

Introduction to Systems Thinking for Early Childhood Leaders

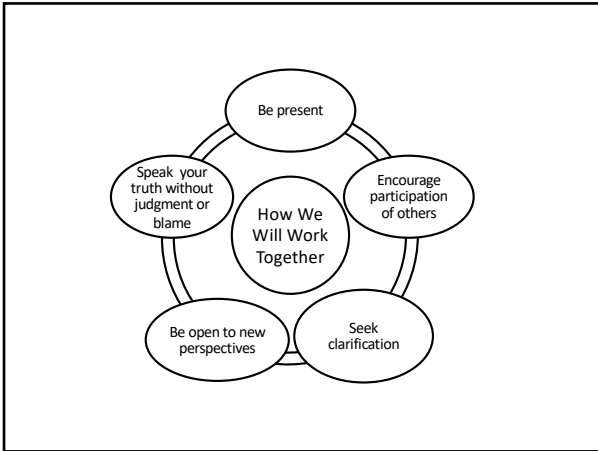
CEELO Leadership Academy
Washington DC

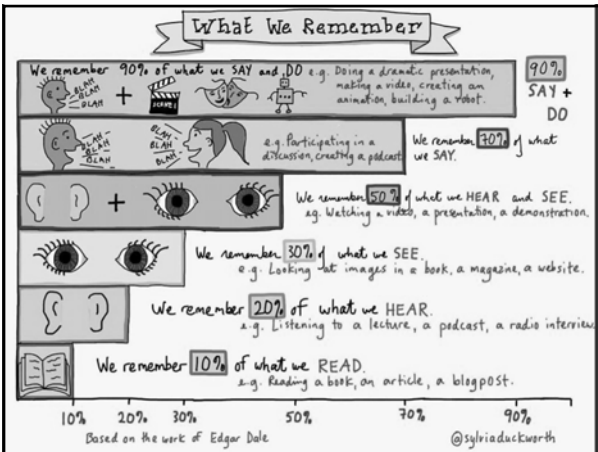
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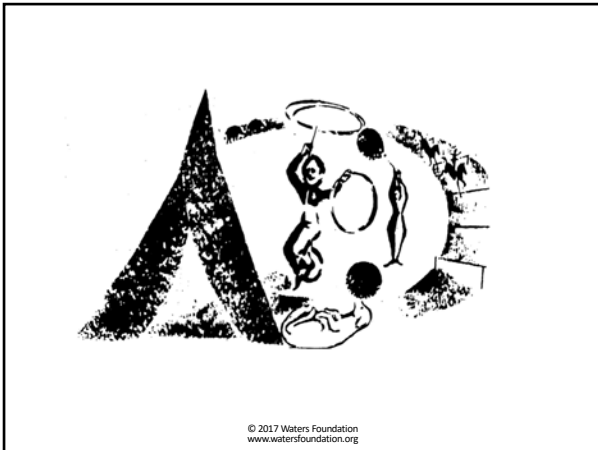







Human Continuum
Check-in





System Simulation*

The challenge of "seeing" systems



*Adapted from *The Systems Thinking Playbook*, by Linda Booth Sweeney and Dennis Meadows

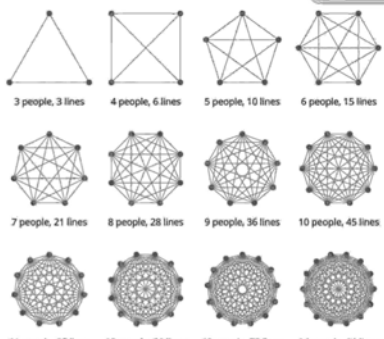
DEBRIEF

Observers
 What did you observe during the simulation?
 What rules or policies were in place to generate the dynamics you observed?
 How challenging was it to understand the system just by observing it?

Participants
 What did you notice during the simulation?
 What was your experience like as a participant in this activity?
 How was this activity like a system?

Who in the simulation had the most influence? Why?

