

What We Have Here is a Failure to Communicate: Introduction to Dialogue



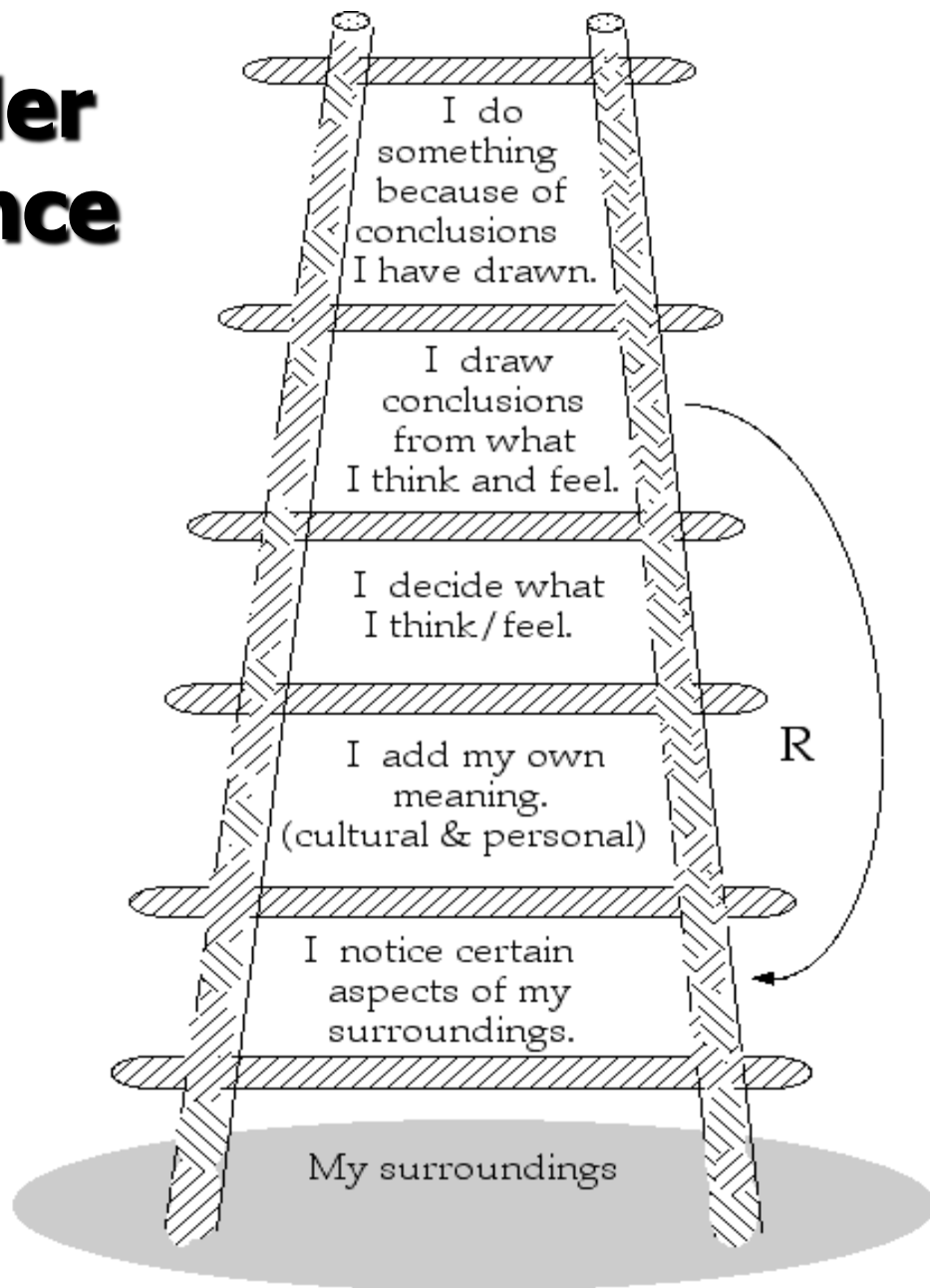
Mental Models

- Self-generating beliefs which result from interpretations and conclusions based on past observations and experiences.

