.3



Queen's
UNIVERSITY

Actions: I offer the student extra consideration and assistance.

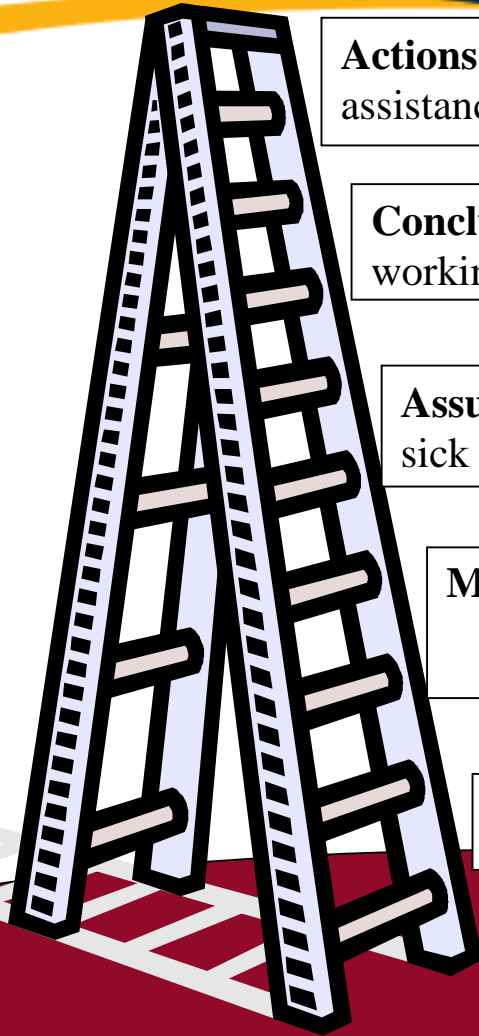
Conclusions: The student is a single parent and working really hard to balance priorities.

Assumptions: The student was up late with a sick child.

Meanings: The student is tired.

Selection: My student is yawning.

Data Pool



Ladder of Inference – practice



Queen's

Actions: “I’m just going to produce the report myself from now on and not talk with Anne anymore”

