



The Shadow Deck of Distorted Reasoning Forms & Distorting Conditions

A learning, facilitation, and reflective-practice resource for better judgment

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ABOUT THIS DECK

The **Shadow Deck of Distorted Reasoning Forms and Distorting Conditions** is a learning, facilitation, and reflective-practice resource for nonprofit leaders, boards, committees, and governance educators.

It helps users to diagnose distorted reasoning and judgment pressures, and to engage the enabling capacities that support better deliberation.

The deck can be used alongside the Reasoning Repertoire Deck for personal development, board and committee training, agenda and board-paper review, live facilitation, reviewing faulty reasoning spreads, and post-decision learning.

Its purpose is to help groups reason more deliberately, correctly, and accountably.

CONTENTS

This shadow deck features:



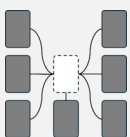
22 Distorted Reasoning Forms (naming the ways reasoning can go wrong)



12 distorting conditions (naming the pressures that make distortion more likely)



6 diagnostic aids (helping users recognise what is happening before slipping into error)



7 Shadow Empathy Pattern cards describe ways empathic attention can fail through absence, capture, or overreach



Only the diagnostic cards in this deck provide recommended practices. Otherwise, the remainder highlight faulty reasoning and underlying conditions that contribute to those faults.

Refer to the Reasoning Repertoire Deck if you are looking for the 21 valid reasoning styles (in five clusters), 7 factors that shape reasoning style selection, 7 enabling capacities, and the Lucid Empathy card (for use in combination with any of the valid reasoning styles whenever human consequences are involved), to help boards use reasoning styles well under pressure.

The 22 **Distorted Reasoning Forms** are:

- Circular reasoning;
- Tautological reasoning;
- Regressive reasoning;
- Dogmatic closure;
- False dichotomy;
- Reductionist reasoning;
- Linearist reasoning;
- Deterministic overreach;
- Probabilistic misreasoning;
- Analogical overreach;
- Category-error reasoning;
- Wishful reasoning;
- Motivated reasoning;
- Confirmation-locked reasoning;
- Post hoc reasoning;
- Overgeneralising induction;
- Anecdotal reasoning;
- Narrative capture;
- Moralised reasoning;
- Ad hoc rescue reasoning;
- Sophistic / rhetorical reasoning; and
- Paralytic overcomplexification.

The **Distorting Conditions** are:

Groupthink; Emotional override; Time pressure; Authority dominance; Conflict avoidance; Identity threat; Reputational anxiety; Mission romanticism; Crisis mentality;

- Information overload; Ambiguity intolerance; and Donor deference.

The **Diagnostic Aids** are:

Observable signals; Pressure check; Evidence quality check; Closure check; Human consequence check; and Correction pathway

The **Shadow Empathy Patterns** are:

Emotional Contagion; Empathy Bypass; Testimonial Capture; Selective Empathy; Performative Empathy, Saviourism / Paternalistic Rescue; and Empathic Manipulation.

HOW TO USE THIS 'SHADOW' DECK

Description

Use this deck to notice reasoning drift, diagnose judgment pressures, and identify where correction is needed.

Core question

What is bending judgment, and how is reasoning going wrong?

Use when

A discussion feels rushed, defensive, overconfident, circular, emotionally charged, evidence-light, or resistant to challenge.

Use safely

Diagnose reasoning patterns, not people. Pair with the Reasoning Repertoire Deck to select corrective styles, enabling capacities, and Lucid Empathy where human consequence is involved.



Personal reflection

Choose one recent decision. Ask: What pressure was present? What reasoning form appeared? What would I notice earlier next time?

Meeting use

Pause discussion. Select one Distorting Condition and one Distorted Reasoning Form. Ask what claim, assumption, evidence, or dissent needs testing.

Workshop use

Use with scenarios or board papers. Identify signals, pressures, likely distortions, and corrective prompts.

Post-decision review

Ask what distorted reasoning appeared, what enabled it, and what should change in future deliberation.

CIRCULAR REASONING



Description

A conclusion is supported by reasons that already assume the conclusion.

Warning phrase

“That proves it because it fits what we already know.”

Usually arises when

Familiar mission, strategy, policy, or identity language is mistaken for independent support.

Signs in discussion

Conclusion restated as support · key terms repeat · “because that’s what we do” logic

Suppresses

Independent evidence · causal explanation · stakeholder need · genuine review

Corrective styles

Recursive · Inductive · Ethical · Counterfactual

Corrective prompt

What would support this conclusion if we did not already accept it?

Condition links

Groupthink · Authority Dominance · Identity Threat

Corrective move

Name one independent reason, evidence source, or principle outside the conclusion itself.

TAUTOLOGICAL REASONING



Description

A claim is restated in different words rather than genuinely explained or supported.

Warning phrase

“This matters because it is important.”

Usually arises when

Values, mission, public messaging, or board papers use emphatic language without substance.

Signs in discussion

Synonyms repeat · no new information appears · powerful wording clarifies little

Suppresses

Explanation · evidence · principle · practical consequence

Corrective styles

Narrative · Deductive · Ethical · Inductive

Corrective prompt

What does this statement add beyond restating itself?