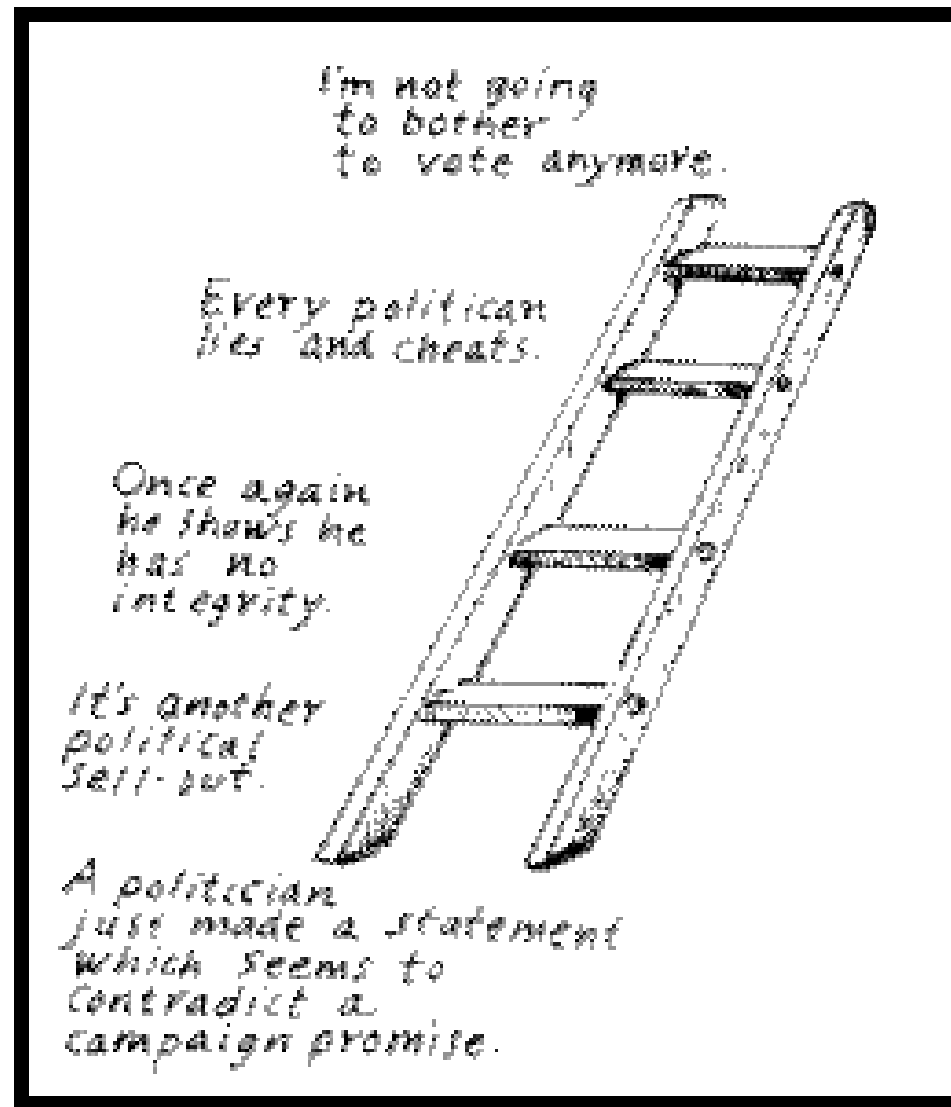
Mental models are the product of something known as...