Levels of System Complexity



3 people, 3 lines	4 people, 6 lines	5 people, 10 lines	6 people, 15 lines
7 people, 21 lines	8 people, 28 lines	9 people, 36 lines	10 people, 45 lines
11 people, 55 lines	12 people, 66 lines	13 people, 78 lines	14 people, 91 lines

Image credit: @JeppHansgaard @InnovisorInc

Characteristics of Systems

- Parts
- Relationships (Interconnections among the parts)
- Dynamics
- Goals



A system is a collection of elements that interact with each other over time to function as a whole.

Systems in Your Life

- Well-being
- Family
- Workplace
- School
- Community



Choose one and describe how it is a system.



Homework tab:
Practice the Habit
p. 6

The Five Systems

Your understanding of the systems in your life and work will affect your decisions, your actions and the way you choose to live. We have identified five basic life systems that involve people in the guidelines. Each system is represented by a circular icon. These sample systems are included throughout the guideline and are used to practice expressing and analyzing examples. To get started, select one each of the five system types.

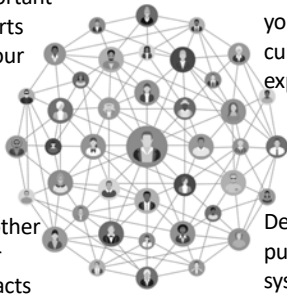
Icon	Sample System	Describe how each of these five systems would be used in the workplace and your life.
	Well-being Personal well-being as a system involves your physical, emotional and social health. It also considers your state of being happy and prosperous.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
	Family This system considers all of the people you choose to identify as your family, both immediate and extended, and may include people of all ages.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
	Workplace Your workplace considers systems that could include your employment, management position, your direct reporting or any role you play where you make a contribution to others.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
	School As a place for learning and preparation, school is a system that is constant. Not all of your school could be a public, private, charter or home setting and could be a system that you attended or any other phase of learning.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
	Community Your community could be a place where you reside or a place where you belong. It could be a town, city, or affiliation network. Your community involves relationships that are based around a common purpose.	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

And now it's time to look at **your** work place system
Consider the 4 system elements below:

Name 4 important elements/parts that are in your system

What are 2 changes your system is currently experiencing

What are 3 other systems your system interacts with?



Describe 1 goal or purpose of your system

Share your system with a partner



What is systems thinking?

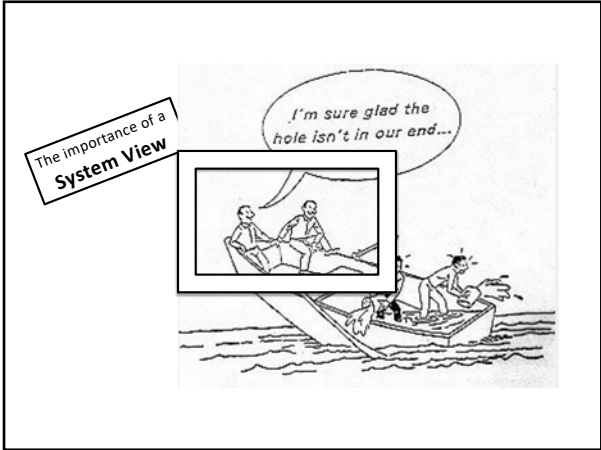
Systems thinking is a way of seeing the world that focuses on **relationships** that exist between system parts.

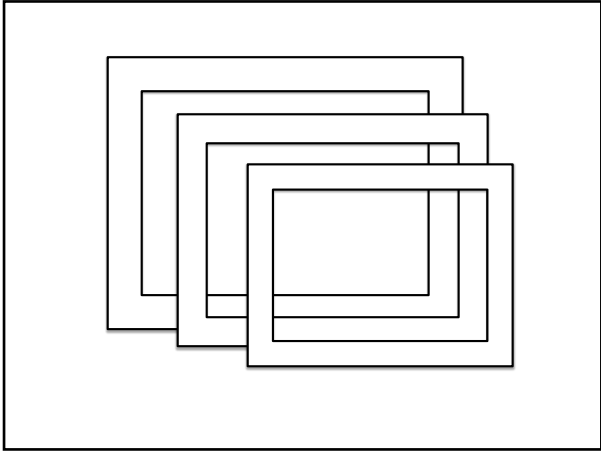
The **structures** that define the relationships determine the behavior of the system.

