Critical Thinking Skills 3: Inquiry and Listening



Agenda



- Recap
- Conflicting Ladders of Inference
- The value of mindfulness
- Examples
- Inquiry and listening
- Practice

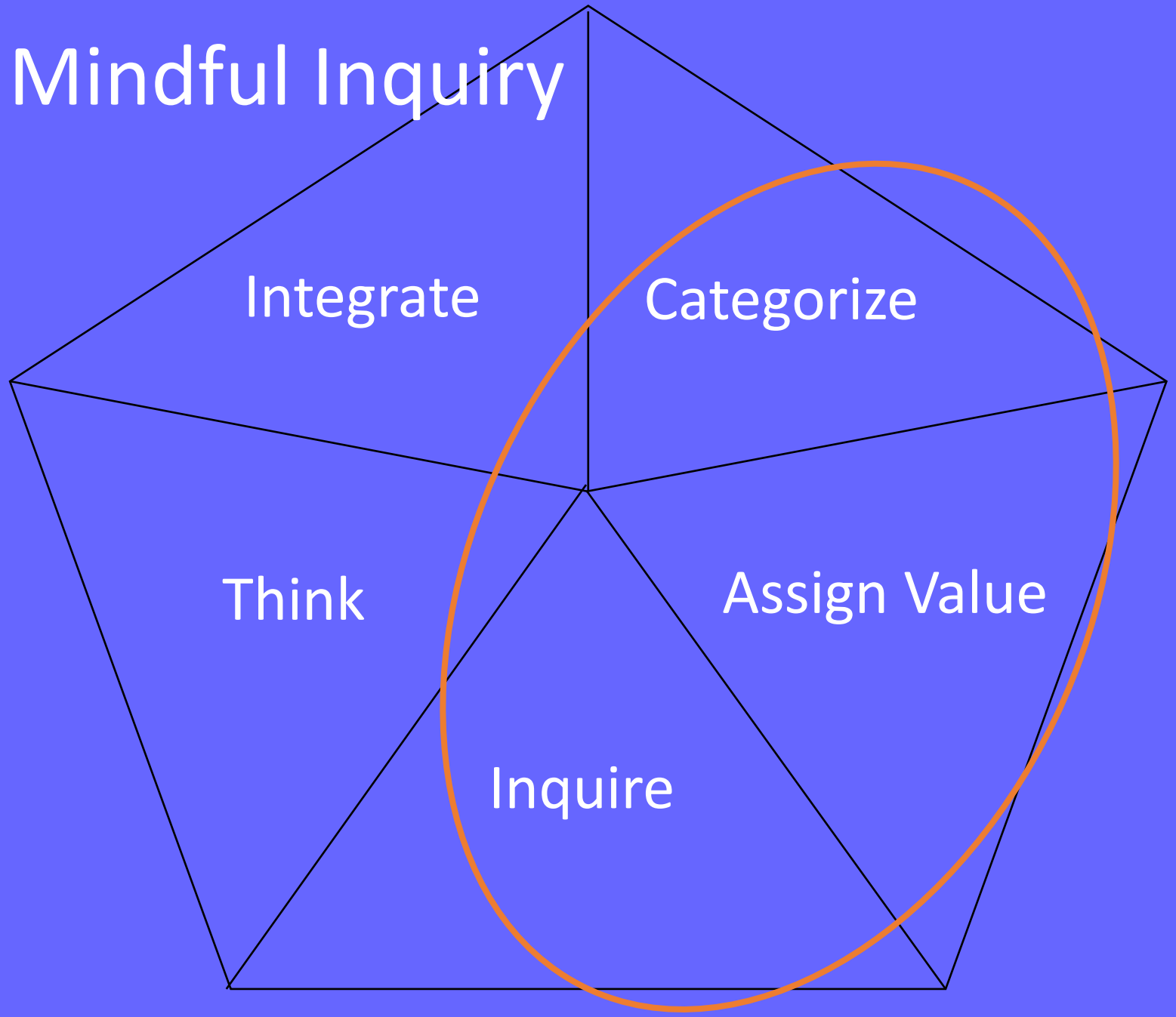
Recap



- We rarely question the underlying sources of our assumptions, attachments, values and perceptions.
- The Ladder of Inference is a tool for discovering the foundations of our own and others' beliefs and actions.
- Inquiry using the Ladder of Inference can reveal openings for new ways forward.

Applying Mindful Inquiry





What's going on in a conflict or dilemma?



