



The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly: Giving and Receiving Feedback Constructively

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What is your experience?

Think of a **memorable** performance feedback experience.

- What was it?
- When was it?
- What made it memorable?

Share with a partner (3 minutes each)

A (somewhat) universal truth . . .

- When we give feedback, we notice the receiver isn't good at receiving it.
- When we receive feedback, we notice the giver isn't good at giving it.



How are we doing in the feedback department?

According to a 2011 survey:

- 36% of managers complete appraisals thoroughly and on time
- 55% of employees said their most recent review was unfair or inaccurate
- 25% said they dread performance appraisals more than anything else in their working lives

Source: Globoforce.com

WHAT MAKES FEEDBACK CONVERSATIONS CHALLENGING?



We notice different things

- We spend as little of our mental energy as we have to in order to get the job done.
- We take shortcuts and make assumptions about each other



We create different stories

I talked to Jeff about his performance



Anita talked to me about my performance



Each of us is the star of our own life

- 93% of American drivers rate themselves as better than average
- Half of adults admit to texting while driving



Instructions for small group activity

1. Form a small group of 6-8 people and select one person to act as recorder.
2. Take turns describing what you see in the photo on the next screen. Do this quickly—you don't have to reach agreement.
3. The recorder should write down all the different observations the people in your group make. Number your list.

What do you see happening?



How we make meaning

- **Assumptions** are things we take for granted. Assumptions are part of our system of beliefs, and they can be true or false.
- Example: *Email always gets delivered correctly.*

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How we make meaning

- **Inferences** are conclusions we reach about something we don't know based on things we do know (or think we know). They can be true or false.
- Example: *If your colleague says that he will send you an email by 8:30 am and at 8:30 am it's not in your inbox, you might infer that your colleague did not keep his word.*

How we make meaning

- **Attributions** are special kinds of inferences about people's motives. They can be true or false.
- Example: *If you inferred that your colleague did not keep his word, then you might attribute to him that he was lazy, didn't care about the project, or wanted you to fail.*

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How we make meaning

- **Directly observable data** is sensory information (what you can see, hear, touch, etc.) that has no extra meaning added. It is the way a video or audio device might record an event.

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Two people, two interpretations

	Person One	Person Two
Observable Information	You ask your colleague to send you the email by 8:30 a.m. and it did not arrive.	You ask your colleague to send you the email by 8:30 a.m. and it did not arrive.
Assumption	Email accurately <i>addressed is delivered immediately</i> and accurately.	Email accurately addressed can be delayed or misdelivered.
Inference	My colleague didn't keep his word.	My colleague's email didn't get through.
Attribution	My colleague doesn't care about this project.	

Small group activity, part 2:

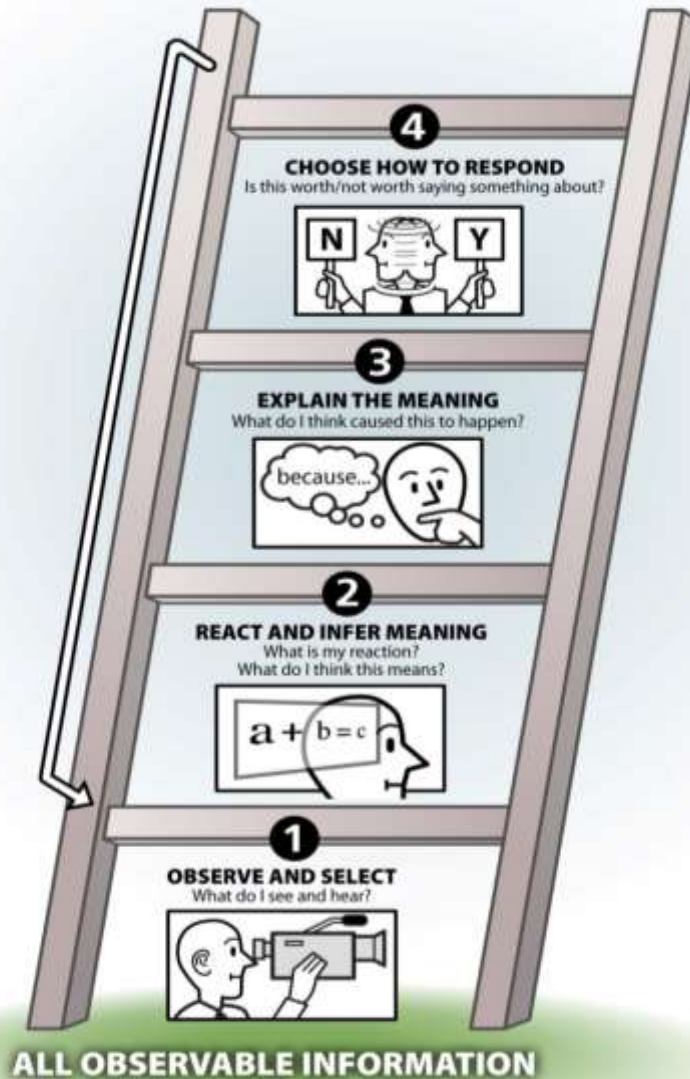
1. Return with your group to the list of observations you made about the photo.
2. Together, go through the list and mark each item as **DO** (directly observable) or **A** (assumption, inference, or attribution).
3. Count the number of items that are directly observable and divide by total to get percentage.

