



HUMAN SYSTEMS  
DYNAMICS INSTITUTE

## Pattern Spotters

Some people have a gift for seeing patterns in chaos. They make great artists and politicians and parents of two-year-olds. Pattern spotting does not come naturally to others, they look at a mess, and see only the mess. In HSD, we depend on being able to see deep simplicity that hides under the surface of chaos, so seeing patterns is a core competency for HSD practitioners.

We recognize that pattern geniuses live among us, but we believe and anyone can build the adaptive capacity to see patterns in real space and real time. Practice helps, but we have also borrowed and created approaches to help build pattern-spotting muscles. One of our favorites, coming to us from Vygotsky via Bob Williams, is what we call the Pattern Spotters.

They are five fill-in-the-blank statements that focus your attention of what you can see to help you bridge to what you cannot. The statements are:

- ▶ In general, I notice . . . .
- ▶ In general, I notice . . . , but . . . .
- ▶ On one hand . . . , and on the other hand . . . .
- ▶ I am really surprised that . . . .
- ▶ I wonder . . . .

As you reflect on these statements, you and your colleagues can begin to notice containers and boundaries that are relevant, differences that make a difference, and exchanges that have the capacity to move a system forward or keep it stuck. In short, you see the patterns and are prepared to move forward with your Pattern Logic.

We use the Pattern Spotters for many things, including to:

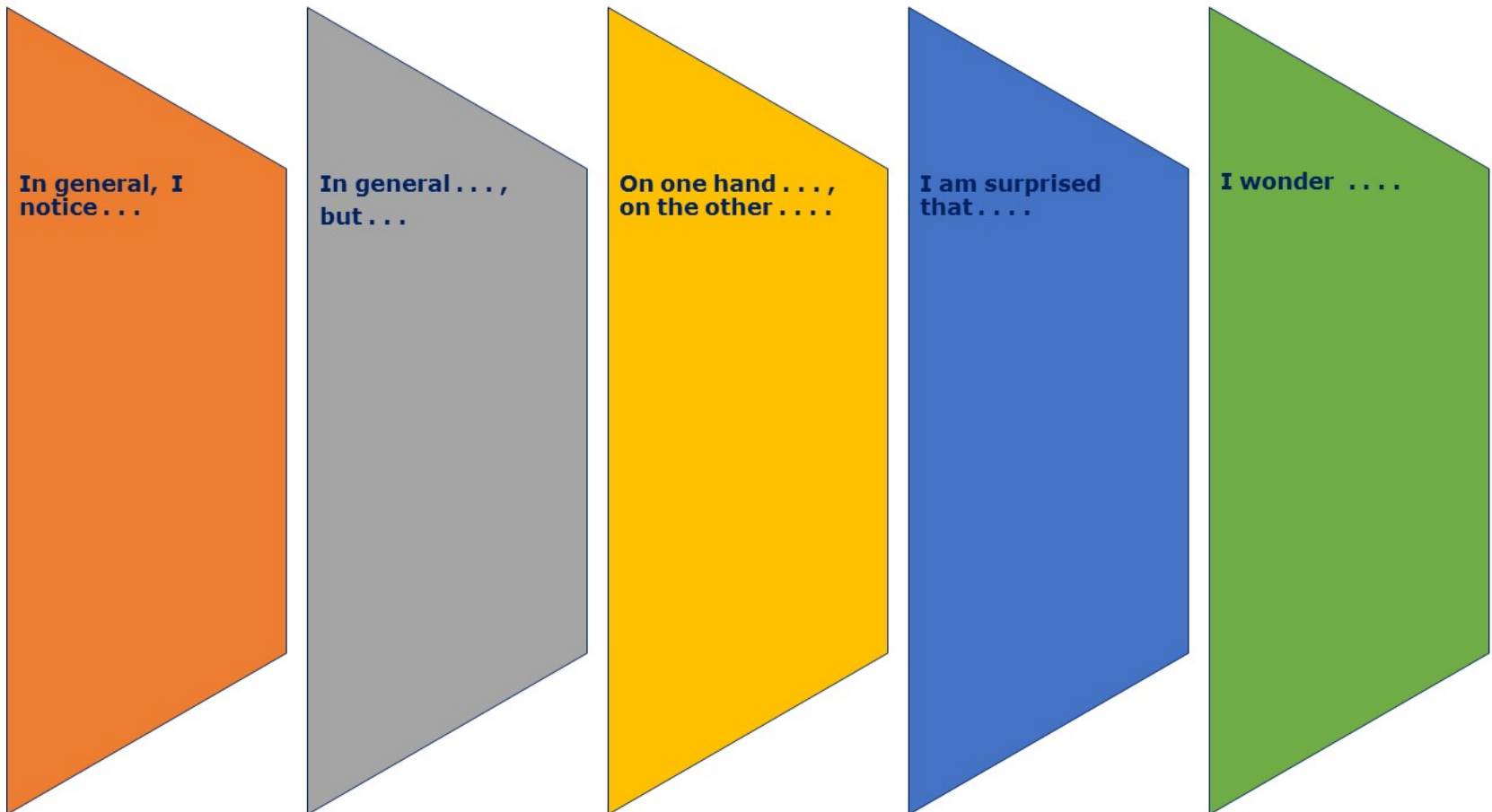
- ▶ Analyze complex qualitative data;
- ▶ Debrief after a particularly difficult, or productive, meeting;
- ▶ Guide after-action reviews of projects;
- ▶ Plan a proposal; or
- ▶ Begin a dialogue to defuse conflict.

Nothing is intractable.



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## What Can the Pattern Spotters Do for You?



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