Condition links

Mission Romanticism · Ambiguity Intolerance

Corrective move

Translate the phrase into a reason, effect, duty, or evidence claim.

REGRESSIVE REASONING



Description

Justification is postponed indefinitely by requiring another reason for every reason.

Warning phrase

“But what justifies that standard?”

Usually arises when

Boards mistake endless grounding for rigour and cannot accept practical sufficiency.

Signs in discussion

One more reason requested · stopping points resisted · paralysis disguised as rigour

Suppresses

Practical grounding · sufficient warrant · decision thresholds · responsible closure

Corrective styles

Deductive · Dialectical · Counterfactual · Proportional

Corrective prompt

What level of justification is sufficient for responsible action here?

Condition links

Information Overload · Ambiguity Intolerance

Corrective move

Name the operative rule, criterion, threshold, or principle sufficient for this decision.

DOGMATIC CLOSURE



Description

A rule, premise, value, or interpretation is treated as beyond examination.

Warning phrase

“Our principles settle this.”

Usually arises when

Certainty, authority, identity, or discomfort with ambiguity closes down live reasoning.

Signs in discussion

Rules end discussion · dissent seems disloyal · principles block contextual testing

Suppresses

Interpretation · evidence · context · consequence · dissent

Corrective styles

Deductive · Dialectical · Ecological · Ethical

Corrective prompt

Are we applying a principle thoughtfully, or hiding behind it?

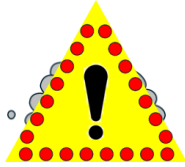
Condition links

Authority Dominance · Identity Threat · Ambiguity Intolerance

Corrective move

Apply the principle while naming context, evidence, consequences, and discretion.

FALSE DICHOTOMY



Description

A complex issue is reduced to two supposedly exhaustive and opposed options.

Warning phrase

“Either we do this, or we abandon the mission.”

Usually arises when

Time pressure, conflict, crisis, or ambiguity makes a forced choice feel clarifying.

Signs in discussion

Either/or language · hybrid options omitted · dissenters cast as the opposite extreme

Suppresses

Tension analysis · staged options · design alternatives · nuance

Corrective styles

Dialectical · Morphological · Fuzzy · Proportional

Corrective prompt

What third, fourth, or hybrid option are we excluding?

Condition links

Time Pressure · Conflict Avoidance · Crisis Mentality · Ambiguity
Intolerance

Corrective move

Generate at least one staged, hybrid, or both/and option before deciding.

REDUCTIONIST REASONING



Description

A complex issue is explained through one factor when multiple causes interact.

Warning phrase

“It really comes down to one thing.”

Usually arises when

Pressure for clarity, speed, reassurance, or accountability narrows the field of view.

Signs in discussion

One factor dominates · interacting causes ignored · systemic mapping feels excessive

Suppresses

Systems awareness · abductive inquiry · proportional judgment · contextual evidence

Corrective styles

Systems · Abductive · Proportional · Ecological

Corrective prompt

What other factors may be interacting with the one we are focusing on?

Condition links

Time Pressure · Mission
Romanticism · Information Overload

Corrective move

Name three interacting factors before choosing the dominant explanation.

LINEARIST REASONING



Description

One-way sequential causation is assumed where feedback, delay, or interaction matters.

Warning phrase

"We approved the plan, so the result should follow."

Usually arises when

Plans, dashboards, timelines, or program logic make complex causality look orderly.

Signs in discussion

Decision treated as result · delays ignored · feedback absent · resistance overlooked

Suppresses

Systems interaction · nonlinear effects · uncertainty · indirect consequences

Corrective styles

Systems · Nonlinear · Probabilistic · Counterfactual

Corrective prompt

What feedback loops, delays, or indirect effects might disrupt this chain?

Condition links

Time Pressure · Crisis Mentality · Ambiguity Intolerance

Corrective move

Add one feedback loop, one delay, and one possible unintended effect.

DETERMINISTIC OVERREACH



Description

A contingent outcome is treated as inevitable, fixed, or already determined.

Warning phrase

"This was always going to happen."

Usually arises when

Boards seek certainty, closure, or reassurance after complex events or difficult outcomes.

Signs in discussion

Inevitability language · alternatives dismissed · agency downplayed · contingency ignored

Suppresses

Counterfactual testing · uncertainty · responsibility · strategic choice

Corrective styles

Counterfactual · Probabilistic · Strategic · Ethical

Corrective prompt

What else could have happened, and what choices still matter?

Condition links

Reputational Anxiety · Institutional Defensiveness · Crisis Mentality

Corrective move

Name one contingency, one choice point, and one avoidable assumption.

PROBABILISTIC MISREASONING



Description

Likelihood, risk, confidence, severity, or uncertainty are confused or misused.

Warning phrase

"It's unlikely, so it doesn't matter."

Usually arises when

Risk ratings, forecasts, scenarios, or statistics are used without clear confidence or context.

Signs in discussion

Likelihood confused with severity · confidence unstated · ranges resisted · uncertainty flattened

Suppresses

Risk discipline · confidence testing · scenario thinking · proportional caution

Corrective styles

Probabilistic · Proportional · Counterfactual · Ethical

Corrective prompt

Are we separating likelihood, severity, confidence, and consequence?

