

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY AND TAI CHI

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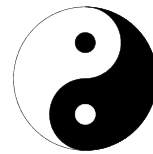
Appreciative Intelligence®¹ (AQ) is broader than simply Appreciative Inquiry, and Kinaesthetic Intelligence (KQ) represents *any* form of bodily movement. However Sue and Chris of BJ Seminars International work specifically with Appreciative Inquiry and Tai Chi. Chris had more than 20 years of experience learning and teaching Tai Chi Chuan, while Sue had been an active Appreciative Inquiry practitioner for several years. In discussing the philosophy and values that underpinned their work, they came to appreciate the synergies between AI and Tai Chi.

While Appreciative Inquiry is most commonly applied in large group or organisational contexts, Tai Chi is more usually applied as an individual, both focus on finding and enhancing the positive core of the human spirit.

For those not familiar with Tai Chi Chuan, which translates to 'supreme ultimate fist', it is a Chinese exercise, relaxation, meditation, philosophy (non religious) and self-defense system². Appreciative Inquiry can also be seen as a system, used to co-create a shared vision of possibilities and achieve a better future together.

Tai Chi is based on the 2000-year-old philosophy of Taoism. The Taoists believed you could achieve a harmonious life by seeking the Tao (natural way). In practical terms this means you need to harmonize your mind and body with nature before you can find the Tao.

From Taoism came the Tai Chi symbol of Yin and Yang. The white represents Yang (man, strength, day etc.) and the black represents Yin (woman, softness, night etc.). The Yin and Yang are opposite forces or energies and in constant motion. One of the many interpretations of Yin and Yang is in the area of good health. We achieve good health when our Yin and Yang energies are balanced.



Once again, there are distinct parallels with Appreciative Inquiry. Bringing all voices into the room, honouring and appreciating differences, the act of co-creation - all of these and more can be seen to reflect the spirit of Yin and Yang. Appreciative Inquiry often addresses the need to achieve balance between 'opposite energies in constant motion', creating a space where multiple realities are acknowledged and honoured. An organisation could also perhaps be described as 'achieving good health' when these energies are synergised and balance.

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² There are five major forms or styles of Tai Chi: Wu (Wu Chien Chuan); Yang; Chen, Wu (Master Wu Yuxian); and Sun. The five major areas of Tai Chi are: The Form; Chi Kung/Nei Kung; Push Hands; Self Defence; and Weapons. (The basic weapons are sabre, sword and spear).

Tai Chi includes a series of movements and postures that are performed in sequence to create what is called the 'form'. Appreciative Inquiry most frequently incorporates a series of activities performed in sequence (a 4-D or 5-D Cycle) to create forward movement.

While not attempting to 'pair' specific principles or practices of AI and Tai Chi, the table below further serves to illustrate the synergies across the two approaches:

8 Principles of AI	8 Assumptions of AI	8 Principles of Taoism³	8 Intrinsic Principles & Qualities of Tai Chi Movements⁴
1) <i>Descriptive or Constructionist Principle</i>	1) In every society, organization, or group, something works.	1) Inner Strength	1) Softness
2) <i>Simultaneous Principle</i>	2) What we focus on becomes our reality.	2) <i>Adaptability</i>	2) Slowness
3) <i>Poetic Principle</i>	3) The language we use creates our reality.	3) <i>Devotion and Dedication (Sincerity)</i>	3) Complete relaxation
4) <i>Anticipatory Principle</i>	4) Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities.	4) <i>Faith</i>	4) Harmony
5) <i>Positive Principle</i>	5) The act of asking questions of an organization or group influences the group in some way.	5) <i>Peace and Harmony</i>	5) Connectedness
6) <i>Wholeness Principle</i>	6) People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future when they carry forward parts of the past.	6) <i>Tranquility and Serenity</i>	6) Circularity
7) <i>Enactment Principle</i>	7) If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past.	7) Emptiness	7) Clarity, accuracy and elegance
8) <i>Free Choice Principle</i>	8) It is important to value differences.	8) Enlightenment	8) Projection

BJ Seminar International's AQ-KQ® concept therefore draws on the principles and practices of both Appreciative Inquiry and Tai Chi to assist groups to co-create an enhanced and positive future.

³ Bourke, G., Thompson J., & Yiu, T. (1984), *Tai Chi with Tennyson Yiu*. Dai Nippon Printing Co., Hong Kong.

⁴ Ibid.