



Disturb the System, by Margaret Wheatley

Think about how we generally have treated information. We've known it was important, but we've handled it in ways that have destroyed many of its life-giving properties. For one thing, we haven't been interested in newness. We've taken disturbances and fluctuations and averaged them together to give us comfortable statistics. Our training has been to look for large numbers, important trends, major variances. We live in a society that believes it can define _normal_ and then judge everything against this fictitious standard. We struggle to smooth out the differences, conform to standards, measure up. Yet in life, newness can only show up as difference. If we aren't looking for differences, we can't see that anything has changed; consequently, we aren't able to respond. Even when we do notice new information, we too often rush in to kill it off. Instead of appreciating the rich possibilities that could move us to new levels of understanding, we think we're wise enough to play instant Solomon. We don't want to dwell in confusion. We value quick decisions over wise ones. "Let's get this over with," we say. "Let's just make a decision." We aim our efforts dead into solid ground, away from the exploration that would move us toward the light of richer understanding. For so long, we've been engaged in smoothing things over, rounding things off, keeping the lid on (the metaphors are numerous), that our organizations have literally been dying for information they could feed on, information that was different, disconfirming, and filled with enough newness to disturb the system into wise solutions. --Margaret Wheatley, in _Leadership and the New Science_