



# POWERFUL QUESTIONS

MORE  
POWERFUL

DID,  
CAN,  
WILL,  
WHICH

WHO,  
WHERE,  
WHEN

WHY,  
HOW,  
WHAT

...How come? What if?  
Where are we now? Where do we go?  
Who is making decisions?  
Who for?...

LESS  
POWERFUL

(Bijoux, 2020; Informed by Cooperider and Srivastva, 1987 and Vogt, Brown and Isaacs, 2003.)

# POWERFUL QUESTIONS



## WHAKAPAPA AND OUR USE

Powerful questions are a tool of Appreciative Inquiry and their structure aligns with Simon Sinek's work on the Golden Circle and starting with 'why'. Traditionally constructed with why, what (what if) and how (how come) as the more powerful ways of beginning a question, less powerful questions include who, when and where. The least powerful questions start with did, can, will and which as well as any other yes/no questions.

In the contexts that we work in, however, who, where and when are also powerful questions and they are often where we start. This is because who is involved in making decisions shapes those decisions and so too does where and when the decision making takes place. Every person and every place has unique potential, and it changes over time. Our lives and the lives of the places we are in are constantly in flux.

## HOW TO USE IT

This tool is useful for generating curiosity, encouraging creativity and stimulating reflective conversation. Powerful questions can surface underlying assumptions, expand possibilities, focus attention and move things from what is, to what could be in ways that craft imagination, insight, innovation and action.

We use powerful questions in a huge range of ways. One way is to explore who we are in this time and place as well as where we are and where we want to go. We ask "What if..", "how come" and "who else" to help reveal what matters to who and why.

Understanding where we are as a group of people - in our self development, households, neighbourhoods, cities, regions, countries and on this planet in this place and at this time - is key to understanding our strengths, opportunities, aspirations and the results we are aiming for as well as revealing the challenges and needs we have.