17 Practices of Systems Thinking

1. **Considering both short and long term consequences of one's actions**
    Looking ahead and anticipating not only the immediate results of actions, but also the effects down the road

2. **Looking at multiple perspectives of an issue**
    Changing perspective to see other points of view within a system

3. **Looking at the 'big picture'**
    Focusing on the overall 'forest' as opposed to the details of any one 'tree'

4. **Looking for patterns in data**
    Reviewing information with an eye towards patterns or themes

5. **Looking for trends over time**
    Viewing changes over time as part of the natural dynamics of the system

6. **Being comfortable with ambiguity**
    Holding the tension of paradox and ambiguity; taking the time necessary to understand the dynamics of a system before taking action

7. **Checking results and changing actions if needed.**
    Assessing for improvement using benchmarks; seeing errors as a means to learning and adjustment

8. **Looking for interconnected issues**
    Perceiving connections between multiple issues/parts within a system

9. **Looking for small actions that can make big differences**
    Using systems understanding to determine what small actions could produce high leverage results

10. **Considering the impacts of accumulations over time**
    Paying attention to things that build up (or deplete) slowly over time—both concrete ('money in a bank account') or abstract ('trust within a relationship')

11. **Being comfortable with questioning one's deep assumptions**
    Understanding that one's beliefs of how the world works (mental models) may limit one's thinking.

12. **Being aware of boundaries**
    Understanding that boundaries are arbitrary; checking for consistency of understanding about where a particular boundary is drawn.

13. **Thinking critically about causation, not just correlation**
    Looking beyond basic connectedness to understand the dynamic relationship between the connected parts

14. **Being cautious of adopting a win/lose attitude**
    Being skeptical of a 'zero-sum game' approach to individual goals within a highly interdependent system

15. **Considering unintended consequences**
    Anticipating ancillary effects of actions over time

16. **Seeing self as part of system under study**
    Understanding that one's own behavior within the system, impacts the system

17. **Recognizing that a system's structure drives its behavior**
    Focusing on system structure and avoiding blaming others when things go wrong