

Foundation Paper

**Solving complex problems through the
eyes and grounding of our deeper mind!**

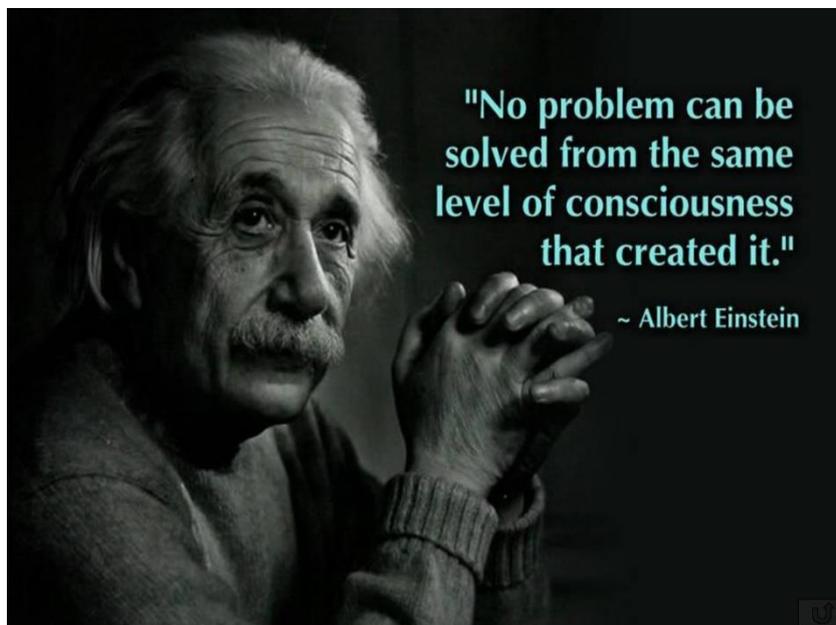
Mike Schwarzer

Solving complex problems through the eyes and grounding of our deeper mind!

By Mike Schwarzer

The world is facing unprecedented challenges. We live in far more complex conditions than previous generations. The future can no longer be predicted by looking at the past. Climate change is threatening the liveability on our planet. The speed of technological advances that affect our daily lives and put enormous pressure on businesses and institutions to keep up with the needs that come from those advances. A shift towards autocratic political leadership in many traditionally liberal western societies that causes division in the global community and that challenges the freedom we enjoy. Although, technologically we have become an interconnected global community, we have become more disconnected at the human level and from our biosphere.

What is the solution to the solution? (yes, I wrote that quite deliberately)

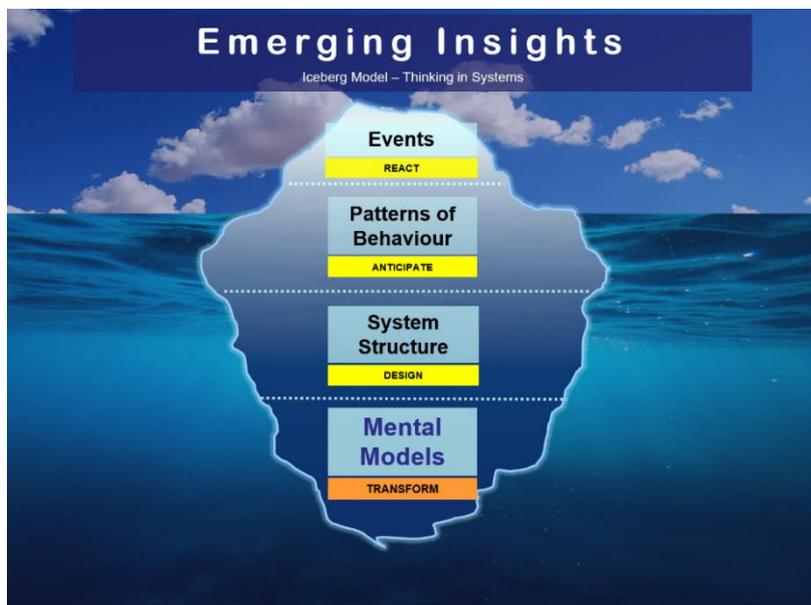


The clue can be found in this Einstein quote above, “No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness or thinking that created the problem.”

