

Before the Brilliance Exercise

Self-made matriarchs and patriarchs are really smart people. Their trusted advisors are best-in-class. All that IQ and instinct encourage and reward the bad behavior of assumption. Hunches about other peoples' actions have been proven right so often, jumping to conclusion is a coveted and treasured skill. It is enough to make you giddy until you stop and realize that the assumptions and assignments you make about others' motives are being made about you, by someone with your same superpower.

Think of a time when you felt wrongly accused, pigeon-holed, or blamed for something that mattered deeply. Use a journal or notebook to make notes about the scenario, the facts as you recall them, who was involved, and what assumptions were pinned to your behavior.

- **What was assumed about you?**
- **What were the participants at risk of losing or in need of protecting?**
- **What did they stand to gain by being right?**
- **What was inaccurate or misunderstood?**
- **How did you feel in the moment?**

The next step is to make notes about the drivers you brought to the situation. Be as self-honest as you can about both your healthy and unhealthy emotions at the time. Maybe there was a desire to protect someone from making a regretful choice, or a need to prove someone else wrong as revenge for prior bad behavior.

- **What were you vulnerable about?**
- **What did you need to protect?**
- **What did you need to defend?**
- **What outcome was non-negotiable?**
- **What was at stake if it didn't happen?**

Take a few deep breaths and get ready for the good stuff. Review your notes from both sets of questions and look for parallels. Identify where, perhaps, you misunderstood their intentions. Motive's two-sided coin is often alive and well in a single situation.





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