



# Human Systems Dynamics: Adaptive Action Lab

Agile 2019

Jeremy Lightsmith  
Jeremy.lightsmith@gmail.com

Glenda Eoyang, PhD  
geoyang@hdsinstitute.org

**Nothing is intractable.**

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# Complexity Is Complex!



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## Why are we HERE?

- ▶ WHAT is human systems dynamics?
- ▶ SO WHAT are three tools to tame wicked issues?
- ▶ NOW WHAT will you do to shift your own wicked issue?

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## Why are WE here?



Jeremy  
Lightsmith



Glenda  
Eoyang

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Why are YOU here?

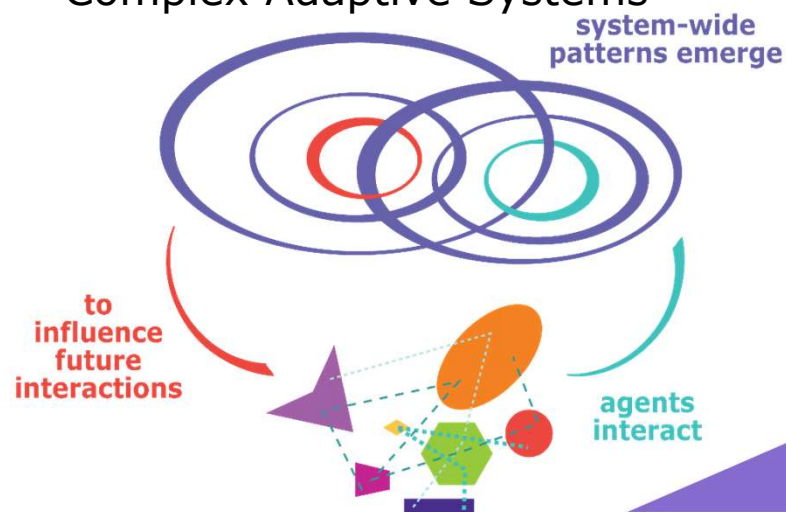


What is ONE word about what keeps you awake at night?

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## Wicked Issues Come from Complex Adaptive Systems



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## Dynamical Change Makes Wicked Issues

- ▶ No stopping condition
- ▶ Multiple points of view
- ▶ Many explanations—none complete
- ▶ Every explanation suggests an action
- ▶ Impossible to solve
- ▶ Not a problem to solve, but a pattern to shift
- ▶ Examples:
  - ▶ Social justice
  - ▶ Poverty
  - ▶ Quality
  - ▶ Customer satisfaction
  - ▶ Conflict
  - ▶ Accountability and Authority
  - ▶ And . . . .

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## Human Systems Dynamics

Theory and practice of wicked issues:

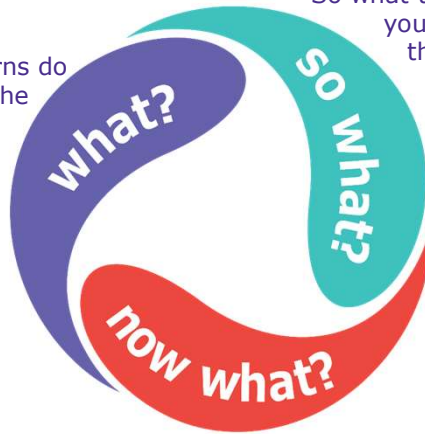
- ▶ Field of Knowledge and Community of Praxis
- ▶ Adaptive Action Laboratory  
You apply what you learn to your own wicked issues
- ▶ Roots of HSD
  - ▶ Conditions for dynamical change: Pattern Logic
  - ▶ Method of engagement: Inquiry
  - ▶ Truth claim: Four Truths
  - ▶ Problem-solving approach: Adaptive Action

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## Tool 1: Adaptive Action

What patterns do you see in the chaos?



So what tensions can you leverage in the patterns?

Now what action will shift the pattern and harvest the tension?

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## What's so special about Adaptive Action?