Condition links

Poor Evidence Quality · Information Overload · AI Opacity · Authority Dominance

Corrective move

State likelihood, severity, confidence level, assumptions, and review trigger separately.

ANALOGICAL OVERREACH



Description

A comparison is pushed beyond its relevant similarities or contextual limits.

Warning phrase

"It worked there, so it will work here."

Usually arises when

Boards borrow models, precedents, or sector examples without testing fit.

Signs in discussion

Similarity overstated · context ignored · differences minimised · transfer assumed

Suppresses

Ecological fit · categorical clarity · local evidence · implementation risk

Corrective styles

Analogical · Ecological · Categorical · Systems

Corrective prompt

Where does this comparison fit, and where does it fail?

Condition links

Reputational Anxiety · Time Pressure · Authority Dominance

Corrective move

List key similarities, differences, context limits, and adaptation requirements.

CATEGORY-ERROR REASONING



Description

An issue is assigned to the wrong type, standard, frame, or decision category.

Warning phrase

"This is just a communications issue."

Usually arises when

Boards use familiar labels before testing what kind of matter is actually before them.

Signs in discussion

Wrong frame settles debate · mixed cases simplified · duties or thresholds misplaced

Suppresses

Classification discipline · ethical duties · system context · boundary testing

Corrective styles

Categorical · Fuzzy · Ethical · Topological

Corrective prompt

What kind of issue is this, and what changes if we classify it differently?

Condition links

Poor Framing Quality · Authority Dominance · Information Overload

Corrective move

Test at least two possible classifications before assigning responsibility or action.

WISHFUL REASONING



Description

Preferred outcomes are treated as more likely because they are desired.

Warning phrase

"I'm sure it will work out."

Usually arises when

Hope, mission commitment, loyalty, or fatigue makes realism feel disloyal or discouraging.

Signs in discussion

Optimism replaces evidence · risks softened · hard options avoided · hope carries the argument

Suppresses

Probabilistic discipline · contrary evidence · scenario planning · responsible caution

Corrective styles

Probabilistic · Counterfactual · Strategic · Ethical

Corrective prompt

What would we believe if we did not want this to be true?

Condition links

Mission Romanticism · Groupthink · Emotional Activation · Reputational Anxiety

Corrective move

Name the desired outcome, the evidence for it, and the strongest contrary signal.

MOTIVATED REASONING



Description

Reasoning is shaped by the conclusion, identity, interest, or outcome the board wants.

Warning phrase

"We just need to find the case for this."

Usually arises when

A preferred decision, leader, strategy, funder, or institutional identity is already protected.

Signs in discussion

Evidence selected to fit · objections reframed · criteria shift · conclusion stays fixed

Suppresses

Evidential discipline · dissent · ethical reconsideration · alternative explanations

Corrective styles

Inductive · Ethical · Dialectical · Counterfactual

Corrective prompt

What evidence would we take seriously if it opposed our preferred conclusion?

Condition links

Institutional Defensiveness · Reputational Anxiety · Authority Dominance · Groupthink

Corrective move

State the preferred conclusion, then test it against contrary evidence and duties.

CONFIRMATION-LOCKED REASONING



Description

Only evidence that supports the existing view is noticed, valued, or remembered.

Warning phrase

"Everything we've seen confirms this."

Usually arises when

A board has become invested in a prior interpretation, strategy, narrative, or diagnosis.

Signs in discussion

Supporting evidence repeats · contrary evidence ignored · same sources relied on

Suppresses

Disconfirmation · learning · alternative explanations · perspective diversity

Corrective styles

Inductive · Counterfactual · Dialectical · Abductive

Corrective prompt

What evidence would challenge the view we are confirming?

Condition links

Groupthink · Institutional Defensiveness · Lack of Protected Dissent

Corrective move

Require one disconfirming source, alternative account, or dissenting interpretation.

POST HOC REASONING



Description

Because one event followed another, the first is assumed to have caused the second.

Warning phrase

“After we changed policy, performance improved.”

Usually arises when

Boards infer causation too quickly from sequence, timing, dashboards, or before-and-after stories.

Signs in discussion

Sequence becomes cause · other factors ignored · timing does too much explanatory work

Suppresses

Causal testing · counterfactual reasoning · systems context · external conditions

Corrective styles

Counterfactual · Inductive · Systems · Probabilistic

Corrective prompt

What else could explain the change besides what happened first?

Condition links

Poor Evidence Quality · Time Pressure · Information Overload

Corrective move

Compare timing, alternative causes, external factors, and counterfactual evidence.

OVER-GENERALISING INDUCTION



Description

A broad conclusion is drawn from too few, narrow, or unrepresentative examples.

Warning phrase

“This proves the pattern.”

Usually arises when

A small number of cases feels vivid, urgent, familiar, or easy to interpret.

Signs in discussion

Small samples overread · exceptions ignored · weak patterns treated as settled

Suppresses

Sample quality · contrary cases · uncertainty · evidential proportion

Corrective styles

Inductive · Probabilistic · Abductive · Counterfactual

Corrective prompt

How representative is this evidence of the wider pattern?