The Ladder of Inference



Example: Ladder of Inference



Here's another wrinkle:

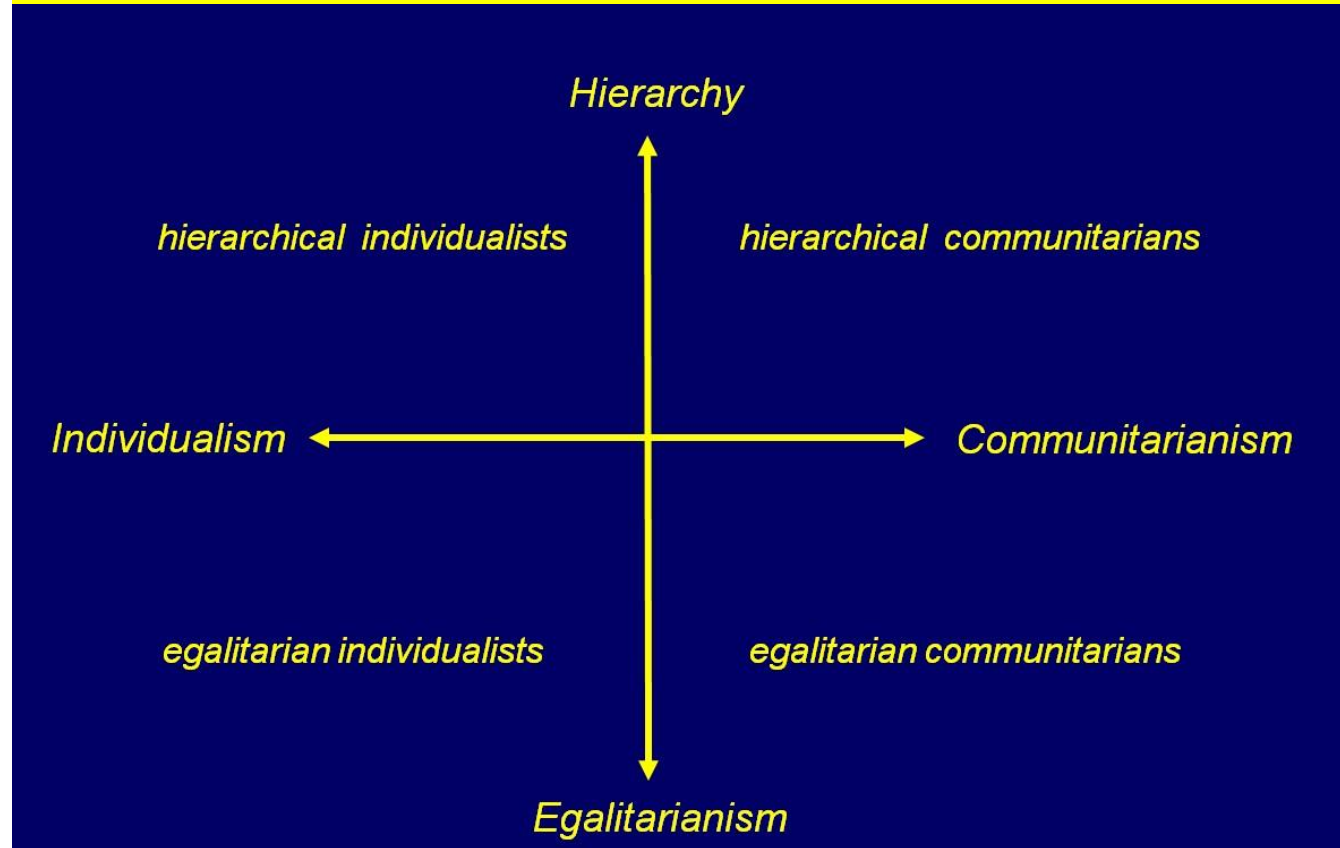
Cultural Cognition

Our brains are wired to ignore information we don't want to hear. This subconscious process reinforces our preexisting beliefs.

