

Nourish to Flourish



Nourish to Flourish brings together practitioners' voices and creative practices, and appreciative reviews of resources that support strengths-based approaches to human interactions.

Voices from the Field



Keith Storage

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In the May 2021 issue of *AI Practitioner*, Faith Addicott commenced a series for Voices from the Field titled “Our Principles in Action: Appreciative Inquiry for Justice and Belonging”. The series explores the ten AI principles in the context of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Given that the focus of this issue of *AI Practitioner* is dedicated to learning and leveraging generative approaches to DEI, we decided to devote this installment of Voices from the Field to two principles in Faith’s series, the Wholeness and Awareness principles, and how they contribute to our appreciation of what is possible.

Faith Addicott | USA



Faith Addicott, MPA, MPOD is working to improve the intersection of work and life through innovative and human-centered process design. Her consulting work has centered on nonprofits and local government, where she has undertaken organizational assessments and strategic planning using AI and other strengths-based processes. She is a champion for inclusive workplace design.

Wholeness asks us to acknowledge that every person has value, every voice belongs.

Awareness of Wholeness: Two principles in balance

The Wholeness principle: Wholeness brings out the best

Wholeness brings out the best in people and organizations. Bringing all stakeholders together in large group forums stimulates creativity and builds collective capacity.

The Awareness principle: Be conscious of underlying assumptions

Understanding and being aware of our underlying assumptions is important to developing and cultivating good relationships. Practicing cycles of action and reflection can build one's self-awareness.

As we lean into this special issue of the Appreciative Inquiry journal, we wanted to bring forth two principles that both complement and elevate each other. It is a core part of our experience with Appreciative Inquiry that interconnectedness exists between all of the [AI principles](#), and also between the human beings who live in the intersectional spaces of our world.

Wholeness as a principle speaks to this. It asks us to acknowledge that every person has value, every voice belongs. When we bring wholeness into the center of our thinking, it becomes clear that equity work must be a core element of any change initiative because it removes any false sense that difference means differing levels of creative capacity or worth. In the ways that we organize ourselves socially this has deep implications.

More broadly, wholeness is the quality of being complete or a single unit and not broken or divided into parts. When organizations embrace wholeness, it opens up a wide variety of possibilities, both the human side of our experience ([being whole people at work](#)) and the organizational side ([transcending silos and silo mentalities](#)).

- People and organizations that dare to show their personal side with all the emotions, doubts, challenges and feelings involved, are generally better able to solve problems, address conflicts and reduce the influence of big egos.
- By creating a unified vision that the entire workforce understands, the various teams in the company can build their objectives with that vision in mind. This will build greater trust between teams and help everyone adopt a big-picture view of goals, rather than focusing only on their own department.

Wholeness invites us to think about how AI can help us in working across silos.

Wholeness invites us to think about how AI can help us in working across silos, communicating strategies across divisions, purpose and value development, naming authenticity and belonging in the workplace, understanding interconnectedness and dependencies, and generally raising our awareness of how our embracing of diversity grows our positive shared future.

Awareness invites us to think of a positive, shared future.

In the definition we provided above, the **Awareness** principle of AI is focused on unearthing our assumptions, on finding and owning our biases and our strengths. In the context of wholeness, the awareness principle asks us to come to a greater understanding of our interconnectedness, and challenges us to unlearn comparative valuation of people.

Some of the biggest assumptions we carry in our white-centered society are rooted in othering, in assigning places or silos to each “kind” of person. These move far beyond race and ethnicity. We categorize by gender, weight, sexuality, ability, neurotypicality. The history of the west is rooted in a history of mechanistic and divisive world views. We have learned to break things into smaller pieces and constituent parts in ways that we rarely examine.

In our work, we must examine and unlearn as generative actions – awareness also names our need to move, to change, to be in action, not just the contemplation of equity. We must both breathe and push into birth a world of wholeness; we must be both the wind and the sail. It is the balance between things that brings possibility.

In the intersection of awareness and wholeness, we come to a place of crossing paths, a place that creates spaciousness for all people to belong. In this place we are the sum of all our identities and more: we are beings who live in context. That context must be without judgment or valuation because its positionality is universal.

Appreciative Inquiry itself is an intersectional act – we both appreciate, and we ask. If we do that in keeping with the principles of awareness and wholeness, we multiply our understanding of what is possible for all people, of all races and all identities, in the space of creative freedom and belonging. This is the heart of all diversity, equity and inclusion work, and our principles call us to the task.

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