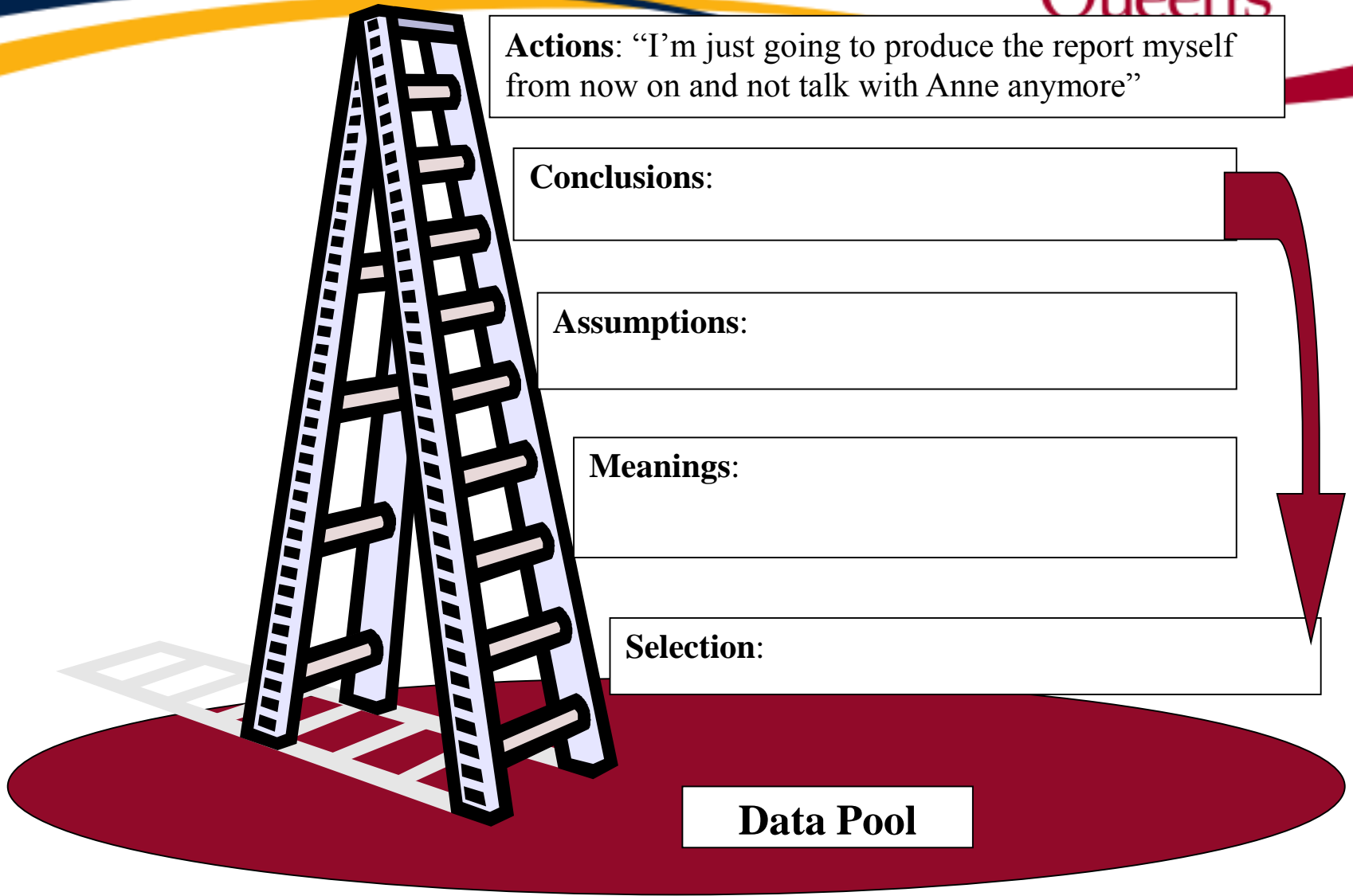
Conclusions:

Assumptions:

Meanings:

Selection:

Data Pool



Broken and faulty ladders – how to fix?

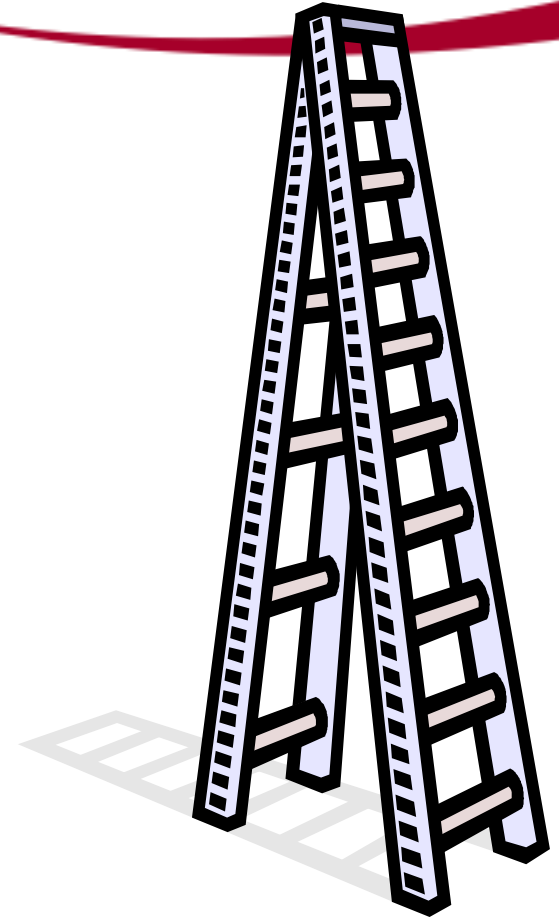


S
TY



Ladder of Inference

- Ask questions to examine and highlight
 - The rationale behind actions
 - The validity of assumptions
 - The accuracy of attributed meanings
 - The selection of the original data
 - The pattern that you see
 - “being right”
- Note: this is MY story – I can change it
- Discussion – how does this help?