- Considering the source – cultural signals
- Selective listening – choosing our media diet
- Choosing our friends
- Filtering – cognitive filters deflect information that threatens our worldview
- Last message in, first message out



Cultural Cognition & Four World Views

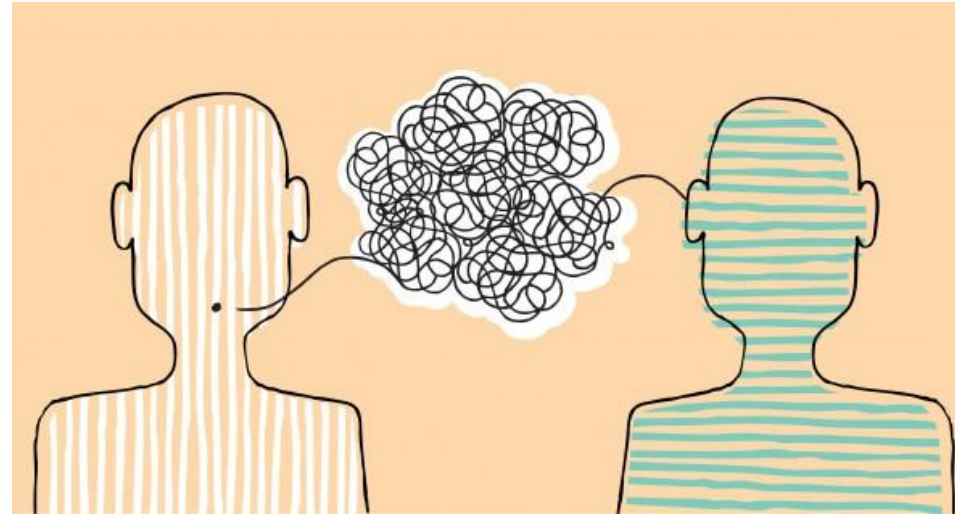


The closer the source of information is to our own quadrant the more likely we are to accept their message, regardless of the facts

- Source: Yale Law School Cultural Cognition Project www.culturalcognition.net

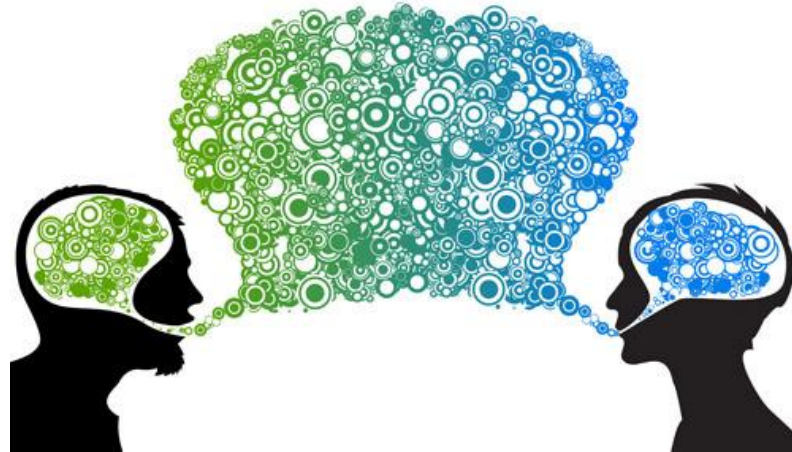
Impact on Communication

- Conflict can arise when we treat our assumptions as self-evident facts.
- We aren't always aware of where our own assumptions and conclusions are coming from.
- Ladders of inference and cultural cognition are at play pretty much all the time.
- Not being aware of this can close opportunities to reflect on and/or challenge our own thinking, as well as to hear, understand and respond effectively to what others are thinking and saying.



Dialogue – how it can help

- Dialogue: A conversation with a “center and no sides” used for *understanding*, not necessarily *agreement*



- Allows us to explore our own assumptions (reveal our own “ladders”).
- Allows us to understand the assumptions of others (understand others’ “ladders”).

Dialogue Practices

- **Listening** - listening to understand, not to respond or "reload"
- **Respecting** others' views - not wanting to convince others of the "rightness" of our perspective or interpretation
- **Speaking** your truth & encouraging others to do the same -surfacing our assumptions and way of seeing things, revealing our and others' mental models
- **Suspending** certainties - not being so staked into our own viewpoint that we cannot see others

Judgment → Inquiry
Defensiveness → Self-reflection
Conflict → Mutual exploration

Communication can be improved by:

1. Becoming more aware of our own thinking and assumptions . (Reflection)
2. Making our thinking and assumptions more visible to others. (Advocacy)
3. Inquiring into others' thinking and assumptions. (Inquiry)