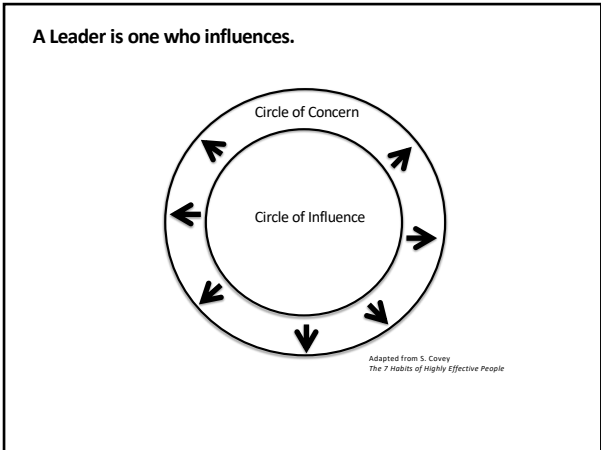
The behaviors of systems are viewed as **patterns or trends** that unfold over time versus a series of discrete events.

It is a way of thinking and a language for describing how things work.

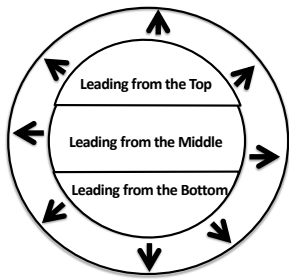






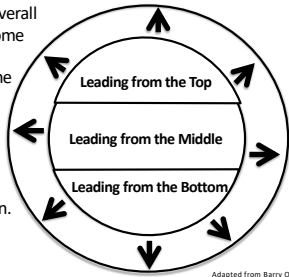


Influential Leadership Positions



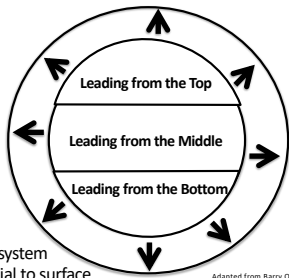
Adapted from Barry Oshry and David DeVane

Top Leaders have overall responsibility for some segment of the organization or some organizational function, whether as division head, project manager, team leader, instructor, and so on.



Adapted from Barry Oshry and David DeVane

Bottom Leaders have limited control over the resources needed to move projects or initiatives forward, yet have a unique perspective of the system that may be essential to surface when making decisions and taking action.



Adapted from Barry Oshry and David DeVane

Middle Leaders attempt to function between the conflicting needs, demands and priorities of others. They, too, have unique perspectives that are key in contributing to system understanding.

Adapted from Barry Oshry and David DeVane

Most likely you are all of these.

Adapted from Barry Oshry and David DeVane

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













What is a ...?

Farmer

Teacher


Waters Center for Systems Thinking


What is a Systems Thinker?

 Seeks to understand the "big picture"	 Observes how elements within systems change over time, generating patterns and trends	 Recognizes that a system's structure generates its behavior	 Identifies the circular nature of complex cause and effect relationships
 Makes meaningful connections within and between systems	<h3 style="text-align: center;">Habits of a Systems Thinker</h3>	 Changes perspectives to increase understanding	 Uses understanding of system structure to identify possible leverage actions
 Surfaces and tests assumptions	 Considers an issue fully and resists the urge to come to a quick conclusion	 Considers how mental models affect current reality and the future	 Checks results and changes actions if needed: "successing approximation"
 Considers short-term, long-term and unintended consequences of actions	 Pays attention to accumulations and their rates of change	 Recognizes the impact of time delays when exploring cause and effect relationships	 Checks results and changes actions if needed: "successing approximation"

***"First forget inspiration.
Habit is more dependable.
Habit will sustain you whether you're inspired or not.
Habit is persistence in practice."***

*Octavia Butler,
Award winning author*





What are your strengths and challenges?

Quickly review each card and make 3 piles:

1. **Strengths**
Habits you practice regularly
2. **Growth Areas**
Habits that need more practice
3. **Don't understand**
"I have no idea what this is about."