We All Go Up the Ladder

- Assumptions
- Inferences
- Attributions



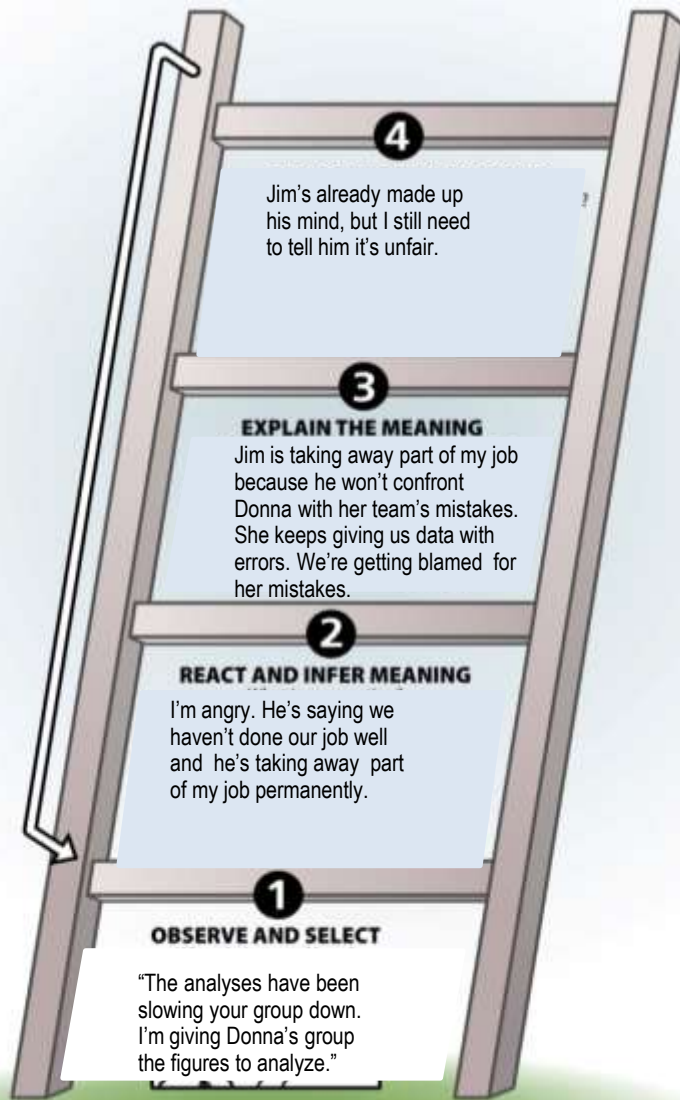
Ladder of Inference



Jim says to Hank:

- “Hank, your group’s been working really hard and doing good work, but the analyses have been slowing your group down. I’m giving Donna’s group the figures to analyze. You won’t need to do it.”

Hank's Ladder of Inference



ALL OBSERVABLE INFORMATION

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**“LOWERING YOUR
LADDER” IS THE
FIRST STEP**



Giving and receiving feedback effectively starts with what's in your head . . .



Before anything comes out your mouth



When we have feedback to share, we often have this mindset:

I understand, you don't. I'm right, you're wrong.
I will win.

NO.
You're wrong
so just sit there
in your wrongness
and be wrong.

Shifting our mindset is the first step:

I understand some things. So do you.
Let's learn and move forward together.



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You'll be on safer footing if you . . .

