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Hi everyone,

Maybe these notes will help with your homework. During check-in, we learn that several students in SUSTAIN are having a crisis in week three of the quarter. They want out. It seems that this reaction is expected at some level because the learning is so different. It's a crisis mostly because the students are there because they chose to be, not because it was required. So, they could choose to be out, and that causes discomfort for the faculty. But on the bright side, if I heard this correctly, there are only two students out of 45 that are in a crisis, and that looks like super success to me.

So what would it mean if the situation were that the students couldn't say no? Then it's a very different situation and time for a platitude. "If there is no capacity in a system for people to say no, then yes has very little meaning." Imagine a circumstance where not being able to say no puts people at risk. Say that you fear getting fired if you say no, you might see the consequences of saying no as unacceptable to you. For example, getting a bad grade might be unacceptable to the two students so they want to get back into their comfort zone. We realize that people always have the choice to say no to anything, but for them it doesn't occur as a choice. Whether we can say no or not depends on our attachment to the outcome. How unreasonable is the request?

Let's try that. Let's all make three unreasonable requests this week. The nature of the request is that the response could be yes, no or I can't say right now but can tell you later by a particular time.

The request may not be at all unreasonable to the person who is asked. Or they might see themselves as having no option to say no even if you say they do.

The example of the unreasonable request with little consequence is going to McDonalds and asking for a pizza. But you can do better than that. Really think about unreasonable and how much it differs from person to person and between cultures.

What if the request is going to someone you love and something is at stake? It might be disruptive, but you are more likely to be revealing something that is already there than creating a new condition. And in the case of someone you love, what would you really want that they wouldn't want to do, anyway? So, good luck with coming up with one unreasonable request before next Monday, let alone three.

Roger thinks he may not have been clear about our acknowledgement homework. Let's try this again. What would you like to be more present in your life? Don't go about it linearly, take the point of view that these are manifest as fields or systems, think magnetic field. Distinguish what you would like to be more present in the world around you and acknowledge when you see it in others.

Perhaps you are looking for courage, love, happiness, or more shoes. Recognize it around you and be explicit about it. Be aware of how you would habitually encounter it, you regularly see it but you don't consciously acknowledge it. It just goes by un-noticed.

If you acknowledge it, what happens? Liz says her children would fight and she would want to praise them when they weren't fighting, but was uncomfortable. And actually, you wouldn't want to say "glad you are not fighting" anyway because all that your unconscious hears is "fighting". It can't process the negative. Similarly, the most you can get from "don't trash California" is possibly a less trashed California. And whatever you do, don't tell everyone repeatedly that you "will never be Chair" of your department. You're done for. But I digress...

If for some reason you want to have more of is validation that you are not good enough, too this or that, then try to create a test to see to what extent your assertion is true. This is not easy. Confirmation bias, it's everywhere (until it's not, Roger points out). But it is so hard to talk yourself out of something that you have believed since you were a child that you can get six college degrees and still feel like not good enough. Roger's advice is to name it, and stop actively feeding it, so you stop the repetition. Gosh, there is so much life changing homework to be done by Monday. I'd better get busy acknowledging, being unreasonable and naming my innermost paradigms.

Hope to see you all with new paradigms, Dianne

But just for the record, here's the definition of Appreciative Inquiry from Case Western:

Appreciative Inquiry is about the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives "life" to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilization of inquiry through the crafting of the "unconditional positive question" often-involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people. In AI the arduous task of intervention gives way to the speed of imagination and innovation; instead of negation, criticism, and spiraling diagnosis, there is discovery, dream, and design. AI involves, fundamentally, to build a constructive union between a whole people and the massive entirety of what people talk about as past and present capacities: achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, benchmarks, high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies, stories, expressions of wisdom, insights into the deeper corporate spirit or soul— and visions of valued and possible futures. Taking all of these together as a gestalt, AI deliberately, in everything it does, seeks to work from accounts of this “positive change core”— and it assumes that every living system has many untapped and rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. Link the energy of this core directly to any change agenda and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized.