

# Daring not to know

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**W**e often have to create space for new ideas to emerge. This article chronicles what happened when a profound silence descended on a team working on a new campaign strategy.

## Background and Client Objectives

A colleague and I were invited to facilitate a process to generate new ideas for a campaign that had been running for several years and had become a bit stuck and staid.

## Process

Midway through the afternoon of the first day, and following various games and exercises to loosen up the right brain, the group had generated several flip chart pages of ideas. As facilitators, we surveyed them and ventured the opinion that these ideas were not really all that new. We said we felt like tearing them all up and starting again.

A hush descended on the room. Then, one woman, younger and probably with less of her own identity invested in the organisation, stood up, walked to the flip chart and, slowly at first then more and more energetically till finally she was shouting and jumping up and down, tore up all the work of the day so far.

Then she sat down. We sat in silence with the 12 participants. Nobody spoke. Nobody moved. We sat like that for 20 minutes. Now, a minute of silence is a long time when you are facilitating a group. 20 minutes felt like forever. Some people had their eyes shut, some didn't. Amazingly, nobody said, "This is stupid.", or anything like that.

Finally, my colleague spoke, remarking that it can be difficult to speak after the silence has endured so long. This paved the way for one of the participants to speak - the young woman who had torn up all the work. She spoke about the need to campaign from a place of love not fear, a place of compassion, not anger. To campaign from an appreciative stance, building on the positive hopes and dreams we all have for a better future and enhancing and mobilising that positive energy. To focus on our appreciation of the earth and all its beauty, and our passionate desire to preserve that for future generations. To accentuate the positive, and to refrain from playing on fear. Others agreed. The door was open.

## Outcomes

The following day, the participants generated 13 completely new, radically different ideas; and left the day feeling uplifted, inspired and hopeful.

## Appreciative Learnings and Insights

Progress stemmed from daring to sit in the place of not knowing, of not having answers, of sitting with chaos and confusion and despair without trying to fix it. Then words we speak, the plans we make, and the actions we take, bear the hallmark of authenticity and thus carry with them the seeds of success. And our authentic self is loving, appreciative and hopeful.