Condition links

Poor Evidence Quality · Emotional Activation · Time Pressure · Information Overload

Corrective move

Classify the evidence as anecdote, case, pattern, trend, or finding.

ANECDOTAL REASONING



Description

A vivid individual story is treated as sufficient evidence for a broader claim.

Warning phrase

“That story proves it works.”

Usually arises when

Human stories are memorable, morally compelling, emotionally salient, or useful for advocacy.

Signs in discussion

One story dominates · broader data is absent · emotional salience drives conclusion

Suppresses

Pattern evidence · sampling discipline · mixed outcomes · contextual interpretation

Corrective styles

Narrative · Inductive · Probabilistic · Ethical

Corrective prompt

What broader evidence supports or complicates this story?

Condition links

Emotional Activation · Mission Romanticism · Reputational Anxiety · Stakeholder Absence

Corrective move

Pair the story with pattern evidence, contrary cases, and context.

NARRATIVE CAPTURE



Description

A preferred story controls interpretation and resists contrary evidence.

Warning phrase

“We already know what this means.”

Usually arises when

Mission identity, reputation, loyalty, memory, or stakeholder meaning is under pressure

Signs in discussion

Preferred story dominates · contrary evidence softened · stakeholder stories used selectively

Suppresses

Evidential discipline · counterfactual testing · ethical reconsideration · complexity

Corrective styles

Inductive · Counterfactual · Probabilistic · Ethical · Dialectical

Corrective prompt

What evidence would challenge the story we are relying on?

Condition links

Institutional Defensiveness · Reputational Anxiety · Groupthink · Emotional Activation

Corrective move

State the dominant story, then test it against evidence and alternative accounts.

MORALISED REASONING



Description

Moral conviction substitutes for evidence, proportionality, role clarity, or practical judgment.

Warning phrase

"This is simply the right thing to do."

Usually arises when

Values, harm, identity, outrage, or mission commitment intensify the need for closure.

Signs in discussion

Moral language ends debate · dissent feels suspect · implementation and evidence fade

Suppresses

Proportionality · evidence · feasibility · role clarity · dissent

Corrective styles / capacities

Ethical · Proportional · Probabilistic · Strategic · Lucid Empathy

Corrective prompt

How do we honour the value without abandoning evidence and responsibility?

Condition links

Emotional Activation · Mission Romanticism · Groupthink · Reputational Anxiety

Corrective move

Name the duty, evidence, limits, affected parties, and feasible next step.

AD HOC RESCUE REASONING



Description

Extra explanations are added to protect a claim from contrary evidence.

Warning phrase

"That exception does not really count."

Usually arises when

A board is invested in an existing strategy, leader, diagnosis, or institutional story.

Signs in discussion

Exceptions multiply · contrary evidence discounted · preferred claim survives everything

Suppresses

Counterevidence · genuine learning · accountability · abductive testing

Corrective styles

Abductive · Counterfactual · Inductive · Dialectical

Corrective prompt

What evidence would force us to revise or abandon this claim?

Condition links

Institutional Defensiveness · Reputational Anxiety · Authority Dominance · Groupthink

Corrective move

State the protected claim, then name what would count against it.

SOPHISTIC / RHETORICAL REASONING



Description

Persuasive language, framing, or performance substitutes for sound reasoning.

Warning phrase

“That sounds compelling.”

Usually arises when

Confidence, eloquence, status, emotion, or communications pressure carries more weight than warrant.

Signs in discussion

Polished language persuades · key claims remain untested · weak warrants go unnoticed

Suppresses

Claim testing · evidence · assumptions · dissent · practical consequence

Corrective styles

Deductive · Inductive · Ethical · Dialectical · Probabilistic

Corrective prompt

What is the claim, and what actually supports it?

Condition links

Authority Dominance · Reputational Anxiety · Groupthink · Information Overload

Corrective move

Separate rhetoric from claim, evidence, warrant, implication, and decision.

PARALYTIC OVER- COMPLEXIFICATION



Description

Complexity is expanded until responsible judgment, action, or closure becomes impossible.

Warning phrase

“It’s too complex to decide.”

Usually arises when

Systems awareness, risk sensitivity, ambiguity, or fear of error overwhelms decision discipline.

Signs in discussion

Complexity keeps expanding · action deferred · no threshold for sufficiency is set

Suppresses

Practical judgment · proportionality · decision thresholds · accountable action

Corrective styles

Systems · Proportional · Linear · Strategic · Ethical

Corrective prompt

What is complex enough to respect, but clear enough to decide?

Condition links

Information Overload · Ambiguity Intolerance · Reputational Anxiety · Time Pressure

Corrective move

Name the decision threshold, minimum evidence, key risk, and review trigger.

TIME PRESSURE



Description

Urgency compresses attention, testing, dissent, and reflection.

Diagnostic question

What reasoning are we skipping because of urgency?

Condition cluster

Pressure / decision-compression condition

Bends reasoning by

Narrowing attention · rushing closure · suppressing dissent · favouring familiar styles

Warning signs

“We just need to decide” · weak testing · deferred concerns · little review planning

Likely distortions

Reductionist Reasoning · Linearist Reasoning · Probabilistic Misreasoning · False Dichotomy

Corrective practice

Separate urgent containment from fuller deliberation and set a review trigger.

Chair prompt

What must be decided now, and what must be reviewed later?

INFORMATION OVERLOAD



Description

Too much information weakens salience, relevance, synthesis, and judgment.

Diagnostic question

Are we informed, or simply overloaded?

Condition cluster

Information / cognitive-load condition

Bends reasoning by

Blurring priorities · hiding key evidence · exhausting attention · encouraging shortcuts

Warning signs

Dense papers · little synthesis · unclear relevance · directors rely on impressions

Likely distortions

Probabilistic Misreasoning · Reductionist Reasoning · Overgeneralising Induction · Ad Hoc Rescue Reasoning

Corrective practice

Require a short synthesis: key claim, evidence, uncertainty, options, and decision needed.

Chair prompt

What information is most material to the judgment before us?

AUTHORITY DOMINANCE



Description

Status, expertise, role, or confidence narrows challenge and independent judgment.

Diagnostic question

Are we testing the claim, or deferring to the speaker?

Condition cluster

Authority / voice condition

Bends reasoning by

Silencing challenge · elevating confidence · reducing scrutiny · narrowing alternatives

Warning signs

Few questions · expert view settles issue · hesitation around challenge · fast agreement

Likely distortions

Probabilistic Misreasoning · Reductionist Reasoning · Ad Hoc Rescue Reasoning

Corrective practice

Separate respect for expertise from testing of claims, assumptions, and evidence.

Chair prompt

What would we ask if this recommendation came from a less authoritative source?

INSTITUTIONAL DEFENSIVE- NESS



Description

The organisation protects its preferred story, identity, decisions, or reputation from challenge.

Diagnostic question

What are we finding hard to admit, test, or learn from?

Condition cluster

Institutional-protection condition

Bends reasoning by

Protecting narratives · minimising evidence · avoiding accountability · resisting learning

Warning signs

Criticism reframed as unfair · exceptions multiply · responsibility blurs · learning stalls

Likely distortions

Narrative Capture · Ad Hoc Rescue Reasoning · Confirmation-Locked Reasoning · Moralised Reasoning

Corrective practice

Name the uncomfortable evidence and ask what responsible learning requires.

Chair prompt

What would we say if our first duty were learning, not self-protection?

REPUTATIONAL ANXIETY



Description

Concern for public image narrows truthfulness, learning, responsibility, and proportion.

Diagnostic question

Are we protecting trust, or protecting appearances?

Condition cluster

External-pressure / legitimacy condition

Bends reasoning by

Prioritising optics · avoiding candour · inflating risk · narrowing stakeholder attention

Warning signs

Optics dominate · truth is softened · stakeholders become audiences · delay feels safer

Likely distortions

Narrative Capture · Probabilistic Misreasoning · Motivated Reasoning · Ad Hoc Rescue Reasoning

Corrective practice

Distinguish reputational management from truthful, accountable, trust-building action.

Chair prompt

What response would preserve trust because it is true, fair, and responsible?

GROUPTHINK



Description

Pressure for agreement suppresses dissent, challenge, and independent judgment.

Diagnostic question

Are we agreeing because the reasoning is strong, or because dissent feels costly?

Condition cluster

Collective-pressure / protected-dissent condition

Bends reasoning by

Rewarding conformity · softening challenge · narrowing options · protecting cohesion

Warning signs

Fast agreement · soft objections vanish · dissenters self-censor · alternatives receive little testing

Likely distortions

Confirmation-Locked Reasoning · Wishful Reasoning · Narrative Capture · Reductionist Reasoning

Corrective practice

Create protected dissent before closure and require one credible alternative interpretation.

Chair prompt

What would a thoughtful dissenter say we have not yet tested?

POOR EVIDENCE QUALITY



Description

Evidence is incomplete, weak, selective, outdated, unclear, or poorly matched to the decision.

Diagnostic question

Is the evidence strong enough for the judgment required?

Condition cluster

Evidence / reasoning-quality condition

Bends reasoning by

Weakening warrant · hiding uncertainty · amplifying anecdotes · encouraging overconfidence

Warning signs

Thin data · unclear sources · no confidence level · contrary evidence absent

Likely distortions

Probabilistic Misreasoning · Overgeneralising Induction · Anecdotal Reasoning · Reductionist Reasoning

Corrective practice

Match evidence requirements to the significance, risk, and reversibility of the decision.

Chair prompt

What evidence would be sufficient, proportionate, and reliable for this judgment?

POOR FRAMING QUALITY



Description

The issue is named, scoped, or presented in a way that narrows judgment.

Diagnostic question

Are we reasoning inside the right frame?

Condition cluster

Framing / sensemaking condition

Bends reasoning by

Narrowing scope · hiding assumptions · privileging one interpretation · excluding alternatives

Warning signs

One frame dominates · missing stakeholders · criteria unclear · options feel preselected

Likely distortions

Reductionist Reasoning · Narrative Capture · False Dichotomy · Category Error Reasoning

Corrective practice

Restate the issue through at least two alternative frames before deciding.

