

*Jemstone Consultancy Business Psychology: Adding value to business through the application of positive psychology: increasing wealth, health and happiness: 020 8293 0017*

## Appreciative inquiry is good for your health!

The positive principle underpinning AI practice states 'that building and sustaining momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding'. Appreciative Inquiry methodology achieves this in three ways: by framing affirmative inquiry topics, by asking positive questions and by generating positive emotions. Interestingly, it seems that the generation of positive emotion may have additional benefits!

Fredrickson's research (reported by Stafford) suggests that positive emotions widen attentional focus and aid divergent thinking

They help build psychological resilient to negative life events

They help you live longer,

They are instrumental in psychological resilience to depression

Meanwhile The Independent reported research suggests that negative emotions such as anger adversely affect health, including heart conditions, IBS, ulcers. At the same time they report that there is a link between happiness and a boosted immune system. And that optimism can be beneficial even when unfounded.

So, the moral of the story is: take an appreciative approach to change and you may well benefit people's mental and physical health and increase their longevity as well as achieving the organisational change. And be determinedly optimistic.

*Cooperrider and Whitney (2001) A positive revolution in change: appreciative inquiry in Cooperrider et al(eds) appreciative inquiry: an emerging direction for organisational development*

*Stafford: What good are positive emotions. The psychologist Vol 17, no 6 p331 2004*

*Jerome Burne: Sick? But I'm just not the type. The Independent review Monday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2004*

## Highlights from the ABP conference

As usual the ABP annual conference was excellent. Some of the highlights for me were:

Keynote speaker Robert Holden suggesting that many of us spend too much energy working hard for success and too little considering what it might actually be.

**Message for managers:** Do you really want your people measuring their success by how overburdened they are by emails or phone calls (on holiday?). If not, help them create more positive images and experiences of being successful.

Another was Laurence Barrett of Abbey National talking about networked change. He included an excellent quote (not sure of origin) 'Wealth is created not by protecting the known but by imperfectly seizing the unknown' He also touched on the importance of language in change and the notion of viral communication.

**Message for leaders:** change is a social and relational phenomena, not solely a planning process

These presentations will shortly be available on the apb website: <http://www.theabp.org/>

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## Postmodernism theory has basis in brain physiology

In brief postmodernism suggests that many 'true' accounts can exist of the same data. For organisational consultancy this suggests that the pursuit of 'one true account' experienced by all may be a lost cause, rather the challenge is to mediate with many realities e.g. to achieve organisation through social communication and relationship.

Examining the state of knowledge about brain physiology, Carter makes the following points that, seem to me, to suggest a physiological basis for postmodernist philosophy.

'Thanks to the infinitely complex interplay of nature and nurture no two brains are ever exactly the same.'

'By the time we are adult our mental landscapes are so individual that no two of us will see anything quite the same way'

'The sight of an external object will vary from person to person because no two people have precisely the same number of motion cells'

'There is no definitive picture of 'out there' only a construction in our heads triggered by the external stimuli we are best equipped to register'

'The meaning is different for every person because it depends on their past experience'

'...we see that our actions follow from our perceptions and our perceptions are created by brain activity'

In other words, everyone will make sense of the same thing differently, we can't help it, the challenge is to create sufficient coherence that we can move forward in a co-ordinated way.

*Carter R(1998) Mapping the mind. Phoenix*

## How do you find the world?

Two women were made unexpectedly redundant from an organisation they had both worked at for a number of years. Once they had recovered from the shock, they both went job hunting. As it happened they both applied for the same job.

At the end of the interview, when asked if she had any questions, the first said 'Yes, can you tell me what the people are like to work with here?' The interviewer replied, 'Before I answer that, can you tell me what the people were like at your last organisation?' 'Certainly: it was difficult, they were rather uncooperative with lots of problems, unfriendly.' 'Well, ' said the interviewer 'I am afraid to tell you that you will find them just the same here.'

The same exchange took place in the second interview except that this woman replied 'Certainly: they were good people to work with, friendly, helpful and courteous. I was sorry to leave' 'Then,' said the interviewer 'I am delighted to say you will find them just the same here!'

*Adapted from Parkin(2004) Tales for Change. Koqan Page*

## Jemstone Consultancy News and Updates

The Jemstone and Tessera workshop 'Skills for expanding strategic thinking' which introduces participants to the methodology of appreciative inquiry and Lego serious play in the context of strategy development has been extremely well received. The next, and possibly last, workshop will be held on July 9<sup>th</sup>. If you are interested in more details please contact [sarahlewis@jemstoneconsultancy.co.uk](mailto:sarahlewis@jemstoneconsultancy.co.uk)

All copies of past newsletters containing short articles about Appreciative Inquiry, coaching, strategy, team development etc. can be found on and downloaded from the website. <http://www.jemstoneconsultancy.co.uk/newsletters.htm>

For further information on any of the above, or to enquire about team development, coaching, consultancy or management development services, please contact us 020 8293 0017 or [sarahlewis@jemstoneconsultancy.co.uk](mailto:sarahlewis@jemstoneconsultancy.co.uk)