Overall

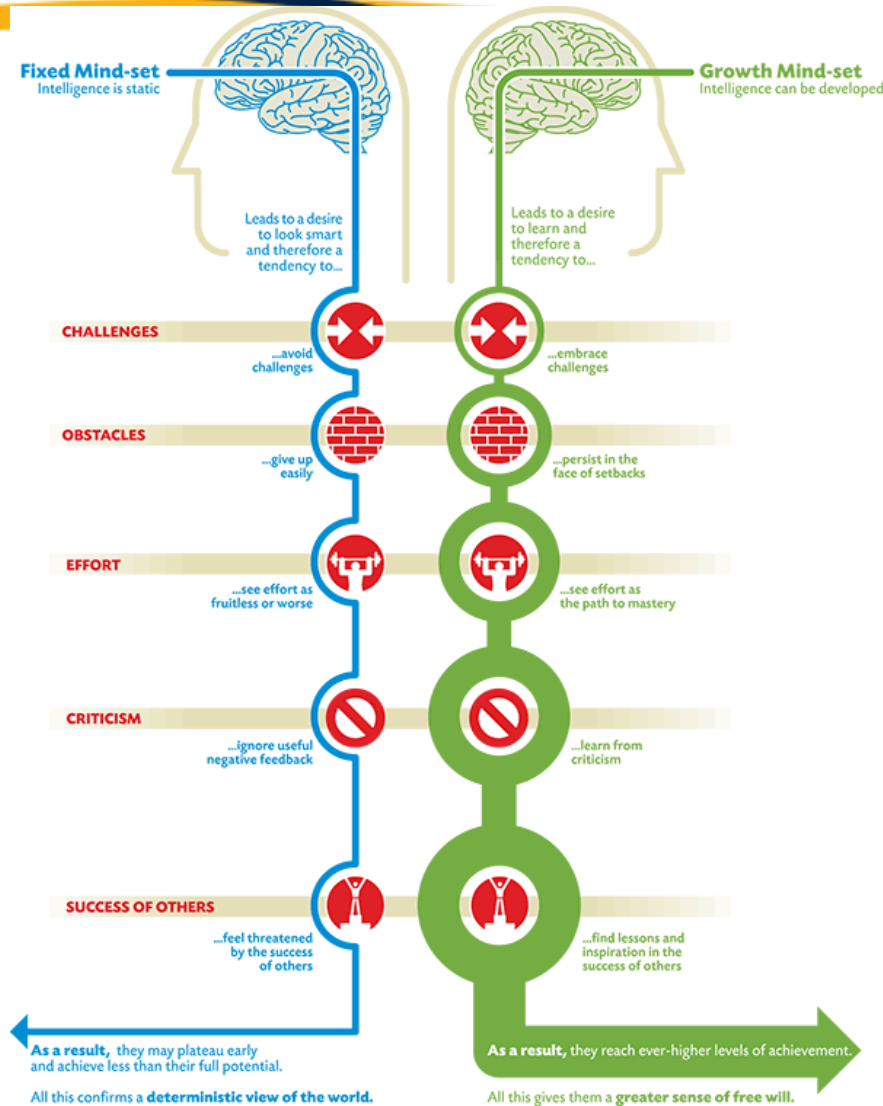
- Practice Resilience
 - TTR
 - Avoid / Dispute thinking traps
 - Swing the pendulum
- Practice Optimism
 - Good things are everywhere all the time
 - Bad things are isolated and temporary
- Practice AIM
 - Pay attention to the good things
 - Most charitable interpretation
 - Choose what you want to remember
- You're not alone – connect with others



Growth mindset (Carol Dweck)

Fixed mindset:

- Avoids challenges
- Gives up easily
- Less effort – means I'm dumb
- Does not take criticism well
- Threatened by the success of others



Growth mindset:

- Embraces challenges
- Persists
- Puts in effort to get to mastery
- Learns from criticism
- Encouraged by the success of others

Discussion

