

Attribution Theory

Indiana Department of Workforce Development
Case Management Training



Attribution Theory

The way in which people explain the causes of their own and other people's behavior.

Internal/External

Intentional/Unintentional

Controllable/Uncontrollable

Fundamental Attribution Error (Actor/Observer Bias)

Tendency to overestimate the extent to which another person's behavior is due to *internal/dispositional* factors and to underestimate the role of *external/situational* factors.



Examples

Other's Behavior

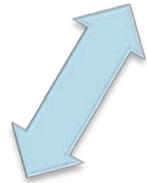
- She's clumsy!
- What a jerk!
- Wow, someone was partying hard last night!

My Behavior

- That stupid rock was in my way!
- Sorry, I'm in a rush!
- Ugh, I was up all night taking care of my sick kid!

Overcoming FAE

Take heed of
consensus
information

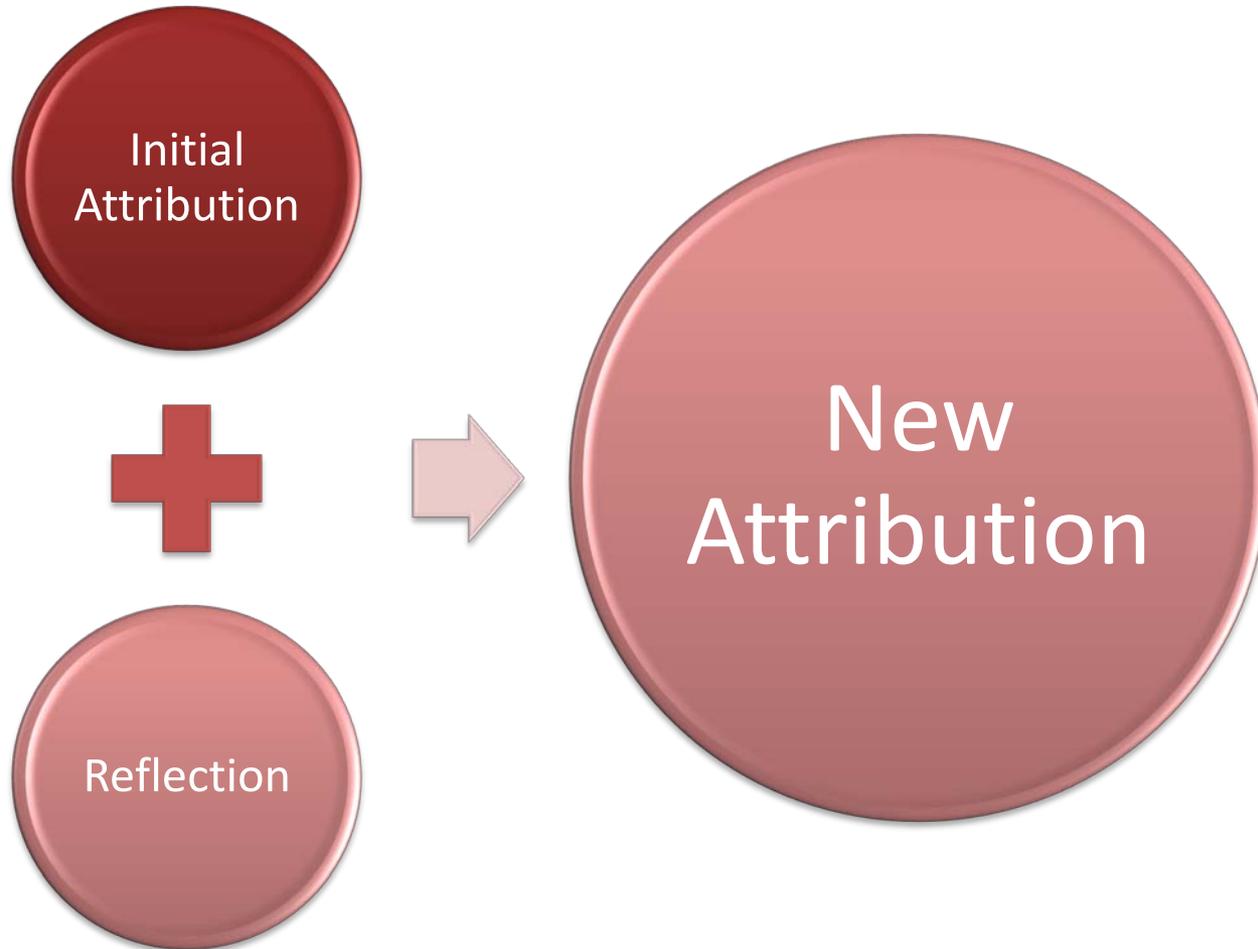


Look for
unseen
causes



How would I
behave?

Two Step Process of Attribution



FAE Video Link

<http://www.fastcompany.com/1657515/a-theory-called-a-fundamental-attribution-error>

Why is understanding FAE so important?

- Helps Case Manager generate multiple ideas regarding causes of a person's behavior
- Encourages Case Manager to dig deeper to find out the actual cause of a person's behavior
- Allows the Case Manager to take an active role in self-evaluation and avoid jumping to conclusions
- Provides a framework and language to address first impression biases

Which leads to more effective interactions with customers