Coherence Self-Assessment

HUMAN SYSTEMS DYNAMICS INSTITUTE

Coherence is defined by Mirriam Webster as a "*systematic or logical connection or consistency,*" and "*the integration of diverse elements, relationships, or values.*" *In human systems dynamics we talk about a system's need for coherence to build resilience iin the parts and the whole. One of the ways we talk about thsis is "fit for function." We talk about a reciprocal relationship where the parts of the system contribute to the success/health of the whole, even as the whole system is organized to support the individual parts. Glenda Eoyang, Ph.D., in her reseach, has identified seven characteristics of coherent systems: shared goals, shared meaning, repeated patterns, complementary functions, conserved energy, reduced internal tension, and internal and external adaptation. Over time we have seen these characteristics contribute to the overall functioning of systems, and where systems are struggling, we can see the absence of one or more of these characteristics. We have, for simplicity's sake, turned those characteristics into questions for self-reflection and identified indicators that reflect highly coherent systems.*

The following table provides a structure for self-reflection, based on those seven questions.

Column 1 lists each question as a reference point.

Column 2 holds indicators of each particular characteristic.

Column 3 offers a place for notes from ovbservations.

Column 4 offers HSD-based tools that might be useful as you explore your questions about the characteristics

Please note: These three HSD-based tools can be used across all the characteristics.

Inquiry   Adaptive Action   Pattern Logic

The assessment can be used by anyone who cares about a system where they live, work, or play. It can be used to explore current patterns; it can be used to consider future endeavors. For more information about coherence and any of these tools, please visit our website:
www.hsdinstitute.org

Reflect on these questions to explore the level of coherence in your system.	WHAT?	SO WHAT?	NOW WHAT?
	To what degree do these indicators of coherence show up?	What have you learned about the question, and what does that mean in your system?	These are HSD-Based tools to consider as you plan your next wise action.
	Do individuals, teams, groups:		
Is everyone going the same place? (Shared goals)	Explore shared purpose Agree on the destination Plan the path together Know what milestones to expect along the way Know how you'll know when you arrive		Radical Inquiry
Is this "trip" important to everyone? (Shared meaning)	Engage in collective sense-making Share common language about the work Appreciate the urgency of the work Tell, and listen to stories, hopes and dreams Share accountability		Four Truths
Do people and processes "fit" within reason? (Repeated patterns)	Look for repeated patterns of engagement Ensure clear roles, expectations, feedback Hold reasonable and useful norms Amplify useful, productive patterns		Decision map Pattern Spotters
Does everyone know they count? (Complementary functions)	Consider the whole, the part, the greater whole Coordinate processes and practices well Tolerate necessary redundancy Manage boundaries Empower informed decision making		Simple Rules Difference Matrix

	WHAT?	SO WHAT?	NOW WHAT?
Are you wasting energy? *(Conserved energy)*	Distinguish between urgent and important Prepare and resource each stakeholder Stay unstuck Embrace reasonable risk Provide useful and timely feedback		Interdependent Pairs Three Buckets
Are there too many cooks in the kitchen? *(Reduce internal tension)*	Reduce internal tension Create culture of meaningful evaluation Support continuous learning and growth Learn from tough lessons		Power of Questions STAR Diagram
Can people adjust and adapt? *(Internal and external adaptation)*	Find fit for function internally and externally Look for and respond to trends Notice and respond to surprises Learn from experiments Respond in robust and progressive ways		Landscape Diagram Three Kinds of Change