

FOUR PATTERNS OF THOUGHT

WORLDS OF POSSIBILITY

The brain is very complex and uses the following four rules simultaneously to build thought structures of great intricacy. This includes things like identifying relationships and deconstructing their parts, using perspectives to reorganize systems of distinctions and relationships, taking perspectives of both animate and inanimate objects, and breaking perspectives into parts in order to avoid gross generalizations about the perspectives of different groups.



J DISTINCTIONS (IDENTITY-OTHER)

DISTINCTIONS are made between and among things and ideas. How we draw or define the boundaries of an idea or a system of ideas is an essential aspect of understanding. Whenever we draw a boundary to define a thing, that same boundary defines what is not the thing (the "other"). Distinctions are used to challenge existing norms, labels, and definitions, and to identify biases in the way information is structured.

RELATIONSHIPS (ACTION-REACTION)

RELATIONSHIPS are defined between and among things and ideas. We cannot understand much about anything, including a system, without understanding how parts and wholes are related. Relationships come in all types: causal, correlation, direct/indirect, etc. Systems thinkers use relationships to show dynamical interactions between things and ideas, including feedback loops to show reciprocal relations.

SYSTEMS (PART-WHOLE)

Organizing things and ideas into part-whole SYSTEMS helps to make meaning. Systems thinkers know that changing the way ideas are organized changes meaning itself. The act of thinking is defined by splitting things up or lumping them together. Systems thinkers constantly consider context by asking "what is this a part of?" in order to see how things fit into larger wholes than is the norm.



J PERSPECTIVES (POINT-VIEW)

PERSPECTIVES are taken and understood every time we make a distinction (including identifying relationships and systems). Systems thinkers use perspectives to rethink distinctions, relationships, and/or systems. They move beyond human or animal perspectives (i.e., "perspectives with eyes") by taking conceptual perspectives (i.e., seeing a phenomenon from the perspective of an idea or thing).

