



ATTRACTORS  
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*Every month **Attractors** shares tips and tools from human systems dynamics.  
In this month's edition, Glenda Eoyang reflects  
on her upcoming webinar series:*

***THE FIX THAT FITS***

Associates of the HSD Institute are a diverse bunch. They include OD practitioners, educators, event designers and facilitators, HR professionals, mediators, public health and healthcare practitioners, evaluators, technology consultants, personal and professional coaches, social workers, community developers, economists, political scientists, anthropologists, and leaders in public and private institutions.

Regardless of their disciplines, ages, and levels of experience, they all had a few things in common when they decided to become Associates of the HSD Institute. They were:

1. Curious
2. Committed
3. Frustrated

Frustrated? Yes, they had been around long enough to know the difference between solutions that are “supposed” to work and those that do. They knew lots of tools and methods—in fact some of them took pride in their bulging toolboxes. Intuition (or clients with opinions) helped them decide which tool to use in which situation. Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't. It was frustrating to have so many wonderful tools and so little theoretical grounding to help select a tool that was a likely fit for a specific challenge. Their extensive experience and broad expertise left them in the dark about how to better anticipate which fix would fit the problem at a particular place and time.

Human systems dynamics adds some tools to the proverbial toolkit. More importantly, it provides a theoretical foundation, grounded in the natural sciences, to help you see and influence dynamics as they emerge in teams, families, organizations, and communities.

HSD is based on principles of chaos theory and complexity science, and both of these theoretical foundations come with two caveats. Predictions are unreliable, and control is impossible. So, though a theoretical base can improve the fit between a proposed solution and a thorny problem, it cannot predict outcomes or control behavior. This natural limitation of HSD theory and practice is fundamental and strangely empowering. Our Associates know from their long years of experience, that prediction and control are usually not possible in complex human systems. HSD frees them from unrealistic expectations and allows them to consider ways to anticipate and adapt to situations as they emerge. That's why HSD helps find the “fix that fits” rather than reinforcing the delusion of a certain solution to a complex problem.

In the ten-day Human Systems Dynamics Professional certification training program, Associates learned fundamental natural patterns of complex adaptive and self-organizing systems. They practiced seeing and responding to the complex dynamics of human systems. They considered how to use the practices of HSD to improve performance for themselves, their organizations, and their communities.

For the first time, beginning in October, HSD Institute will host a **webinar series** to help others begin the journey toward finding the fix that fits. In the first session, we'll discuss six questions that help you recognize complex dynamics, consider a range of options for action, and select an approach to bridge current and preferred patterns of interaction. These six questions are a mixture of uncommon common sense and radical inquiry. They highlight three critical differences that shape the patterned dynamics in all kinds of human systems.

**What are the three most important things you notice about the present situation?** This question helps you see patterns that have emerged from the past and influence the present. This question should spark a process of individual reflection and group discussion as many different factors are noted, compared, and put in competition to be included in the “big three.”

**How do you want these three things to be the same or different in the future?** This question helps you focus on possibilities for pattern transformation as the present influences the emerging future.

**What do you think you know for sure and what are your questions?** In the complex dynamics of human systems, you can never know for sure that you know for sure, but the multiple shades of certainly become even more significant. This question helps you set the stage for the inquiry into thought and action that will move you forward. This question, like the others, can be a personal reflection and is even more powerful when a group shares the inquiry.

**What are the contradictions you are encountering?** Contradictions—sometimes referred to as paradoxes—establish perpetual tensions in human systems dynamics. They can either keep you stuck or create the most innovative possibilities you can imagine. You get to choose.

**What has surprised you in the recent past?** Surprises are full of information, they can be traces of change already underway or triggers for change to come. Depending on the speed and intensity of your dynamics, the recent past may be the past ten minutes or the last month, year, or decade. Consider what horizon is meaningful for you, and focus on surprises that broke familiar patterns.

**What are you going to do to make a difference in the near future?** This is the question that bridges thought to action. Use the reflections from the other questions to brainstorm a list of options for action. Pick one. Do it. Ask the list of questions again. If you are in the midst of rapid change, your “near future” will be very soon, and your cycles of inquiry and action will be quick. When change takes a slower pace, you can look toward a near future that is farther away and take more time for each cycle of inquiry and action.

These questions aren't magic. They simply help you see the similarities, differences, and relationships that have meaning across space and time for you and your partners in change. They articulate the patterns that determine whether your fix fits the current situation or not. They help you create, implement, and assess the “fix that fits.”

Join our network of curious, committed, and no longer frustrated Associates as they find the fix that fits:

- Join us at one of two HSDP Certification Trainings scheduled for 2008, and become an HSDP Associate.
- Join us for the six webinar series **Finding the Fix that Fits: Human Systems Dynamics at Work**, to find out more about these questions and other ways that HSD helps you generate, select, implement, and evaluate options for action.
- Come to a free introductory webinar scheduled for October 3. To get more information and to register, visit [www.odnetwork.org/resources/HSD/](http://www.odnetwork.org/resources/HSD/). Here you will find a detailed description of the series, as well as information on other resources available from the HSD Institute.

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[www.hsdinstitute.org](http://www.hsdinstitute.org)