



System1 Introduction to Systems Thinking

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System thinkers see everything as a system of positive and negative forces acting on each other to hold a system in balance. The cause of one action is the effect of another in sequence until they feedback into each other. The positive and negative spin of the forces acting on each other hold the system in balance. Thus it is a system. Here are some 'system thoughts' to think about.

Rules of Thumb for System Thinking. Some are common sense, some make you go, hmmm. Put your system cap on and see what you see.

1. **Everything is connected to everything else.** Every system has influences that affect its balance and how it behaves.
2. **The obvious solution does more harm than good.** Appeasing the squeaky wheel just ignore all the rest of the parts of the system. In fact, it teaches the rest how to be squeaky.
3. **Don't fight the positive feedback loop, give power to the negative feedback loop.** Fighting the positive just makes it more powerful. Support the enemy's enemy instead.
4. **Negate the negative.** Take power away from negative force to a system and you add power to its positive counterforce.
5. **Don't make rules you can't enforce.** It just adds to the system confusion.
6. **Look for leverage points.** Discover those that require little/easy change that have the greater impact.
7. **Don't try to control the players, change the rules.** People react to the system rules before they will stand being confined by control. Welcome to human behavior.
8. **There are no simple solutions.** For one solution creates a new problem.
9. **You can't help people without making them self-sufficient!** If you try, you do more harm than good. Giving birds food in the summer causes them to die in the winter once the feeding stops.
10. **There are no final answers.** (It is the adaptable, not the well adapted that survive.; Ken Baulden) Nothing is forever.
11. **Every solution creates new problems.** If you don't believe it, just look at today's problems. They were yesterday's solutions.
12. **Loose systems are often better than tightly structured ones.** They look chaotic and wasteful, but the more flexible they are, the more stable and balanced they become. You can't drive a car holding the steering wheel fixed.
13. **Don't be fooled by cycles within the system.** They are part of the system.
14. **Competition is often cooperation in disguise.** Competition has rules of fairness or it is no longer a competition. Ever hear about the Aggie/Texas football game and Texas walked off the field because of the officials' ruling? Three plays later, the Aggies made a touchdown.
15. **Bad boundaries make for bad government.** If the city of Houston taxes those inside the city limits yet benefits the suburbs, the inner city will die.