

## Blame my assumptions

Directions: Review the statements below identify the blame and the hidden (and sometimes not so hidden) assumptions.

1. I don't understand how you can believe that a divided country supports our ability to be stronger.

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2. You aren't listening to what the other party is saying ...

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3. If we were living our values as a nation we wouldn't have gotten ourselves into this conflict.

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4. The war has affected our ability to address many domestic issues that need attending.

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5. The liberals have so many issues on their platform it's hard to see any strategic focus in what they are doing.

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6. It's important that our students understand the challenges of students in third-world countries.

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7. If we wait any longer the situation around social security will be unmanageable.

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8. You are blaming the school system for your son's struggle to get accepted into a university.

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9. This country is on a verge of a nervous breakdown.

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10. You don't seem to be making any sense.

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Here's what we thought. It was great developing this exercise we had an opportunity to see some of own hidden assumptions arise as we worked our answers.

1. I don't understand how you can believe that a divided country supports our ability to be stronger.

The statement is questioning their ability to make an accurate analysis; you might want to ask them about how they came to this belief and not challenge their choice of perspective (or belief system).

2. You aren't listening to what the other party is saying ...

The statement implies that the other isn't listening; are they not listening or not understanding, or maybe the speaker doesn't really understand. You can ask someone to repeat to you what they heard.

3. If we were living our values as a nation we wouldn't have gotten ourselves into this conflict.

This statement is full of assumptions. Here are a few: we agree on what our national values are; that we haven't been living these values; that the current conflict is a result of this and if we lived our values we wouldn't be in this situation – can you say that's true for certain? It might be helpful to get specific here and share your perspective as an inquiry. "I've been wondering if we as Americans focused more on "treating thy neighbor as you'd like to be treated" whether we would have gotten ourselves into this conflict in the first place."

4. The war has affected our ability to address the many domestic issues that need attending.

This statement implies that the domestic issues that need attending would be addressed if we weren't in war; is that true -- would we have been more diligent on other issues without the war? You might want to share this as a concern – for example: "I 'm worried that the domestic issues that need addressing are not being attending to."

5. The liberals have so many issues on their platform it's hard to see any strategic focus in what they are doing.

This statement implies that quantity inhibits our ability to be focused – is this true? You might share your perspective by identifying your inability to see the strategic focus among the many issues of the liberal platform.

6. It's important that our students understand the challenges of students in third-world countries.

This statement could have a few hidden assumptions although they're not as explicit as some of the other statements. One possible hidden assumption is that it's important to understand the Third World because they need our support. Another possible assumption would be all the third world has to offer is their challenges what about their joys, hopes and realizations. You could rephrase the statement "it's important that our students have an opportunity to understand and connect with other students including those in third-world countries."

7. If we wait any longer the situation around social security will be unmanageable.

This statement implies that the challenges we faced with social security are of immediate need for attention. Do we have to drop everything today? Are we talking two weeks from now? Two years from now? If we don't know how to manage the situation today will it be any more unmanageable tomorrow? You might want again to share this as a personal concern. For example, "I'm concerned if we don't address this issue in the next year it will be more difficult for us to manage."

8. You are blaming the school system for your son's struggle to get accepted into a university.

This statement implies that the other was blaming the school system. If it sounds like a blame, ask them if they are blaming.

9. This country is on a verge of a nervous breakdown.

This statement implies that we are in a crisis mode needing some serious attention. The statement also is all encompassing; is every part of our nation in crisis? Are we really on the verge of a nervous breakdown; maybe we're on the verge of a new opportunity.

10. You don't seem to be making any sense.

This statement blames the other for their lack of understanding. You might share where your thinking gets lost in their explanation.