

Conflict: Invalid Assumptions

Negative Attribution Theory:

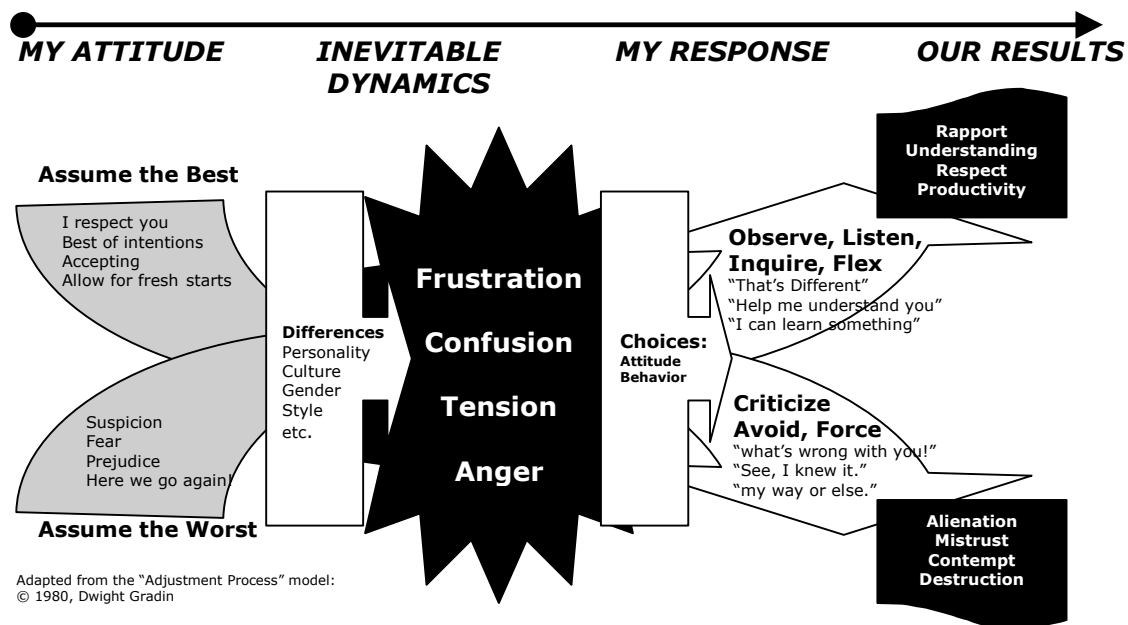
When you do something that I don't understand, don't like, or would have done differently, I tend to attribute to you a negative motivation or intent... like these:

You're selfish, you're just bossy, that guy's a maniac, she's just jealous, he doesn't care, you're not a team player...

Does this sound familiar? It is human nature to judge another. I am amazed how often I do this to the many people I encounter each day. Yet, there is no more **needless** or **destructive** form of personal conflict than those **we create** by our tendency to slap negative labels on each other (by second-guessing and assuming the worst in one another).

This tendency is a direct result of our **pride** (being wise in my own eyes) and our **failure to think** (intellectual laziness). There is no place for this in any workplace, much less among the people of God.

The model below illustrates how my initial attitude toward a teammate will dictate my response to the inevitable frustrations we will experience when we work together. Why frustration? Because we are different in so many ways. If I form subtle negative assumptions, I'm more likely to respond to differences with criticism. On the other hand, if I assume the best, I'm more likely to pause and listen when I get frustrated.



Romans 14:13

Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, ...noble, ...right, ...pure, ...lovely, ...admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about (dwell on) such things.



POINT OF ACTION:

Having trouble with someone? Pause and make a list of truly praiseworthy traits. Stop judging and seek to understand the other point of view, style or approach. If you must confront or challenge, do it from a perspective of seeking first to understand. Give maturity and wisdom a chance to form in you a more productive response.