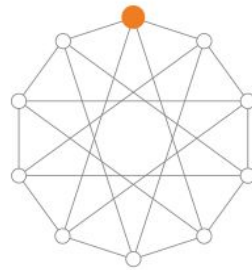# Explore New Mental Models & Operating Metaphors

Humane Leadership Institute

Mental Models

- Categories imply a framework or model – e.g. animal vs. plant tacos
- Models allow us to structure our thinking about complex domains
- Every domain has its own models
  - Medical
    - First do no harm
    - Triage
    - Relieve symptoms and treat conditions
  - Construction – a study on mental models in construction is [here](#)
    - Plan of action, order of operations, and next steps
    - Tools, skills, and labor
    - Timeline, weather, materials and labor

Mental Models – Usage and Limits

- Which model to use and how models relate to reality is often based on intuition
  - Make your best guess
  - Run some thought experiments to see if the model helps clarify your situation
  - Either keep an open mind while continuing your experiment or keep looking for a useful model
- The map is not the territory – a short article
  - We tend to forget that our map is a tool to understand reality, NOT reality itself
  - Be very careful to avoid thinking of your team as athletes or warriors if your model happens to be sports or martial
  - If you are not getting the results you want from your work and experience, look for a new model

A few popular analytical models

- SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
- 5 Whys -Root Cause Analysis – [RCA Wisdom Jig](#)
- PESTLE - six external factors affecting your business: Political, Economic, Sociological, Technological, Legal and Environmental.
- KPCOFGS - Linnaeus' taxonomy of living things
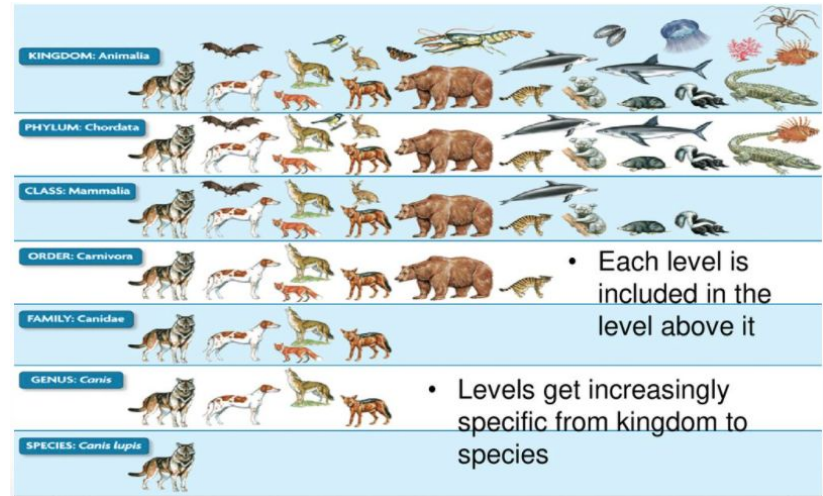
Every Mental Model is Built on a Metaphor

My work is like...

Upgrading your Operating Metaphors can shift your experience and efficacy

- Experiment v. Battle
- Important Projects v. Toilsome Career
- Orchard v. Machine
- Nature v. Individuals
- One v. Many

What Models and Metaphors Structure Your Life?

What models do you use most?

Where did your metaphors come from? – parents, coaches, teachers?

How do your models help you?

How do your models hinder you?

Which metaphors and models might be more useful for you?

"A philosophy of freedom must set out from the experience of thinking, for it is through this experience of thinking that a human being discovers his own self, finds his bearings as an independent personality."

—   Rudolf Steiner, A Philosophy of Freedom

Design the images, scope, and process of your

own thinking

and you begin designing your own life.