Hera

Helping Empower Women through Reskilling and Advancement



Mental Models: How to Make Intelligent Decisions

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Mental Models for Clearer Thinking

- Learn to think beyond single causes
- Make better decisions in complex, uncertain situations
- Replace intuition-only thinking with structured reasoning



What Are Mental Models?

- Simple ways to understand how things work
- Tools that help you think, not ready-made answers
- Help you cut through confusion and focus on what matters
- Help you make better decisions in different areas of life

Real-life scenario

Your manager offers you a new project.

You feel tempted to say **YES** immediately.

But instead of reacting, you pause.

You ask yourself:

- If I take this on, what will I have less time for?
- Will my current work suffer?
- Will I lose time for rest or family?
- Is this helping me move in the direction I want?

Suddenly, the decision is no longer just "*This is a good opportunity.*"

It becomes:

"*What am I gaining, and what am I giving up*?"

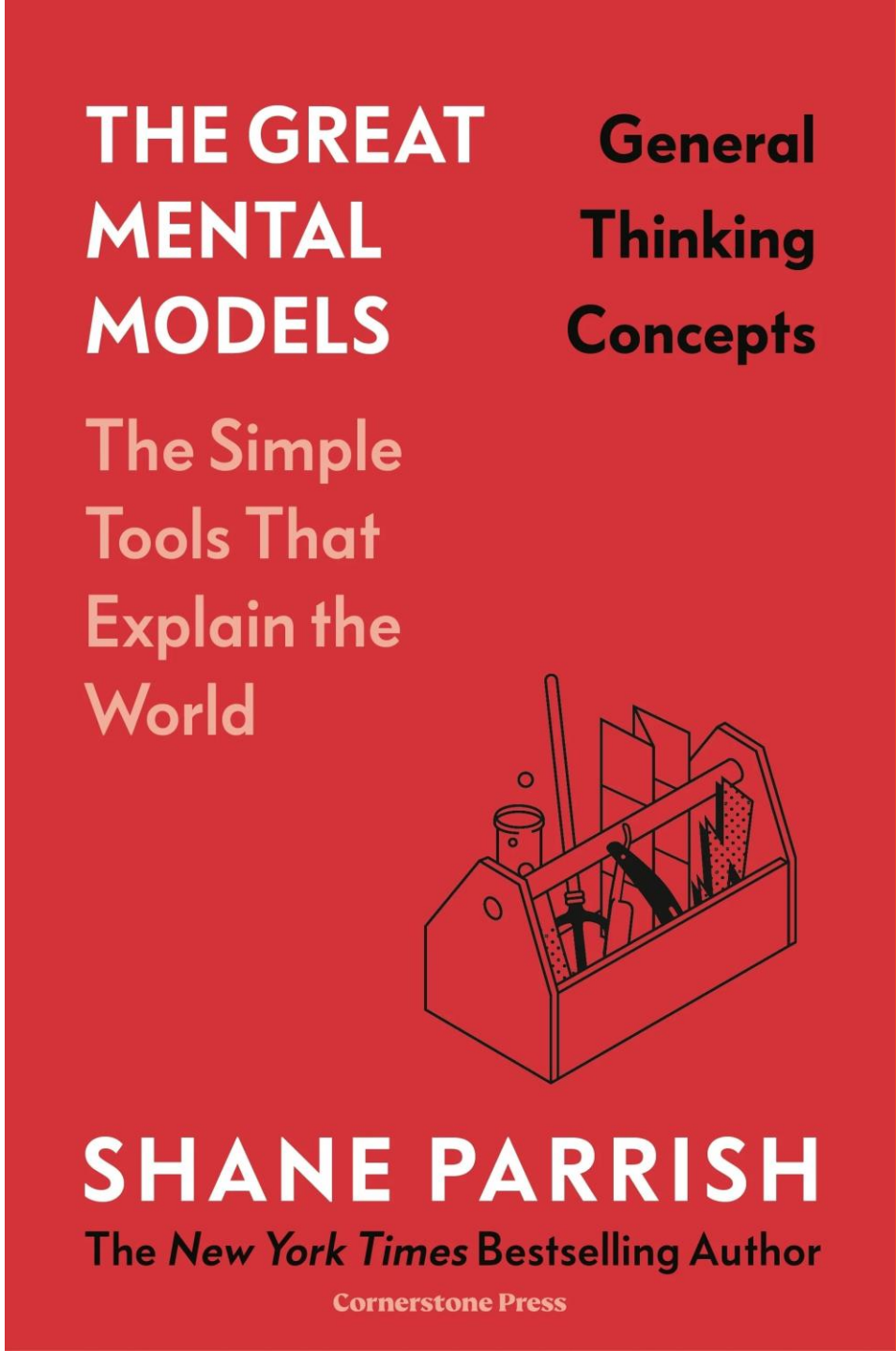
The Danger of One Way of Thinking

- One way of thinking = incomplete picture
- Most problems have multiple causes
- If you look at only one factor, you miss the rest
- Good decisions require multiple perspectives
- Clear thinking comes from combining ideas



Systems Thinking

- Seeing connections, not isolated problems
- Looking at patterns, not single events
- Thinking beyond quick fixes
- Understanding how actions create reactions



Real-life scenario

A company has high employee turnover.

Quick explanation: *“People just don’t stay loyal anymore.”*

Systems thinking:

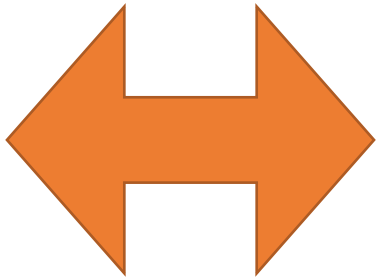
- What is the workload like?
- How is feedback given?
- Are there growth opportunities?
- How is leadership structured?
- What incentives are in place?

Looking at the **system** that produces the outcome.



Everything Is Connected

- Every action has consequences
- Small changes can affect many other things
- Results are often delayed
- Quick, simple thinking doesn't work in complex situations



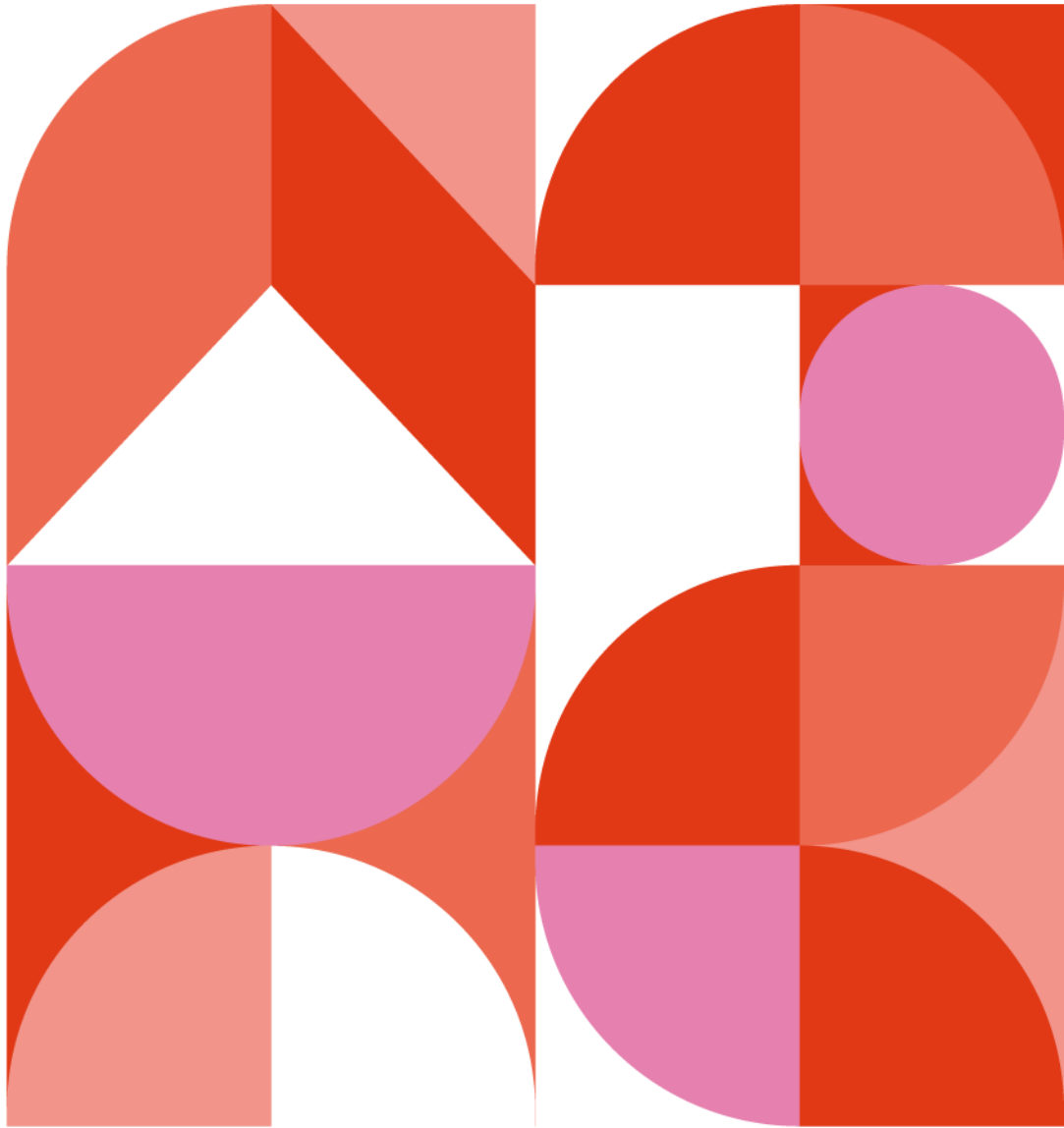
Systems Thinking Reminds Us:

Before acting, ask yourself:

- What else will this affect?
- What might happen later?

Reflection

- Can you think of a decision that felt good at first but created problems later?
- What small habit today might create big consequences in a year?
- Have you ever tried to fix a problem and accidentally made it worse? Why?