Chair prompt

How else could this matter be framed, and what would that reveal?

LACK OF PROTECTED DISSENT



Description

Challenge is formally allowed but not socially, procedurally, or relationally protected.

Diagnostic question

Can people disagree here without penalty, dismissal, or loss of standing?

Condition cluster

Deliberative-culture condition

Bends reasoning by

Silencing challenge · rewarding agreement · hiding doubt · weakening correction

Warning signs

Concerns soften · objections vanish · dissent is personalised · silence follows authority

Likely distortions

Confirmation-Locked Reasoning · Probabilistic Misreasoning · Ad Hoc Rescue Reasoning

Corrective practice

Assign dissent as a role, protect the person, and test the reasoning.

Chair prompt

What concern has not been voiced because it may feel unsafe or unwelcome?

EMOTIONAL ACTIVATION



Description

Strong emotion narrows attention, accelerates closure, or intensifies preferred interpretations.

Diagnostic question

What emotion is shaping the reasoning in this discussion?

Condition cluster

Emotional / attentional condition

Bends reasoning by

Intensifying salience · reducing ambiguity tolerance · moralising issues · rushing closure

Warning signs

Tone escalates · certainty rises · motives are assumed · alternatives feel disloyal

Likely distortions

Probabilistic Misreasoning · Moralised Reasoning · Narrative Capture

Corrective practice

Name the emotion, pause, and separate value signals from decision evidence.

Chair prompt

What is this emotion helping us see, and what might it be narrowing?

STAKEHOLDER ABSENCE



Description

Affected people, communities, partners, or perspectives are missing from the reasoning field.

Diagnostic question

Whose experience, voice, or consequence is absent from this discussion?

Condition cluster

Perspective / legitimacy condition

Bends reasoning by

Narrowing perspective · abstracting harm · weakening legitimacy · hiding lived consequence

Warning signs

Stakeholders become categories · impacts are assumed · no lived-experience evidence

Likely distortions

Reductionist Reasoning · Anecdotal Reasoning · Narrative Capture · Moralised Reasoning

Corrective practice

Identify affected groups, missing perspectives, and how their input will be considered.

Chair prompt

Who is affected but not present in the reasoning?

AI OPACITY / AI OVER- RELIANCE



Description

AI-supported outputs are accepted without enough transparency, testing, context, or accountability.

Diagnostic question

Are we using AI as an aid, or treating it as authority?

Condition cluster

Technology / evidence-quality condition

Bends reasoning by

Masking assumptions · inflating confidence · narrowing inquiry · outsourcing judgment

Warning signs

Outputs accepted untested · sources unclear · confidence overstated · accountability blurs

Likely distortions

Probabilistic Misreasoning · Ad Hoc Rescue Reasoning · Overgeneralising Induction

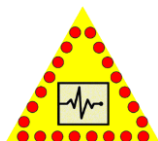
Corrective practice

Treat AI output as a prompt for human review, not as a substitute for judgment.

Chair prompt

What must humans verify, contextualise, and remain accountable for here?

OBSERVABLE SIGNALS



Description

Helps users notice live signs that reasoning may be weakening, narrowing, or distorting.

Core question

What are we hearing or seeing *in the discussion*?

Use when

The group senses that judgment is drifting but has not yet named the distortion.

Helps notice

Repetition · overconfidence · narrowing · avoidance · emotional charge · weak testing

Diagnostic prompt

What behaviour in the discussion suggests reasoning may be going wrong?

Look for

One explanation dominating · contrary evidence dismissed · urgency narrowing attention · moral language closing debate

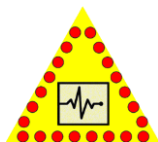
Use with

DRF cards · Distorting Condition cards · Correction Pathway

Practice cue

Name the observable signal before selecting the likely distorted reasoning form.

PRESSURE CHECK



Description

Helps identify the conditions that may be bending judgment before reasoning failure becomes obvious.

Core question

What pressure is shaping the reasoning environment?

Use when

A discussion feels rushed, defensive, overloaded, unsafe, reputationally sensitive, or authority-led.

Helps notice

Urgency · overload · authority · anxiety · defensiveness · silence · stakeholder absence

Diagnostic prompt

What condition is making good reasoning harder?

Look for

Time pressure · weak evidence · status effects · group agreement · reputational concern · unsafe dissent

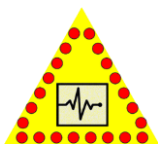
Use with

Distorting Condition cards · Observable Signals · DRF cards

Practice cue

Select the strongest pressure, then ask which reasoning failure it may be producing.

EVIDENCE QUALITY CHECK



Description

Helps test whether the evidence is strong enough for the judgment being made.

Core question

Is the evidence sufficient, relevant, reliable, and proportionate?

Use when

Claims depend on reports, data, stories, forecasts, expert views, AI outputs, or evaluation findings.

Helps notice

Source · relevance · sufficiency · confidence · gaps · contrary cases · assumptions

Diagnostic prompt

What does the evidence support, and what does it not support?

