

Brief Encounters from the Taos Institute

As a way of sharing constructionist ideas, the Executive Board of the Taos Institute decided that each month a contributor would write about an idea or experience that might be an inspiration for others. This month, Mary Gergen volunteered to initiate this series for our learning community.

June 2009



By Mary Gergen

Last week-end, Ken Gergen and I were invited by Taos Institute Associate Jim Ludema to present ideas about social constructionism to his graduate class at Benedictine University. Most of the discussion revolved around organizational issues, but one student asked me how social constructionism had had an impact on my personal life. I spoke about the liberating effect that social constructionism has in that it is always possible to reconstruct the ways in which the world is presented to one, whether in the newspaper, with friends, or in intimate settings. This option is very helpful, especially if there is conflict involved or one feels unhappy about how a relationship is going. I talked about how constructionism helps if Ken and I disagree about something. With our constructionist backgrounds, we have the resources to dismantle the negative corner we've gotten ourselves into. Sometimes we are even able to laugh at how self-defeating our old construction was, and we start again to have a more generative conversation. Once, Ken literally walked out the door, and then came in the house again, so that we could take what had been a failed conversation and begin again in a more appreciative way.

Day in and day out we do construct our reality and the more conscious we are about it within our relationships, the more we can co-construct our world in ways that are positive, uplifting, and generative for all.