Expanding perception

Let’s look at this through the Iceberg Model - Thinking in Systems. This model serves as a tool and metaphor to explore and understand the underlying dynamics and complex nature of minor and major events in our communities and organisations. It allows us to expand our perception and see events holistically rather than as isolated occurrences. Their correlations to any other events and the interplay of the various parts and dynamics involved. We see patterns and trends from which these events have emerged, see the structures and relationships that enable those patterns, we take note of the mental models that have given birth to those structures and that either hold them in place or allow them to transform.

The traditional model focuses on the four dimensions or levels of thinking referred to above - Events, Patterns of Behaviour, Structure and Mental Models (see illustration below).



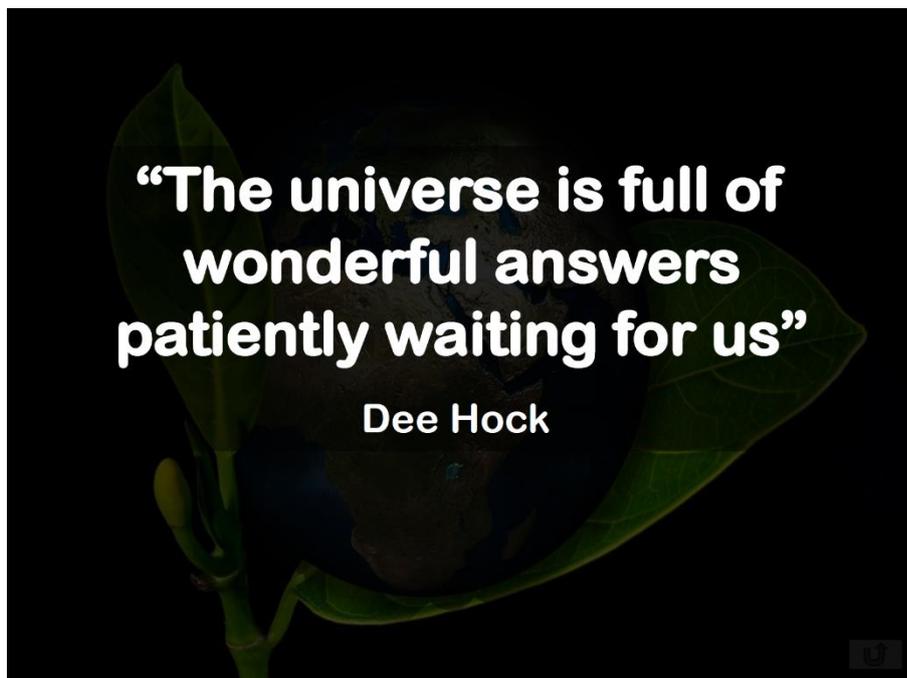
1. **Events** – the events are placed above the waterline as they are generally visible and therefore observable. These are the things that happen in our lives and in the world. We see them in nature as bushfires, floods and earthquakes. We see them in the way we behave and act as individuals and as a community and the effects or outcomes of those behaviours and actions. Although, simple problems can be solved at this level, tackling complex problems at this level, is often reactive in nature. We tend to try to solve them with force. Without understanding and considering the underlying dynamics and deeper issues can easily be met with resistance and conflict or even create the adverse effect.
2. **Patterns of behaviour** – when we start to look a little deeper, we become aware of the patterns of behaviours, characteristics and trends that are in play for these events to occur. Parts of these patterns may be above the waterline and visible where others are under the surface. Being able to see the patterns that lead to those events to occur, allows us to anticipate and plan for them. This level of thinking enables us to adapt to problems and react more effectively to them. This can be more of a case of accommodating or negotiating the problem rather than solving the problem.
3. **Structure** – when we drop underneath the patterns that are in play, we observe the structure that enables the patterns of behaviour to occur. In a sense, the structure is the manifestation of our embodied thinking (more about that in the next level – Mental Models). It is the conditioned infrastructure, the 'path of least resistance', that runs in the background, out of our consciousness, yet that invisibly guides our decisions, behaviours and actions. Just like a riverbed, water will generally flow along the design of its shape as that is the path of the least resistance. Structure shows up in the design and thinking of organisations and institutions. They may function hierarchically (top down control) or self-organised (network enabled) or somewhere in between. The way they function might be formalised through written or unwritten rules, guidelines, norms, policies, procedure, processes and power structures. They also show up in cultural and family systems through their various norms and customs. At this level of thinking we can look at redesigning the shape of the structure. This is transactional in nature, by doing things differently. Like reengineering the riverbed and diverting the flow of the water into a different direction. At first glance this looks like a simple process, change the design and we are good to go. But for example, looking at the success rate of organisational change programs that are often facilitated at and from this level we see that this is not the case. Making change purely at the design stage at the physical and behavioural level, without considering the deeper drivers of the human element we can encounter resistance and it can also create adverse effects.

