

# Soft Skills

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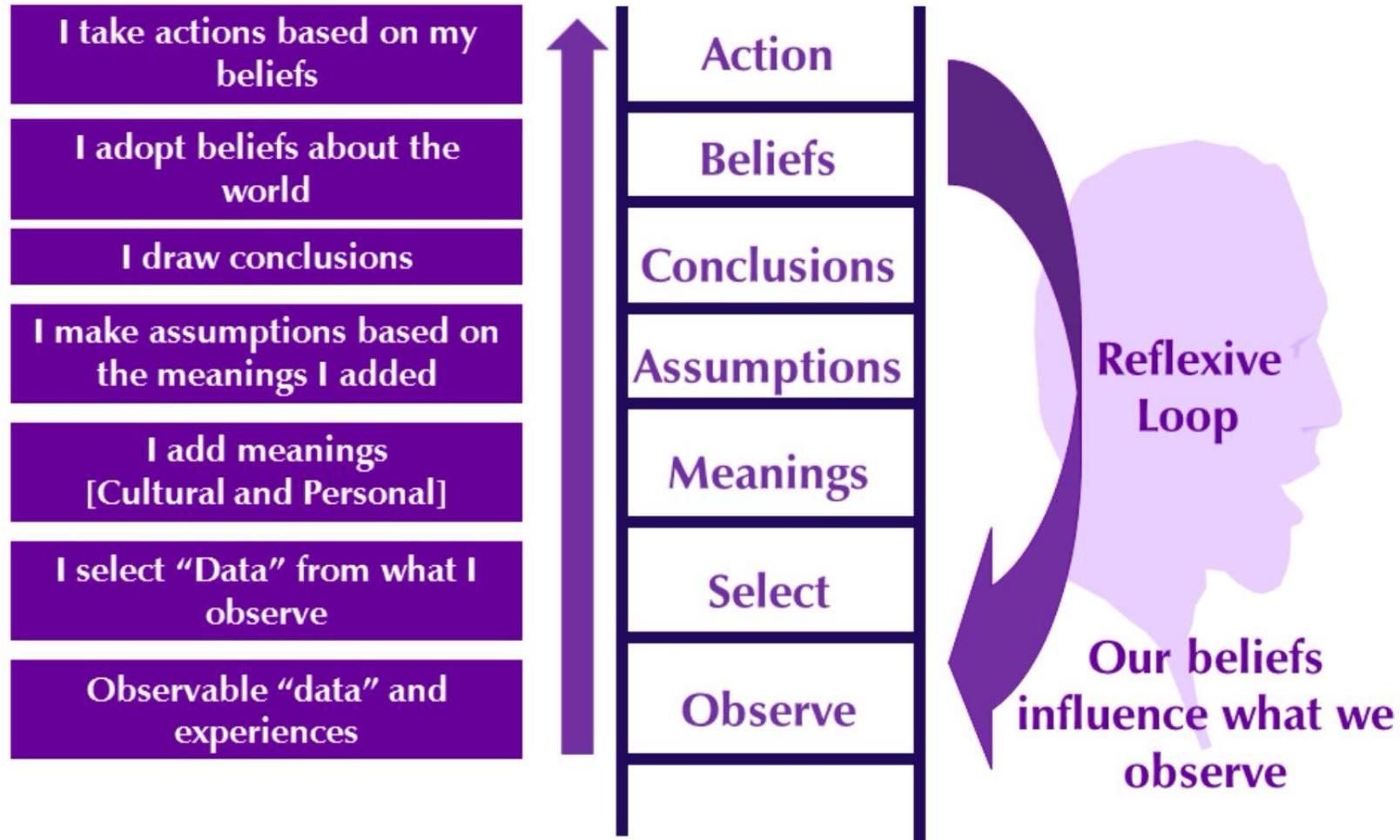
## Defining soft skills

- Adaptability
- Leadership
- Flexibility
- Communication skills
- Problem solving

# What do you bring to the table?

- Life experience
- Education
- Farming experience

# The Ladder of Inference



# Assessing the farm from afar

- How did they find you?
- Initial enrollment data
- Making a call first
- Checking with other service providers
- Assessing social media and web presence

# Initial meetings and establishing trust

- Making sure to introduce yourself
- Finding points of connection
  - Community
  - Personal interests
  - Complimenting an element of the farm operations
- Confidentiality

## Check your assumptions

- Appearances are not everything
- The image a farmer projects is often not reflective of the true state of the business
- Attitude can often be a defense mechanism



# Situational awareness

- What is the state of the farm?
- How is the farmer/s presenting?
- Do people seem hurried/stressed?
- Your arrival
- Body position



# Gender and the farm visit

- Assessing the safety of a solo visit?
- Keeping co-workers informed
- Awkward interactions

# Your personality and how it impacts your work

- Introverted vs. extroverted
- How you perceive the world and how that informs your approach to the farm
- Myers Briggs



# Personal values and judgment

- What values and biases do you bring to the table?
- How do you keep them from getting in the way?
- How do you explain this to a farmer?
- What if the politics of the farmer differ from yours?

# Tolerance for risk

- What is your personal tolerance for risk?
- How do you advise a farmer when you think what they are doing may be very risky?
- Using the numbers to explain
- Don't take it personally when they make a decision that is counter to what you perceive as the best path

# Roles and boundaries

A woman with blonde hair tied back, wearing a light blue t-shirt, stands with her back to the camera in a grassy field. She has her right hand raised to her head, looking out over a vast landscape of rolling green hills and a dense forest in the distance. A wooden fence runs across the field to the right. The scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a clear day.

What boundaries are important to you?  
Personally? Professionally?

# Creating healthy boundaries

- Understanding your role as the planner
- Being clear in your skill set
- Explaining to the farmer where your boundaries are
- Walking away.....

# Generational differences

- Being aware of generational dynamics
- Commonalities between farms
- Framing the interactions within a broader context
- Identifying common issues early on



# Family dynamics

- Getting as much information as possible
- Try not to get in the middle
- Redirect towards the impact on the farm

# The marriage counselor

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- Allowing both partners to be heard
- Clarifying roles
- Allowing for independent work
- Identifying the impacts of disagreement
- Not being afraid to recommend professional help



# When to bring in the Professionals

- Mental health concerns
  - Are counseling services available
  - Trying to eliminate stigma
- Financial woes
  - Mediation
  - Sometimes bringing another person in to the room doesn't help
  - Avoiding lawyers



## Improving your soft skills

- Professional development
- Shadowing
- Reviewing farm interactions with peers