Look for

Anecdotes overused · ranges absent · confidence unstated · contrary evidence missing · source unclear

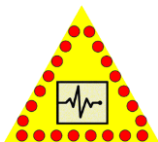
Use with

Poor Evidence Quality · Probabilistic Misreasoning · Overgeneralising Induction · Anecdotal Reasoning

Practice cue

Classify the evidence before accepting the conclusion it is being used to support.

CLOSURE CHECK



Description

Helps detect whether the group is closing discussion before the reasoning is sufficient.

Core question

Are we ready to decide, or just relieved to stop thinking?

Use when

Discussion is moving quickly toward agreement, certainty, simplification, or decision.

Helps notice

Premature closure · untested options · suppressed dissent · weak thresholds · decision pressure

Diagnostic prompt

What has not yet been tested before closure?

Look for

First explanation accepted · dissent fading · uncertainty minimised · alternatives skipped · urgency treated as sufficiency

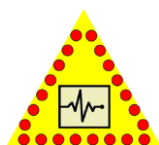
Use with

Dogmatic Closure · False Dichotomy · Reductionist Reasoning · Confirmation-Locked Reasoning

Practice cue

Before deciding, name one untested assumption, option, risk, or dissenting view.

HUMAN CONSEQUENCE CHECK



Description

Considers how people, dignity, agency, power, and lived experience are represented in the reasoning.

Core question

Who is visible, invisible, overrepresented, or being used rhetorically?

Use when

The matter affects people, services, trust, vulnerability, fairness, harm, identity, or legitimacy.

Helps notice

Dignity · agency · vulnerability · power · lived experience · harm · trust

Diagnostic prompt

How is human consequence shaping, or being excluded from, the reasoning?

Look for

People reduced to metrics · one story dominating · affected voices absent · empathy becoming overreach

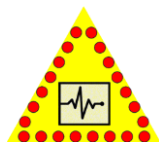
Use with

Lucid Empathy · Empathic Judgment · Narrative Capture · Moralised Reasoning · Stakeholder Absence

Practice cue

Name affected people, missing voices, power asymmetries, and safeguards before deciding.

CORRECTION PATHWAY



Description

Helps move from diagnosing reasoning failure to selecting a corrective response.

Core question

What would help restore better judgment?

Use when

A distorted reasoning form or distorting condition has been identified and the group needs a next step.

Helps notice

Missing style · overused style · needed capacity · corrective prompt · review trigger

Diagnostic prompt

Which reasoning style or enabling capacity would correct the drift?

Look for

Need for evidence · need for systems view · need for dissent · need for proportionality · need for human consequence check

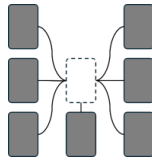
Use with

Valid Reasoning Style cards · Enabling Capacity cards · Lucid Empathy

Practice cue

Select one corrective reasoning style, one enabling capacity, and one chair prompt.

SHADOW EMPATHY PATTERNS



Description

Names seven ways empathic attention can fail through absence, capture, or overreach.

Core question

How might empathy be missing, distorted, or misused in the matter before us or in how we deliberate together?

Use when

A matter involves harm, vulnerability, dignity, trust, power, lived experience, care, conflict, or human consequence.

Helps notice

Absence · numbing · selectivity · contagion · story capture · rescue · manipulation

Three failure modes:

Absence: people disappear from judgment. **Capture:** feeling or story overwhelms judgment. **Overreach:** care becomes control, rescue, or exploitation.

Diagnostic prompt

Is empathy helping us see human consequence clearly, or bending judgment?

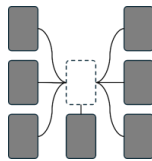
Use with

Lucid Empathy · Empathic Judgment · Ethical Reasoning · Emotional Regulation · Evidential Discipline

Corrective move

Keep people visible while preserving evidence, fairness, agency, role clarity, professional courtesy, and accountability.

EMPATHY BYPASS



Description

Human consequence is skipped, abstracted, proceduralised, or minimised in the name of objectivity.

Warning phrase

“We need to stay objective.”

Usually arises when

Rules, metrics, risk categories, process, or efficiency crowd out lived experience and consequence.

Signs in discussion

People become cases · harm is abstracted · process language dominates · discomfort is avoided

Suppresses

Dignity · lived experience · vulnerability · trust · relational consequence

Corrective styles / capacities

Lucid Empathy · Empathic Judgment · Ethical · Narrative · Evidential Discipline

Corrective prompt

Who is affected, and what human consequence is being hidden by our language?

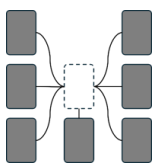
Condition links

Time Pressure · Authority Dominance · Stakeholder Absence · Poor Framing Quality

Corrective move

Name the affected people, likely experience, evidence, duties, and safeguards.

EMPATHIC NUMBING



Description

Repeated exposure to distress, complaint, harm, or need dulls responsiveness and weakens concern.

Warning phrase

“We hear this kind of thing all the time.”

Usually arises when

Boards face chronic need, repeated complaints, scarce resources, fatigue, conflict, or unresolved harm.