- ▶ Focuses on shifting PATTERNS
- ▶ Iterative—really using outcomes of last to frame input to next
- ▶ Three steps can't get lost
- ▶ Questions, so you stay in inquiry
- ▶ Easy to learn
- ▶ Easy to remember
- ▶ Scalable
- ▶ Works with any other tool you know and love
- ▶ Adaptable—what questions are right for your wicked issue?



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## When might you use Adaptive Action?



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## Tool 2: Power of Inquiry

### WHAT?

1. Select a wicked problem
2. Write three sentences about it

### SO WHAT?

3. Pick a partner
4. Read your sentences
5. Listen to their questions for 3 minutes:
  - > No advice
  - > No answers
6. Switch and repeat

### NOW WHAT?

What changed for you when you asked?  
When you listened?



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## When might you use Power of Inquiry?

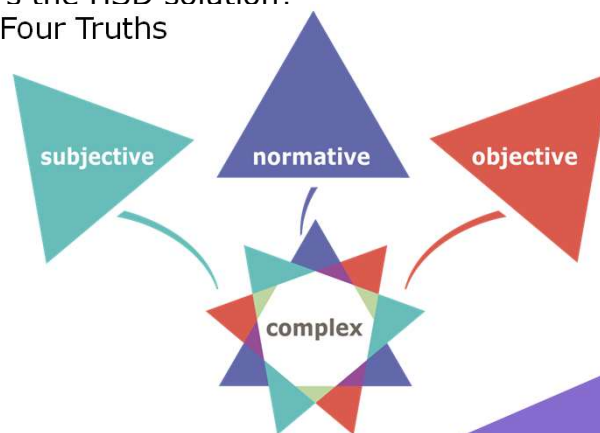


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## Tool 3: Four Truths

- ▶ What's the problem?  
Multiple, irreconcilable claims to truth
- ▶ What's the HSD solution?  
Four Truths



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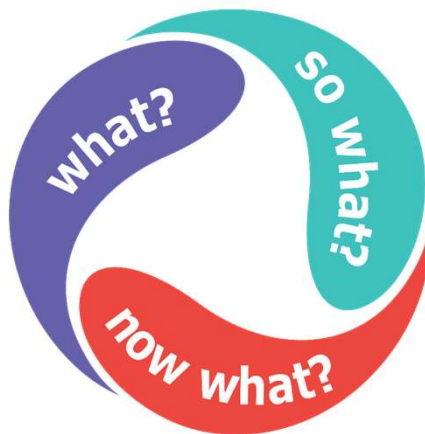
When might you use  
Four Truths?



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NOW WHAT for You?



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## Learn more . . .

- ▶ HSD Models and Methods:  
<https://www.hsdinstitute.org/resources.html>
- ▶ Theory and Practice:  
*Adaptive Action: Leveraging Uncertainty in Your Organization*  
(Eoyang & Holladay, 2013)
- ▶ Applications to wicked problems:  
Live Virtual Workshops (free every month)  
Online Adaptive Action Labs (monthly)
- ▶ Network of HSD Associates:  
HSD Professional Certification Program
- ▶ Sign-up online for blogs and announcements

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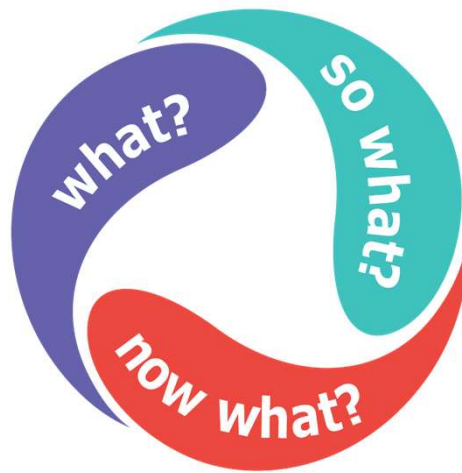


Thank you!

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What is your next Adaptive Action?



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