Ladder of Inference Tips and Tools

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The Ladder of Inference (LOI) is a useful tool at any of stage of your thinking process. Below are a few tips and heuristics for using LOI to help in making objective and reasoned evaluations and judgments.

Tip 1
Consider the following heuristic:

1. Stop! Take some time to consider your reasoning.

2. Identify where on the ladder you are. Are you:
    - Selecting your data or reality?
    - Interpreting what it means?
    - Making or testing assumptions?
    - Forming or testing conclusions?
    - Deciding what to do and why?

3. From your current "rung", analyze your reasoning by working back down the ladder. This will help you trace the facts and reality that you are actually working with.

4. At each stage, ask yourself WHAT you are thinking and WHY. As you analyze each step, you may need to adjust your reasoning. For example you may need to change some assumption or extend the field of data you have selected.

5. The following questions may help you work your way back down the ladder:
    - Is this the "right" conclusion?
    - Why am I making these particular assumptions?
    - What data have I chosen to use and why? Have I selected data rigorously?
    - Is this really based on all the facts? Have I selected broadly enough? ? Are there other facts I should consider?
    - Why have I chosen this course of action? Are there other actions I should have considered?
    - What beliefs lead to that action? Was it well-founded?

Tip 2
Watch for ladder stages that you rush through. For example, do you tend to make assumptions too easily, or quickly select a subset of data?

Tip 3
Try explaining your reasoning to a colleague or friend. This will help you check that your argument is sound. If you are challenging someone else's conclusions, it is especially important to be able to explain your reasoning.

Minimizing Implicit or Unconscious Bias

PROFESSIONAL ACTION PLAN

An action I will take to minimize my own unconscious bias filtering is:

What will help my taking action? What will I do to strengthen these actions?

What will interrupt my taking action? What will I do to address these interruptions?

My action to assist colleagues in learning about minimizing unconscious bias is:

What will help me take this action?

What will interrupt my taking this action? What will I do to address these interruptions?

Who may be an ally to me?