

Commentary on “A Conversation with Yasuteru Aoki”

John Brooker

1. Introduction

Yasuteru Aoki has been involved with SF since he first acted as a translator for SF therapists, such as Scott D. Miller, Bill O'Hanlon, Andrew Turnell and many others and recognised that the principles involved could be used in organisations. He has gone on to promote SF in Japan through his training courses and through J-SOL conferences, that many SF practitioners globally, had the privilege to attend and learn from.

In this audio conversation, recorded with Jenny Clarke and John Brooker, Aoki-san talks about how SF helped develop a positive atmosphere in a division of Canon and other companies and how it works well in the atmosphere of mutual respect found in Japan – as SF helps develop respect not built on hierarchy.

He reflects on the need to use SF to nurture this non-hierarchical respect and harmony in organisations and society.

He and Jenny discuss the concept of mutuality, that SF helps people to collaborate and compromise, without feeling compromised.

Aoki assumes many people naturally have SF inside them, that it our job as practitioners to honour and respect this and make it noticeable. He calls this a Chain of Natural Positive Response which lifts a group beyond the individual to a point where, when the relationship is good, I don't care if the solution comes from me or someone else in the group. He adds wryly that “SF is too simple, so people want to decorate it”.

After this very interesting philosophical discussion, Aoki explains how he has helped train people working in local government over ten years and gives excellent examples from diverse areas such as the fire service, tax collection and inter cultural

services. Some self-organized study groups born out of those training courses are still continuing and even expanding.

Finally, he reflects with Jenny on his experience at Zacros, an organisation led by a President who is a great exponent of SF. He has been using SF for ten years, yet recognises that not everybody wants to adopt a solution focus.

The interview ends with a discussion on the danger of being solution forced (or perhaps SF forced) and how it may be enough for an organisation to have pockets of "SF Inside".

John Brooker