- In a difficult situation each side may have zoomed up their own Ladder of Inference.
- Emotional undertones may lead to skewed perceptions.
- Unwitting bias provokes hurt or angry reactions, and feeling unheard.
- Shared communication is *not* happening. Trust and respect are reduced.



What's going on in a conflict or dilemma?



Differing Ladders of Inference
How do YOU react?

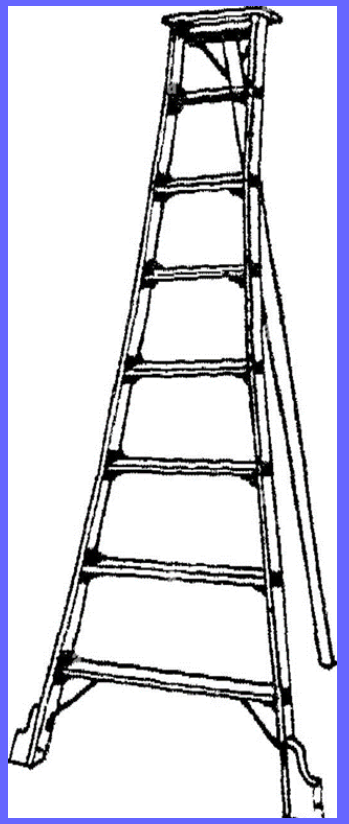
- Judge and dismiss
- Start an argument
- Withdraw
- Demonstrate your own superior reasoning
- Demonstrate the other's faulty reasoning



Likely Results



- Frustration
- Resentment
- Disengagement
- Little progress or trust
- Bias reinforcement
- Stalemate



What's Another Way?



Accept, Acknowledge, Inquire

- A way to gently slide down the Ladder
- The "aikido approach" - bend *towards* the other
- Accept fully and express interest
- The process builds trust



Example: US and China on AI Risks





- “What if you don’t think the first thing you have to do about anything is have a position on it?
- What if you don’t pick and choose ahead of time, leading with the usual from your trusty toolkit?”

Joan Sutherland, Vimalakirti text

Self-Inquiry – What's *My* Part?



7	Take Action
6	Assumptions
5	Conclusions
4	Judgments
3	Sort & Add Meaning
2	Select Perceptions
1	Observable Data

- What is my part in creating the situation as I see it?
- What assumptions and judgments am I operating from?
- How attached am I to my beliefs?
- Did I set up a wall to keep out new input?
- Where do my views of this come from?
- What stood were the most important things I observed?
- Does this situation remind me of another one?



With Mindful Inquiry
Conflicts Become Pots of Gold



me



Everyday Interactions

them

Self-Inquiry



Conflicts
Decisions
Relationships



Querying the Other



Purpose

- To understand their point of view
- To create common ground for solving problems together
- To improve critical thinking

A Challenge

- It may be the last thing you want to do!
- But it’s an opportunity to show respect and apply mindfulness
- Ultimately it will improve outcomes

What Do We Inquire Into?



- What data was selected and why? What was left out?
- Are their “facts” verifiable?
- Do you understand the meaning and values they’ve added to their “facts?”
- Are their conclusions and assumptions clear to you?
- How attached are they? Look and try to sense any emotional “zingers.” Ask about them.

Slow down and ask before drawing conclusions!



How Do We Inquire?



Ask open-ended questions in a welcoming way, such as:

- Hold on, could we talk about this?
- I need to think about this.
- It sounds like…is that right?
- Can you say more about that?
- I'm not following you; could you explain XYZ again?
- How did you come to focus on XYZ in particular?
- Why now?
- It sounds like you feel strongly about this. Could you say more?

Accept whatever they say as their truth. Ask for more if need be.
Be ready to be surprised!

- Take Action
- Assumptions
- Conclusions
- Judgments
- Sort & Add Meaning
- Select Perceptions
- Observable Data

Listening Skills Questionnaire



	Listening Behavior	Always (A), Sometimes (S) or Never (N)
1.	I allow speakers to complete sentences before I speak.	
2.	I make sure I understand the other person's point of view before I respond.	
3.	I listen for the speaker's important points.	
4.	I try to understand the speaker's feelings.	
5.	I wait and visualize my response before I speak.	
6.	I give my full attention to the speaker without multitasking.	
7.	I am in control, relaxed, and calm when listening.	
8.	I use supportive responses such as yes, really, I see.	
9.	If I'm not sure of the speaker's message, I repeat back their main points and ask if I got it right.	
10.	I listen with an open mind.	
11.	I listen even if the other person is not interesting.	
12.	I listen even if the other person is a moron.	
13.	I look directly at the person speaking.	
14.	I am patient when I listen.	
15.	I ask questions to be sure I understand the speaker.	
16.	I do not allow distractions to bother me when I listen.	