4. **Mental Models** – when we drop below the level of structure, we drop into the space that gives birth to the structure, this is the level or world of thought. Here we find how we make assumptions (biases, reasons, judgements, interpretations, evaluations, beliefs, values, intentions, etc) about the world out there, how the world works or how it doesn't work. What's right and what is wrong. And how the embodiment of those assumptions manifests itself in the structure. Engaging at this level of thinking to solve problems and to create change can be transformational in nature. Here we are not just making transactional design changes, but we engage with people's hearts and minds and ideally in a collaborative and co-creating fashion.

Opening the door for Insight to emerge!

What if there was another, more potent level? We tend to focus our attention on the iceberg and its form. But where do icebergs live, what are they made of? Icebergs live in the sea and they are made of water. What would happen if we would drop underneath the level of the mental models of the iceberg, into the space of the water, which I refer to as the Deeper Mind?

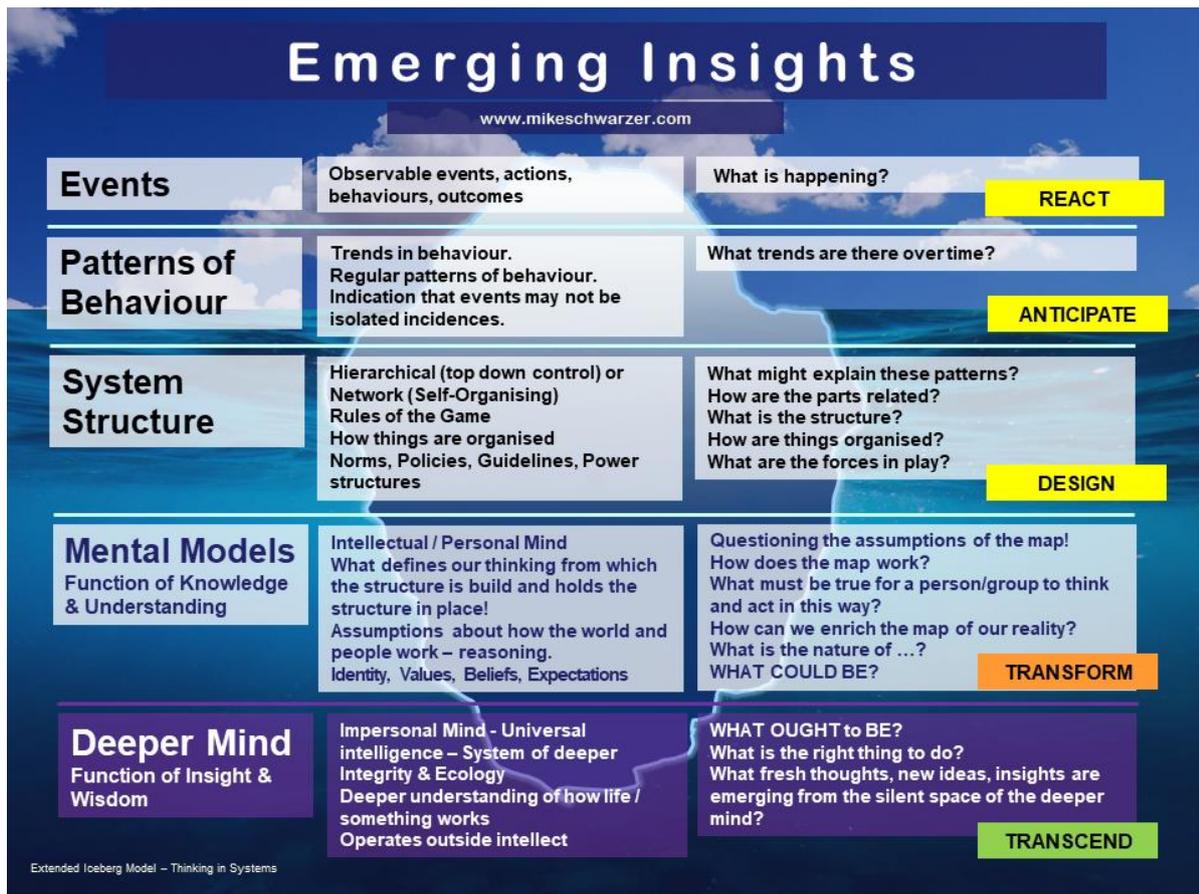
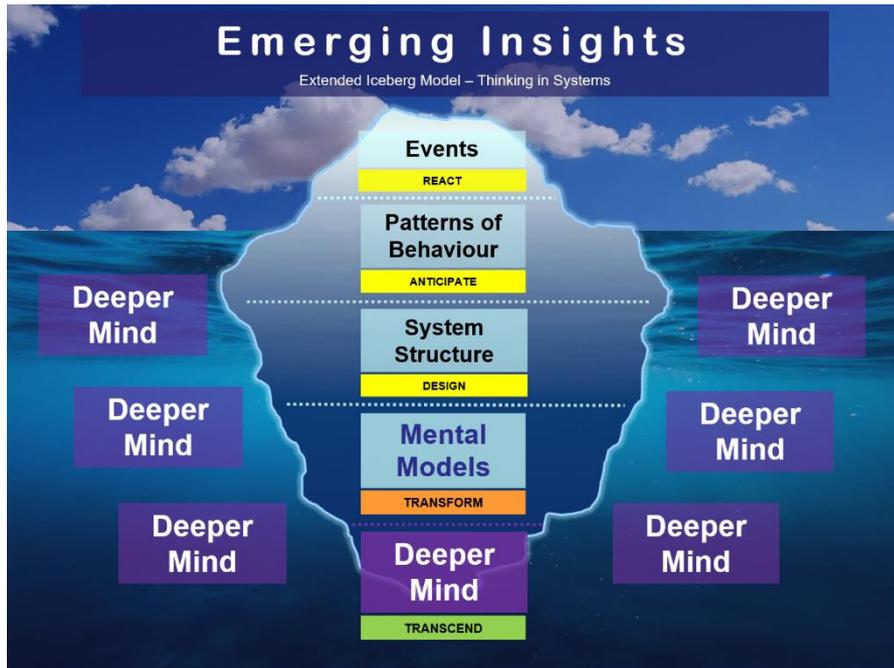
5. **Deeper Mind** - This is the level before our thinking has taken shape. It's the formless intelligence and energy behind life that we are part of. This is the source of deeper insight and deeper appreciation of the ecology of the wider system. These deeper insights often emerge when we have little or nothing on our mind. They show up as an embodied understanding of how life or various aspects of life work from outside the bias and limitation of human conditioning. The implications of these insights, can be described as transcending in nature.



Dee Hock, is the Founder and first CEO of VISA. In his book One from Many: VISA and the rise of Chaordic Organisation, where he shares the journey of how he created the VISA organisation based on the principles of living systems. It is also apparent that he greatly drew from the creative intelligence of this deeper mind.

The quote above suggests that when we look into the direction of the Deeper Mind (Universe), the answers to our problems are waiting to emerge.

The extended Iceberg Model showing the Deeper Mind



Navigating at the level of Mental Models and the Deeper Mind

Mental Models - Intellect

The traditional Iceberg Model illustrates that in order to create change the most transformational place is at the Mental Model level.

- Mental models exist in the world of form, the intellect or personal mind. From that perspective, the quality of our lives and our way of showing up in the world depends on and is determined by the quality of our mental models (or frames or assumptions) about how the world works. Their level of meaningfulness and robustness. And people's level of awareness and perspective on the usefulness as well as the health of those mental models. Furthermore, our cognitive thinking and feeling is not a linear but a systemic and self-reflexive process.

