Iceberg Model of Systems Thinking
Activity Worksheet

Events

Patterns / Trends

Structures

Mental Models

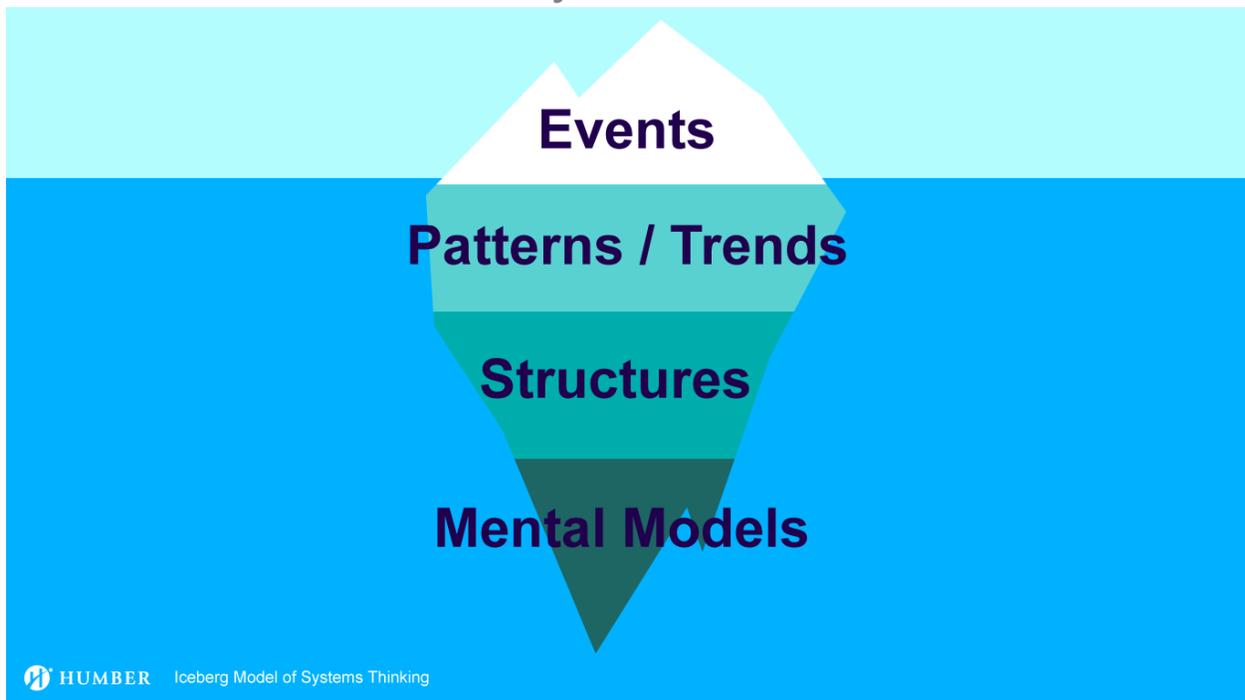HUMBER   Iceberg Model of Systems Thinking

Activity Worksheet Legend:

Self-Reflection
Reflect and write down your individual thoughts to the exploratory question

Obtain different perspectives
Ask colleagues/friends about their perspectives to the question prompts towards the problem. They may be like yours or completely different.

LEVEL 1 – Event(s)
What Happened?

This is the problem we can see and/or are aware of. What is the problem you are witnessing?

What is the Problem?

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Exploratory Questions:

☁	What about this problem catches my attention?	
☁	What is happening right now?	
☁	What can I see?	
👥	What can others see?	

LEVEL 2 - Patterns and Trends
What Trends are Noticeable Over Time?

This level explores potential trends or patterns of the problem you've identified in level 1. Fill out the exploratory question below.

Exploratory Questions

What patterns exist and/or relate to the problem I overserved?	
What has occurred over time?	
What are the trends I've observed?	
What trends have others observed trends over time?	

LEVEL 3 - Structures
What has influenced these patterns and trends?

At this level, you'll be able to identify the root of the problem. Structures can be visible/invisible, tangible/ intangible. Structures may be laws or rules that dictate or influence events at level 1 to occur.

Exploratory Questions

What structures exist that might explain the patterns and trends I've observed in level 2?	
What has influenced and connected the patterns? (Social rules, policies, guidelines, resources)	
What have others said about structures that have influenced the patterns and trends observed?	

LEVEL 4 – Mental Models

What are people's assumptions about the system?

This final level explores the internal belief systems, values, identities we have. Our bias influences and shapes the way we approach complex problems.

☁	What are the values, beliefs I have that I've learned from my society/family which influence how I view this problem?	
☁	What attitudes, beliefs, expectations, and values do I think others have about this system?	
☁	What are the, often unspoken, ways of knowing which has influenced people's attitudes towards this issue?	
👥	What are the mental model biases for others surrounding this issue? How has that influenced how they view this system?	