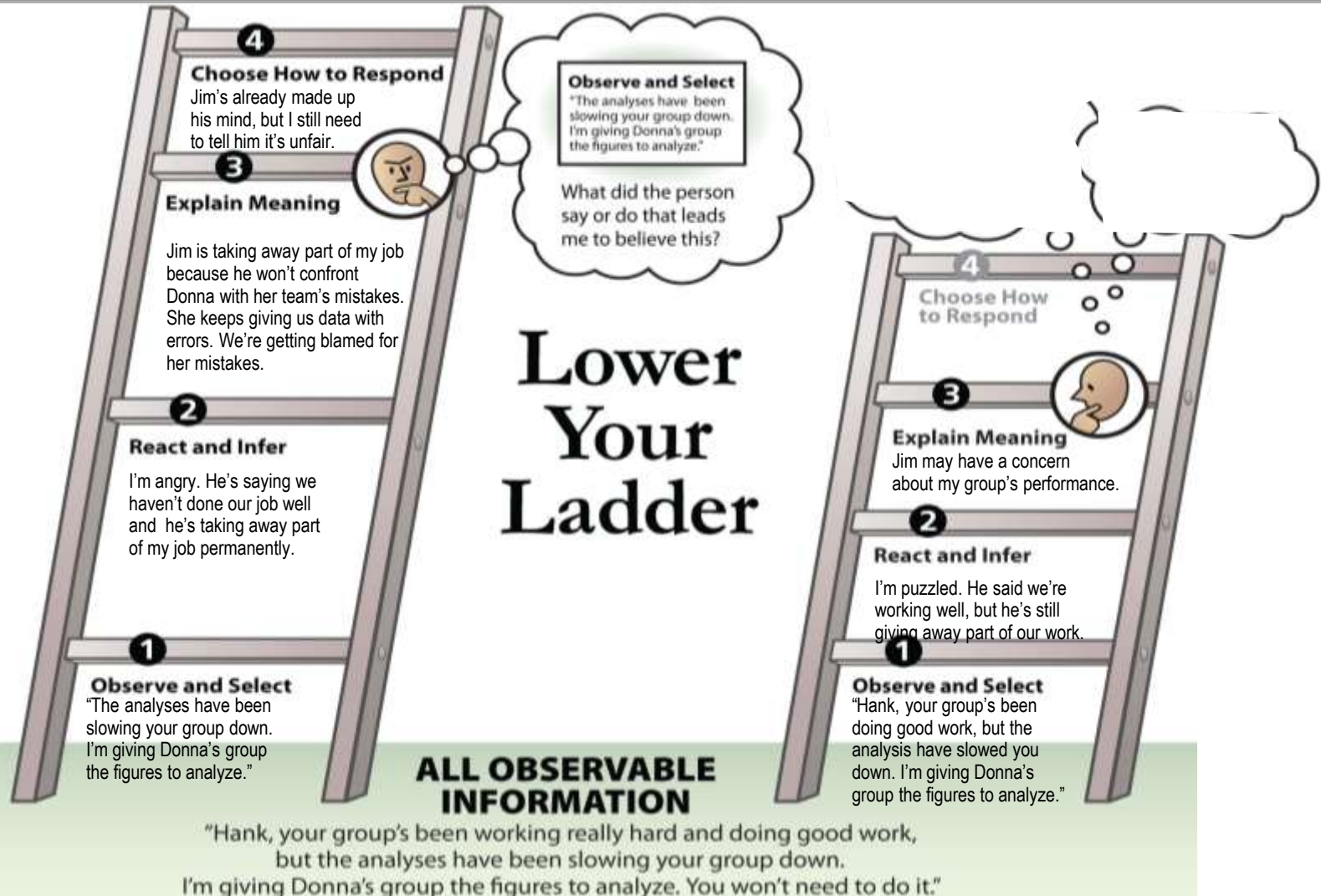
Aim for this



Instead of this



Ladder of Inference – Jim & Hank



Basic formula to “lower your ladder”

- Test observation
 - What I saw was...Did I miss something?
- Test meaning
 - I’m thinking...What do you think?



DON'T FORGET THE BASICS



**Every good
conversation
starts with
good listening.**

44 NO ONE FEELS MORE ALONE

For those who feel like this is the only way to live

There is a way to live that is not like this

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45 NO ONE FEELS MORE ALONE

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Listen

What you need to do is...



What do you think would help you improve?



Constructive Feedback

You never tell me anything!



If we communicated more often I'd be better prepared.



Be Specific

You're always missing deadlines



Provide project timelines and progress reports



Be specific, not generic

- “Be more confident.”



What was heard...

Give the impression that you know things even if you don't.

What was meant...

Have the confidence to say you don't know when you don't know.

Explain your reasoning and intent

Example: Did you return Citizen X's call yet?

The reason I am asking is because I just learned some new information from the Finance Director that might help you prepare.

Combine advocacy and inquiry

Advocacy

- I'd like to discuss . . .
- What I saw happening was . . .
- I think it would be a good idea if we . . .
- I suggest we . . .

Inquiry

- Are there other things you would like to talk about?
- Did I miss something?
- What do you think?
- Do you see things differently?

Should I raise this at all?



- How important is this problem to the organization?
- How long has the problem existed?
- What will happen if the problem is not solved?
- What is the likelihood that the problem will go away on its own?

PEER CONSULTATION



Time for peer coaching and support!

Form groups of three.

Each person shares:

- A specific conversation you are planning to have (can be as giver or receiver)
- Why it's important
- What you are concerned about and/or where you are feeling stuck

The peer coach's job is to:

- Actively listen!
- Paraphrase and summarize to check for understanding
- Ask open-ended questions
- Hold judgment—don't offer advice unless asked



Group Debrief

- Insights?
- Patterns of when/where we get stuck?
- Key Learnings
 - From your own situation
 - From others' situations
- What one thing from this session you can take away and start using?

Additional Resources

- *Smart Leaders, Smarter Teams: How You and Your Team Get Unstuck to Get Results* by Roger Schwarz (Jossey-Bass, 2013).
- *Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well* by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen (Penguin, 2014).
- *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most* by Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen (Penguin, 1999).