Listening Skills



- Interpersonal space.
- Body posture & subtle mimicking.
- Eye contact?
- Affirming expressions and gestures, smile and nod.
- Repeat back what you heard.
- Keep the focus on them, don’t add your own content.



What Does Deep Listening Involve?



"Good listening involves two things:

1. Make sure they say everything they wanted to say,
2. Mirror back what they said, letting them know you understand."

Tara Brach, Trusting the Gold



<u>Qualities of Good Listening</u>

- Quiet your judging voice.
- Listen all the way to the end.
- Show you're interested and engaged.
- Don't interrupt or give answers.



Active Listening



Extenders:

- *Repeat a phrase or sentence.*
- *“Really?”*
- *Pause quietly.*
- *Inquire and wait.*
- *Don’t jump in with comparison or advice.*
- *“I’m confused about ___. Could you say more?”*
- *Summarize: “so what I’m hearing you saying is ___. Is that right?”*

Being fully heard is a powerful extender. Many times that’s all the other person wants.

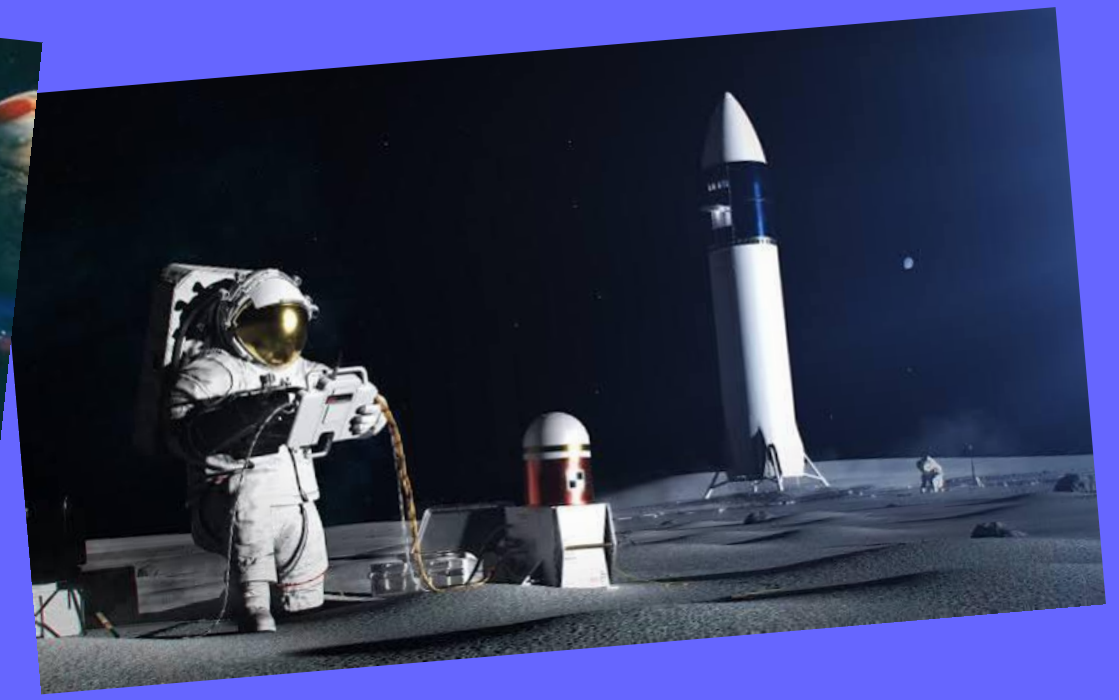
Example: Moving our Collections?



- How did I do as a “listener?”
- Did I assume anything without checking with Tim?
- Did I jump to conclusions I could have checked?
- What could I have asked that might have been helpful???

Case Example: NASA Plans





Summary: Inquiry and Listening



- Careful inquiry and listening are the difference between unresolved arguments and helpful cooperation.
- Start by showing interest in the other person's viewpoint (even when you don't want to!)
- The process builds trust.
- Work to understand the other first, then share your views as appropriate.
- Start with yourself: "telling on yourself" is a powerful tool.