

When addressing conservation challenges, we need to see possibilities through a new set of mental models that are coherent with the natural realm that we ourselves are part of.

These 7 mindsets will help you explore a genuine connection to yourself, your team members, your communities, your stakeholders, all humanity and the natural environment as a whole.



# THE (RE)CONNECTION STAGE

## MINDSETS

Through bio-inspiration, teams can adopt new mental models that are coherent with the principles that govern both natural systems and ourselves as an integral part of these systems.

The following mental models will help participants align with their values, assumptions, agenda, and expectations.

You can take turns to draw a card and reflect on how each mental model applies to yourself, your team, your institution and/or the project you are working on.

There are no set times or rules, trust the process and let it transform you.

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HONEST

# HONEST

Bring your whole self to each project.

Any working team (and the natural realm) will benefit more from your uniqueness, your passions and your spontaneity.

In nature, form follows function. This allows organisms to accomplish their goals with the minimum resources.

Self-honesty encourages transparency, vulnerability, openness and awareness, which have been identified as the main principles for building trust between teams.

When people are honest with themselves, they are committed to their core beliefs. When self-honest people relate to one another, they show up coherent and fearless, confident by acknowledging their capabilities and flaws. The bonds based on self-honesty are genuine, respectful, and strong.

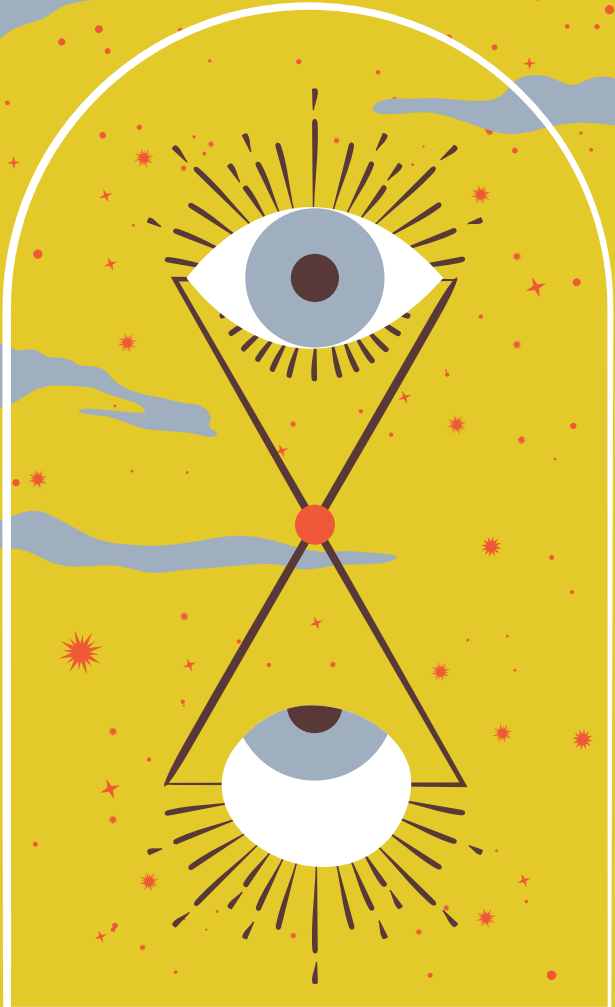
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RELATIVE

# RELATIVE

Be open to new perspectives within yourself and from other species.

Challenge your assumptions.  
Unlearn.Learn.  
Repeat.

In nature, there is no *absolute* frame of reference. Every time you measure, make a statement, or get an insight, it's always in relation to your own frame of reference and positionality.

In both biology and design, a strategy that works well to meet a function in one context, might not work in a different setting. We must be prepared to deconstruct and reframe problems continuously.

D4C teams must consider numerous points of view simultaneously, become comfortable with ambiguity, and embrace uncertainty. They must step into different shoes and hear many voices.

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CYCLIC

# CYCLIC

When we think in cycles, nothing ever is lost, everything is transformed, just like in the natural realm.

Think in spirals and aim for thriving, not eternal growth.

Just like nature is ruled by the planetary cycles, so are the humans that are made by the same elements.

Every living system has phases of growth and phases of rest, this is the slow wisdom that enables evolution, where growth is based on quality more than quantity. This is addressed by embedding circular, regenerative models into your projects from the conception stages.

In D4C, teams can go from *agile-to-deep* analysis in cycles, iterating and optimizing their understanding, ideas, projects. These cycles are spirals moving forward (e.g. build on ideas of others, re-interpret your previous ideas, iterate in order to refine).



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**POSITIVE**

# POSITIVE

Create from a place of love and compassion.

Aim high and expect positive results: every challenge is an opportunity to learn and grow.

Let the challenge drive you, and trust the process. Even the most challenging wicked problems have an approachable angle under a positive mindset.

Positivity within a project is key, since it can help teams adopt error-friendly approaches. Whether your team accomplishes the goal or not, the process will definitely add knowledge and experience for everyone involved.

Some projects are not so much about the destination, but the journey itself. Gratitude, hope and intent will boost positive results and make the journey memorable.



