



## Cooperative Inquiry

**Co-operative inquiry is a way of working with people in a group setting who have similar concerns and interests to yourself. The goals are two-fold: understand your world, make sense of your life and develop new and creative ways of looking at things; and learn how to change things that may need changing and find out how to exist in a more harmonious connection with physical reality.**

Together they move through a series of cycles in which they experience and reflect in a collaborative fashion. In this format individuals are invited to be seen as active agents of change and transformation who empower themselves and others through mutual support and being in relationship.

In co-operative inquiry a group of people come together to explore issues of concern and interest. All members of the group contribute both to the ideas that go into their work together, and also are part of the activity that is being researched. Everyone has a say in deciding what questions are to be addressed and what ideas may be of help; everyone contributes to thinking about how to explore the questions; everyone gets involved in the activity that is being researched; and finally everybody has a say in whatever conclusions the co-operative inquiry group may reach.

Co-operative inquiry can be seen as cycling through four phases of reflection and action. The participants may be professionals who wish to inquire into a particular area of practice; people who wish to examine in depth certain states of consciousness; people who want to assess the impact of particular healing practices; and so on. The cycle between reflection and action is repeated several times. Ideas and discoveries tentatively reached in early phases can be checked and developed; investigation of one aspect of the inquiry can be related to exploration of other parts, new skills can be acquired and monitored; experiential competences are realized; the group itself becomes more cohesive and self-critical, more skilled in its work.

Excerpts taken from John Heron, *Co-operative Inquiry: Research into the human condition*, Sage, 1996.