Growth Loops

Some actions create more of the same

- Positive actions: more effort → better results → more motivation
- Negative actions: bad habits → worse habits

Other actions keep things balanced

- When something changes, the system pushes back

If you don’t see the loop, you misunderstand what’s happening



Leverage Points

- Small adjustments can create large outcomes
- Some actions have a much bigger impact
- Hard work cannot fix poor design
- Always ask: “What small change could create the biggest shift?”

Changing the structure changes behavior.



Cognitive Biases in Systems

- We pay more attention to what we can see
- We focus on what happens right now
- We ignore slow or delayed effects
- We miss indirect consequences

Systems thinking helps us *think beyond the moment.*

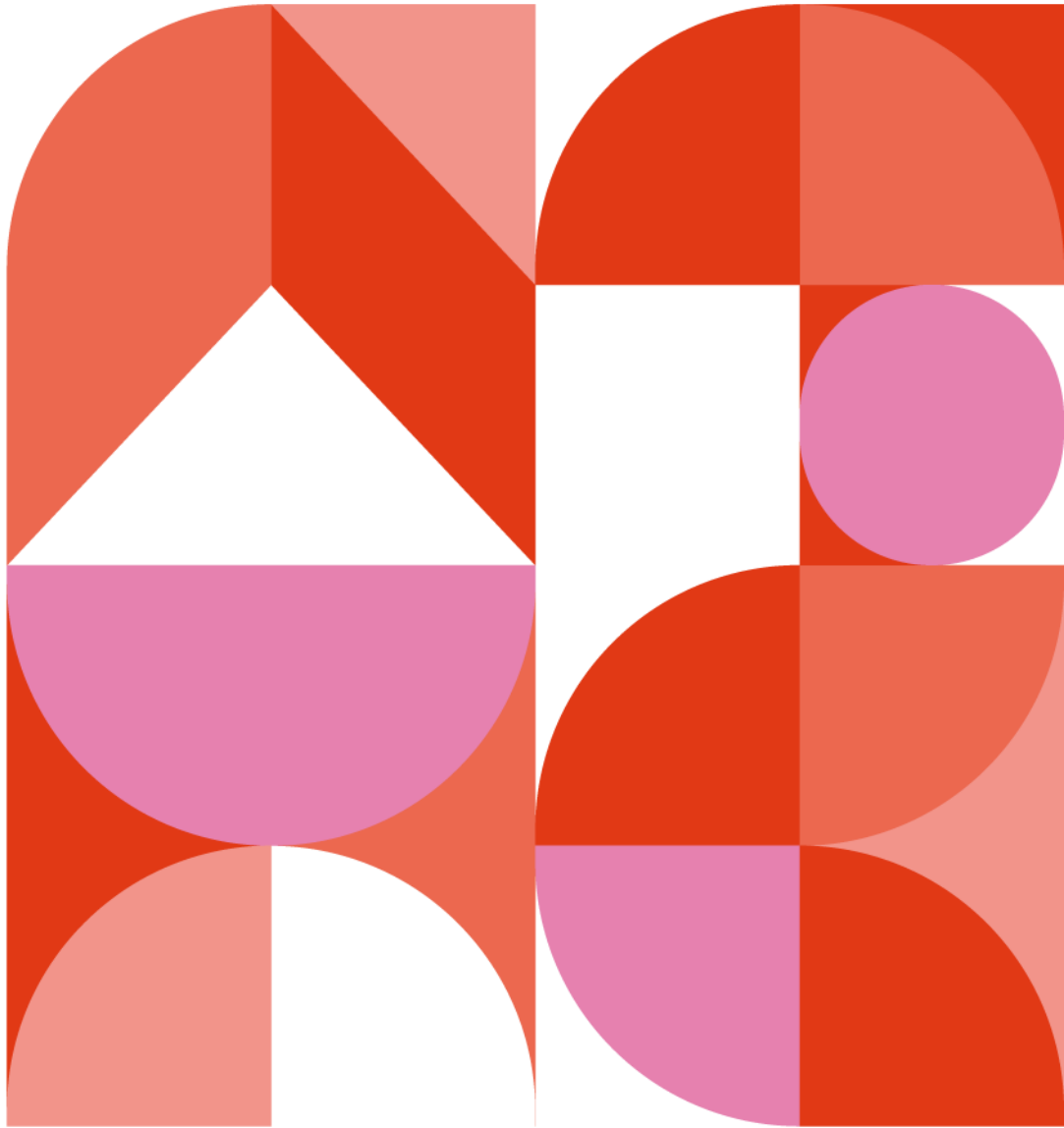


Reflection

- Reflect on a recent busy period. How did you decide what to focus on, and what influenced whether you chose what felt urgent or what was truly important?

- Think about how you usually make decisions. How do you balance immediate demands with long-term consequences?

- Recall a recent disagreement. What information did you focus on, and what information might you have ignored?



Don’t rely on just one way of thinking

Think about behavior

Think about trade-offs

Think about limitations and constraints

Combine Perspectives

References

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Thank you!

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