

Bringing It Home: The Positive Principle

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.

Throughout this series, as we have examined the ways in which our AI principles open the doors to inclusive, equity-centered practices, we have spoken to the unique mindset that each principle invites. For all of them, there is a lens that underlies our day-to-day understanding as it applies to our AI work.

There is a deeper layer.

Beneath the core concepts of our principles – Anticipatory, Constructionist, Simultaneity, Poetic, Wholeness, Awareness, Enactment, Narrative & Free Choice – there is a truth. Simply put, we cannot appreciate where we do not include. The appreciative eye is the eye that holds the whole, in all its awkwardness and splendor.

Likewise, the inquiring mind – inquisitive, full of wonder, never ceasing in the search for truth and beauty – is a space where the kind of false certainties that lead to racist and and oppressive ideologies cannot exist. Because a mind (or a person, or a community) dedicated to asking is always open to discovery, and discovery inevitably unearths the connections and meaning that lie between us all.

The Positive principle is the action principle, the call to move into the pursuit of our questing in full, to ASK QUESTIONS. “Momentum for [small- or] large-scale change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding. This momentum is best generated through positive questions that amplify the positive core.”¹

A single frame of reference

We ask without fear of the answers, in complete acceptance of contradictions and complexities, in the pursuit of wonder, and we explore the fullness of what it means to be human by framing consistently in the positive. We intentionally seek what is best in all of us, in all people. Our exploration brings us into the stories of other cultures, of different ways of knowing. We set the context for

¹ <https://www.centerforappreciativeinquiry.net/more-on-ai/principles-of-appreciative-inquiry/>

The Positive principle is the action principle.

The real heart of the positive principle is in generativity.

mutual understanding in a single frame of reference: what is BEST in you? What is best in me? What is best in us?

This principle is the one that gets the most negative reactions from people ... it's easy to think positive = Pollyanna, a false shine that silences the very real harms and traumas that make our experiences visceral. As discussed in the work of Gervase Bushe,² the real heart of the positive principle is in generativity, not simple positivity. This principle moves us, pulls us, draws us into a best possible future by inviting us into a mindset that demands a positive option, not just dystopian wastelands.

In the context of Justice & Belonging work, the Positive principle looks beyond what we don't want and asks us what good is possible for a just society. Intentionally, it asks that we pursue these questions not only with an expectation of wonder, but also that we do the work with each other, together.

The dance of ask-and-answer

Because the dance of ask-and-answer always involves more than one person; it also always includes more than one viewpoint. Intrinsically interconnected, our principles again lead us to each other, to amazement in the possibility of it all, and in the child-like glee of asking.

Thank you all for taking this journey with me. I hope these thoughts have informed your own sense of what is possible for justice in our work.

² http://www.gervasebushe.ca/AI_generativity.pdf