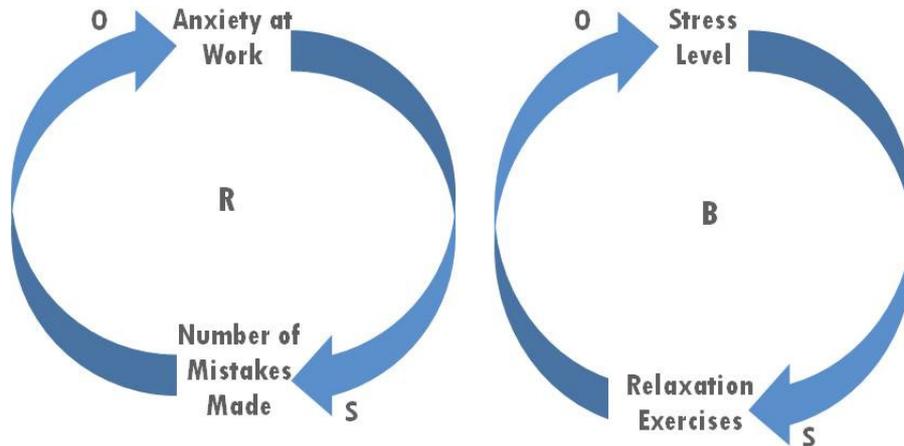


### WHAT IS A CAUSAL LOOP?

Causal Loop Diagrams (CLDs) are a kind of Systems Thinking tool. These diagrams consist of arrows connecting variables (things that change over time) in a way that shows how one variable affects another. Here are some examples:



Each arrow in a causal loop diagram is labelled with an "S" or an "O." "S" means that when the first variable changes, the second one changes in the same direction (for example, as your anxiety at work goes up, the number of mistakes you make goes up, too). "O" means that the first variable causes a change in the opposite direction in the second variable (for example, the more relaxation exercises you do, the less stressed you feel).

In CLDs, the arrows come together to form loops, and each loop is labelled with an "R" or a "B." "R" means reinforcing; i.e., the causal relationships within the loop create exponential growth or collapse. (For instance, the more anxious you are at work, the more mistakes you make, and as you make more mistakes, you get even more anxious, and so on, in a vicious, upward spiral). "B" means balancing; i.e., the causal influences in the loop keep things in equilibrium. (For example, if you feel more stressed, you do more relaxation exercises, which brings your stress level down.)

CLDs can contain many different "R" and "B" loops, all connected together with arrows. By drawing these diagrams with your work team or other colleagues, you can get a rich array of perspectives on what's happening in your organisation. You can then look for ways to make changes so as to improve things. For example, by understanding the connection between anxiety and mistakes, you could look for ways to reduce anxiety in your organisation.