

The Five Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

Constructionist, Simultaneity, Poetic, Anticipatory, and Positive

- 1) The constructionist principle proposes that what we believe to be true determines what we do, and thought and action emerge out of relationships. Through the language and discourse of day-to-day interactions, people co-construct the organizations they inhabit. The purpose of inquiry is to stimulate new ideas, stories and images that generate new possibilities for action. (Stories are created together, in conversation and in relationship)

- 2) The principle of simultaneity proposes that as we inquire into human systems we change them and the seeds of change, the things people think and talk about, what they discover and learn, are implicit in the very first questions asked. Questions are never neutral, they are fateful, and social systems move in the direction of the questions they most persistently and passionately discuss.

- 3) The poetic principle proposes that organizational life is expressed in the stories people tell each other every day, and the story of the organization is constantly being co-authored. The words and topics chosen for inquiry have an impact far beyond just the words themselves. They invoke sentiments, understandings, and worlds of meaning. In all phases of the inquiry effort is put into using words that point to, enliven, and inspire the best in people.

- 4) The anticipatory principle posits that what we do today is guided by our image of the future. Human systems are forever projecting ahead of themselves a horizon of expectation that brings the future powerfully into the present as a mobilizing agent. Appreciative Inquiry uses artful creation of positive imagery on a collective basis to refashion anticipatory reality.

- 5) The positive principle proposes that momentum and sustainable change requires positive affect and social bonding. Sentiments like hope, excitement, inspiration, camaraderie and joy increase creativity, openness to new ideas and people, and cognitive flexibility. They also promote the strong connections and relationships between people, particularly between groups in conflict, required for collective inquiry and change.

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