Choose 2 of your strength Habits and be ready to tell a story of how you practiced those Habits recently.

Habits of a Systems Thinker
Self-Assessment for Individuals and in
Group Settings



Mark exercise tab:
p. 120-121

Habits Dialogue Walk
Bring your cards



Share your strengths and growth area Habits.
Why did you choose these Habits?
Which Habits are especially important to your
early childhood leadership work?



Record some insights and reflections
from your dialogue walk.

Habits of Leaders We Know and Admire



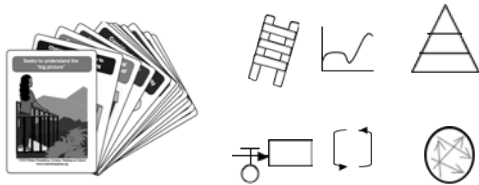
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p. 122-123



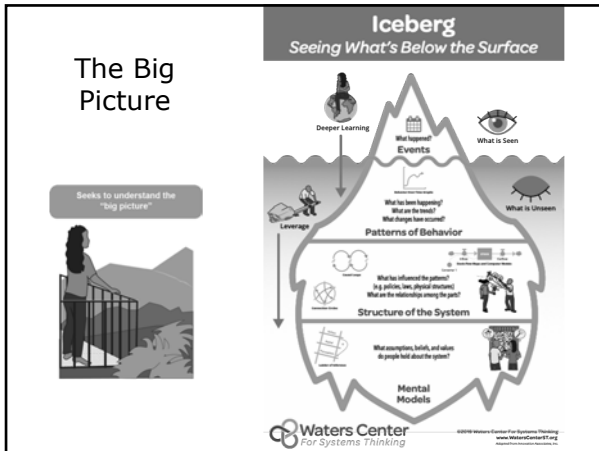
Think about your leadership legacy.
When people choose you as a leader they admire,
which **Habits** would they identify as those you
model and practice consistently?

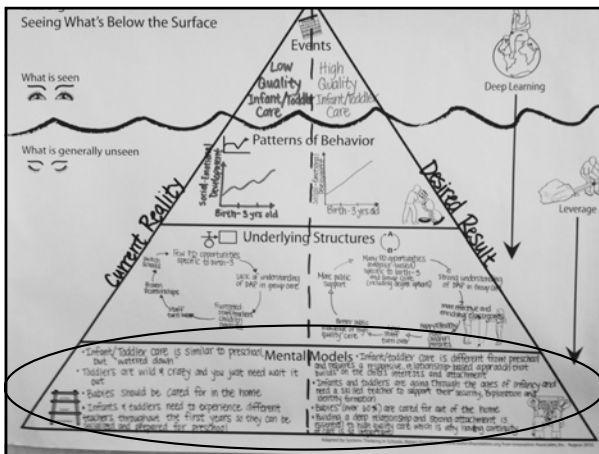
Why systems thinking?

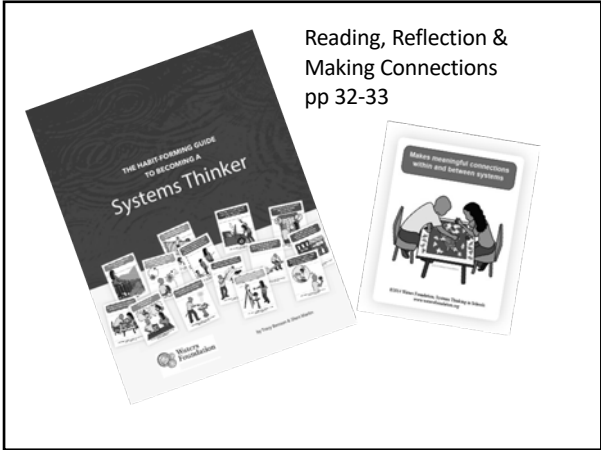
Systems thinking offers us a powerful new
perspective, a specialized language, a series of
Habits and a set of tools.



Your system...any system is perfectly designed to produce the results you are obtaining.
 (Adapted from Carr, 2008)







Reading, Reflection & Making Connections pp 32-33