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**BALANCED**

# BALANCED

Seek balance between gentle and rigorous approaches, they are complementary, interconnected, and interdependent in the natural world.

Remember that mother earth is feminine.

Yin and Yang represent the concept of duality in an indivisible whole. Seemingly opposite forces are actually complementary and interdependent in the natural world, giving rise to each other as they interrelate to one another.

Yin refers to the feminine energies in life: being, waiting, feeling, caring, creating, empathy, intuition; while Yang masculine energy is about doing, efficiency, strength, rationality and results.

When looking at the feminine, it becomes evident why the natural realm is traditionally presented as female, why mother earth is a mother and not a father, and the qualities that we need to foster within projects in order to restore balance.

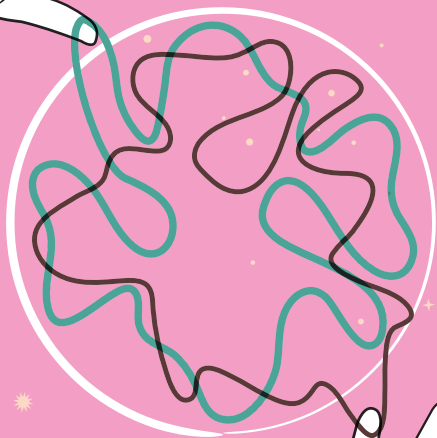
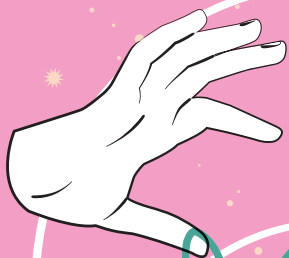


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**SYSTEMIC**

# SYSTEMIC

Understand yourself and your projects as living processes, embedded and intertwined within all of the other processes that make up a living world.

In nature, everything is connected in a system greater than the sum of its parts. What makes it work are the interactions and relationships between those parts. Interdisciplinarity is key to systems thinking.

Think of the world as a continuous dialogue between order, disorder and organization: nature in which chance and necessity combine in the most unforeseeable ways. A vital nature, in which we are immersed, of which we ourselves are made. Zoom in and out: focus on an approachable challenge, but never lose sight of the system.

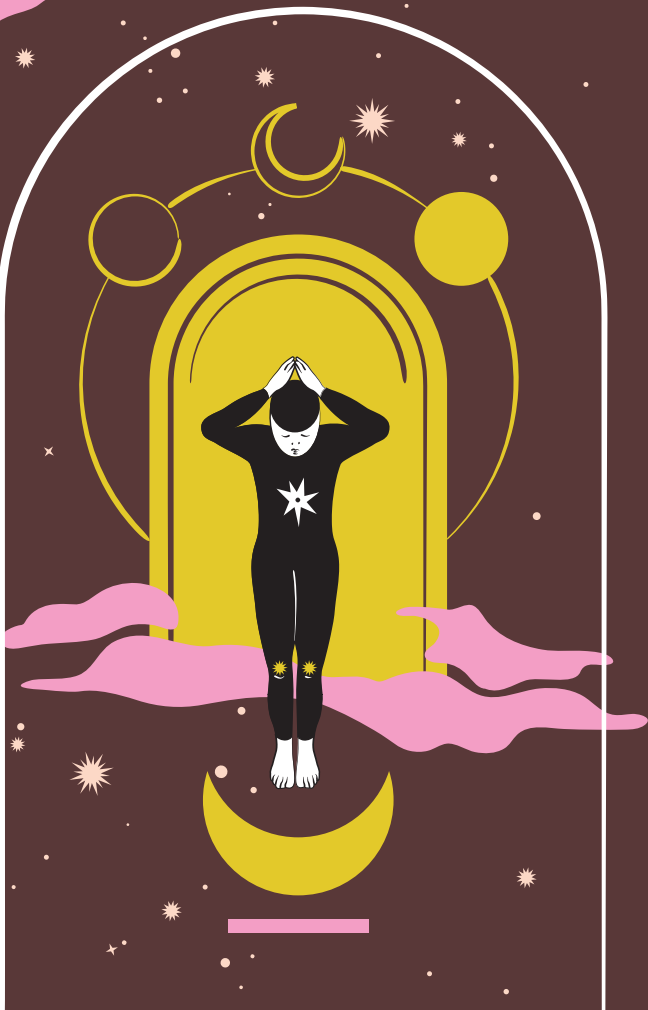
No organism can survive completely in isolation from other living things, human beings included.

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HUMBLE

# HUMBLE

Acknowledge your position in this universe.

Trust the earth's old, wise, perfected ways of doing things. Learn from them, try to imitate them as much as possible.

When we acknowledge that we are an embedded, small part of a vast system and have a very limited viewpoint, we conduct our projects differently.

Humility relates to the adoption of the beginner's mindset. When we let ego tell us that we have figured it all out, it prevents us from learning, bringing forth dangerous *unintended* consequences.

In the context of innovation, there needs to be a delicate balance between fast knowledge and slow wisdom. We must accept that we cannot entirely control natural systems and accept that our human paradigms, models and data only reflect a tiny part of reality.



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