Signs in discussion

Concern feels muted · harm is normalised · urgency fades · repeated patterns lose force

Suppresses

Moral attention · cumulative harm · vulnerability · repair · learning

Corrective styles / capacities

Lucid Empathy · Emotional Regulation · Evidential Discipline · Ethical · Recursive

Corrective prompt

What have we become used to that should still trouble us?

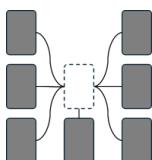
Condition links

Information Overload · Crisis Mentality · Emotional Override · Time Pressure

Corrective move

Name the repeated harm, cumulative burden, affected people, and one renewed duty of care.

SELECTIVE EMPATHY



Description

Empathy is extended unevenly to familiar, powerful, articulate, proximate, or preferred people.

Warning phrase

“I can really see their side.”

Usually arises when

Identity, proximity, donor influence, social familiarity, status, or shared experience shapes attention.

Signs in discussion

Some voices feel more real · familiar people receive more patience · marginal voices fade

Suppresses

Equity · perspective diversity · power awareness · affected-but-absent stakeholders

Corrective styles / capacities

Lucid Empathy · Empathic Judgment · Ethical · Topological · Moral Imagination

Corrective prompt

Whose experience is easier for us to feel, and whose remains distant?

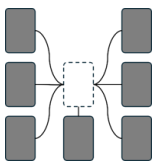
Condition links

Identity Threat · Donor Deference · Groupthink · Stakeholder Absence

Corrective move

Map who is centred, who is marginal, who is absent, and whose consequence needs attention.

EMOTIONAL CONTAGION



Description

The group absorbs another person's emotional state without enough reflection, evidence, or role clarity.

Warning phrase

"Everyone is feeling this, so we have to act now."

Usually arises when

Distress, anger, fear, grief, enthusiasm, or public pressure moves rapidly through the group.

Signs in discussion

Emotion spreads quickly · certainty rises · urgency escalates · alternatives feel disloyal

Suppresses

Proportion · evidence · role clarity · dissent · deliberative pause

Corrective styles / capacities

Emotional Regulation · Lucid Empathy · Probabilistic · Proportional · Ethical

Corrective prompt

What is this emotion helping us see, and what might it be narrowing?

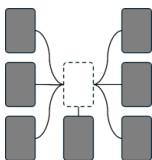
Condition links

Emotional Override · Crisis Mentality · Groupthink · Reputational Anxiety

Corrective move

Name the emotion, value signal, evidence, decision threshold, and pause point.

TESTIMONIAL CAPTURE



Description

One vivid lived-experience account, testimony, or personal story dominates empathic attention beyond what it can fairly support.

Warning phrase

"That story tells us everything we need to know."

Usually arises when

A powerful account carries moral force, emotional salience, symbolic value, or advocacy urgency.

Note;: Distinct from Narrative Capture

Signs in discussion

One account dominates · other affected people fade · broader evidence is neglected · scale is assumed

Suppresses

Perspective diversity · pattern evidence · proportionality · other harms · role clarity

Corrective styles / capacities

Lucid Empathy · Narrative · Inductive · Probabilistic · Evidential Discipline

Corrective prompt

What does this testimony help us see, and what can it not establish by itself?

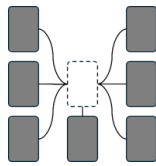
Condition links

Emotional Activation · Stakeholder Absence · Poor Evidence Quality · Reputational Anxiety

Corrective move

Honour the account, then test it alongside broader evidence, other affected perspectives, and context.

SAVIOURISM / PATERNALISTIC RESCUE



Description

Care turns into rescue, control, or helping without sufficient agency, consent, or role clarity.

Warning phrase

“We have to step in and fix this for them.”

Usually arises when

Urgency, mission commitment, power asymmetry, distress, or professional confidence overrides agency.

Signs in discussion

Help is presumed · affected people are spoken for · agency fades · dependency is reinforced

Suppresses

Agency · consent · reciprocity · role limits · professional courtesy · shared responsibility

Corrective styles / capacities

Lucid Empathy · Empathic Judgment · Ethical · Proportional · Topological

Corrective prompt

Are we supporting people with agency, or rescuing them without it?

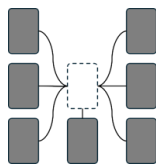
Condition links

Mission Romanticism · Authority Dominance · Time Pressure · Stakeholder Absence

Corrective move

Name what support is invited, what consent is needed, and what boundary must be respected.

EMPATHIC MANIPULATION



Description

Insight into another person’s experience, vulnerability, identity, fear, or trust is used to influence or control.

Warning phrase

“We know what will move them.”

Usually arises when

Persuasion, advocacy, fundraising, communications, negotiation, or reputation management becomes instrumental.

Signs in discussion

Vulnerability is leveraged · trust is treated as a tool · emotional insight becomes strategy

Suppresses

Autonomy · transparency · dignity · consent · fairness · professional courtesy

Corrective styles / capacities

Lucid Empathy · Ethical · Strategic · Critical-thinking Skills · Moral Imagination

Corrective prompt

Are we understanding people to respect them, or to move them?

Condition links

Reputational Anxiety · Donor Deference · Authority Dominance · Sophistic / Rhetorical Reasoning

Corrective move

Test the communication against dignity, transparency, consent, role limits, and accountability.