

Systems Snapshot Q&A



Fitzroy S. Lewis

Connected Together Coordinator

The Sexual Assault Resource and Counseling Center (SARCC)

Q: How were you first introduced to systems thinking?

A: As a young child growing up in the Caribbean, I was immersed in a fascinating natural world. We didn't have electricity until I was six or seven, so at night it was pitch black. Seeing the array of stars and the variety of living things put me in awe at an early age. It fostered the sense that life is stunningly complex, yet everything is part of one whole.

Q: Which Habit of a Systems Thinker do you wish everyone practiced?

A: Big Picture. It helps us understand the unified engagement of things in one system. For example, things grow, things die, they decompose, they become part of the earth again through countless microprocesses happening and working together to foster more life. There is no greater system than life itself! When we have a Big Picture view, we let go of this notion of "command and control" and understand that nature will always show us who is boss.

Q: Which leader (past or present) do you admire most and why?

A: The Messiah is in a class by Himself. Among mere humans, Nelson Mandela. I did a research paper on him during my first year of college in 1981. When he was released from prison, the approach he took demonstrated true servant leadership. Instead of seeking retribution for injustice, he sought the future good for the whole system—for all people.

Q: What is one book you think everyone should read?

A: The Bible. Talk about a prime candidate for a Systems Thinking approach!! There's more there than most people think. There's a lot less, too.

Q: What advice do you have for someone getting started as a systems thinker?

A: The most important thing is to know that you are already a systems thinker. You only need to be more intentional at broadening and refining the skills. That's a system you can navigate.

Q: Why do you think the world needs systems thinkers?

A: The rabbis of Judaism have said, "It is not up to you to win the war, but neither is it for you to desist from the battle." We have a responsibility to do better, to create a better future. The only way to truly honor the system of life is through better systems thinking.