

# **Systems Snapshot Q&A**



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**Q:** How were you first introduced to systems thinking?

**A:** When the Philadelphia School District went on strike for 50 days, my mom sat me down to help me understand what was happening and why. She helped me see things from the perspective of educators and explained the domino effect of laying off 3,500 teachers. For me, this was the start of systems thinking. It was 1981 and I was 9 years old.

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

**A:** It's definitely *Changes Perspectives to Increase Understanding*. A willingness to gain perspectives can lead to a mindset shift. Shifts in thinking can lead to shifts in behavior. And that's the start of system transformation.

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

**A:** *The most?* That's hard because there isn't just one. Since I've already mentioned my mom, I'll spotlight Fannie Lou Hamer. She was an organizer, civil and women's rights activist, and an example of how everyday common people can step into their power, their agency, and have a lasting impact.

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

**A:** *Restoring Sanity* by Margaret Wheatley.

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

**A:** Slow down and ask questions that can allow you to look at patterns and relationships among the elements of the system you are observing.

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

**A:** Because the world is beautiful, messy, and complex, system- and so are its problems. Systems thinkers are willing to look at the complexity of the world and see how it is interconnected. Systems thinking invites us to look at things from various perspectives, change our mindset, and hopefully make decisions with a better understanding of their impact on the world.