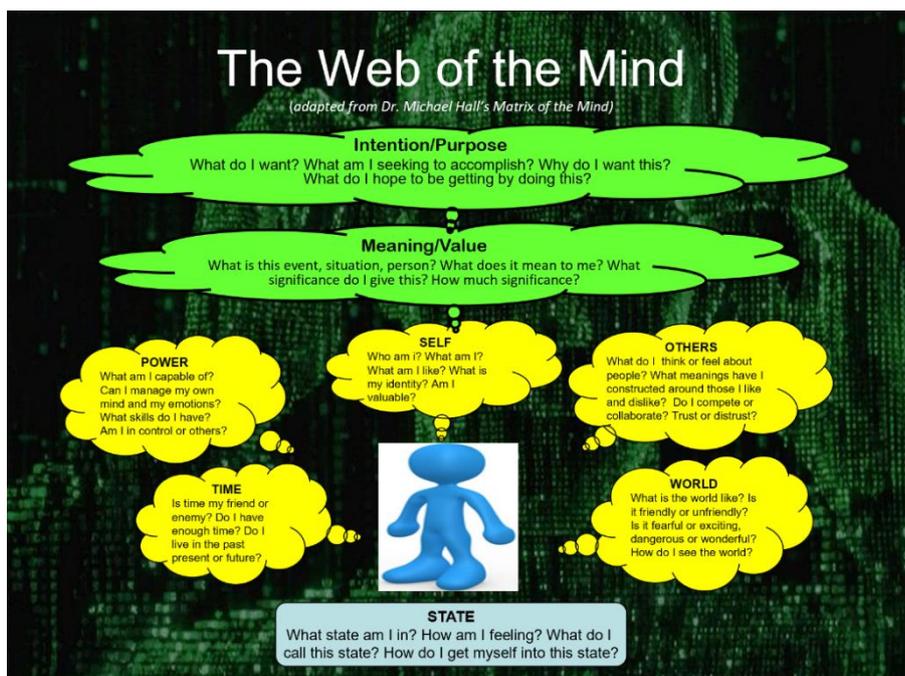
The illustration of the Web of the Mind below, provides you with a map to observe and to engage with a person's thinking, feeling, behaving and acting.

At the mental model level, people are driven by the meanings that they are giving to the world and their circumstances as well as their intentions in relation to those meanings. This is reflected in what they pay attention to, how they feel about their circumstances, the decisions they make and what actions they take.

'Energy flows where attention goes as directed by Intention!' (Neuro-Semantic Presupposition).

For example: If a person gives a negative meaning to a circumstance or event their intention might be to avoid that circumstance. Hence, depending on how they feel this meaning in their body, they will pay attention to the things, make decisions and take actions that will move them away from that circumstance or problem they dislike. They may also resist any efforts to convince them otherwise.

Intention is generally, an invisible out-of-consciousness process that is grounded in their neurology, that people are therefore not aware of. It requires effort to step back and observe one's thinking and intentions let alone changing those intentions.



Creating any change or collaboration at this level, requires engaging with peoples embodied meanings and intentions. Ideally when engaging with oneself and others we need to consider our own intentions (agendas) and the meanings that we bring to the world. We want to consider that they are ecological, add choice to others and enable others to achieve.

Deeper Mind – Universal Intelligence

If we then go to an even deeper level, we reach the world of the formless, the deeper and quiet mind.

- This deeper mind is the space before mental models and their biases have been formed. It is the source of universal intelligence and a deeper ecology and integrity, that shows up as fresh thoughts, new ideas and insights (aha moments). When our mental models are grounded in deeper insight and integrity, they provide a stronger foundation for self-organising structures and patterns to emerge. They allow us to see with greater clarity, stimulate creative energy and give us a stronger sense of purpose and direction. At this level we find it easy to connect with others and make ecologically sound decisions.

The illustration below shows the Web of the Mind (Mental Models) as the servant to the Deeper Mind. It acts as a device that allows us to articulate the insights and understandings that have emerged from the Deeper Mind. Imagine your intellect as a computer screen and the Deeper Mind as cosmic Google!

The Deeper Mind is best accessed with little or nothing on our mind (Intellectual). When we have less on our mind solutions to our problems often show up. Some people experience this while having a shower or going for a walk or whilst having an engaging conversation. When in this space, we tend to feel more alive and calm. We connect easily with others and they are feeling more alive and calm in our presence. Our conversations are more engaging and create the space for new ideas and fresh thought to emerge.

