

This document accompanies Individual Module 9 of the eLearning Series, *Your Extraordinary Workplace*.

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

AI is an innovative approach to problem solving and creating more of what you want

“We must become the change we wish to see in the world.”

Gandhi

Understanding Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative: A favorable assessment, admiration, approval or gratitude

Inquiry: A request for information, asking questions

Appreciative Inquiry is asking questions that are *appreciative* in nature in order to cause *intentional outcomes*.

It is a collaborative, encouraging process that meets the core need of all people for positive, intense connection, while providing a framework for gathering and sharing information with two or more members within an organization. It allows for a sharing of the best information between people. The basic process of AI is the use of *fateful* questions, resulting in interviews, conversations and stories that create positive future outcomes. AI is consistent with the latest research in the new sciences, including quantum physics, chaos theory, complexity theory, simultaneity, and constructivism.

Key Idea: Appreciative Inquiry (AI) helps people access positive memories that are often otherwise ignored.

“AI is a holistic model based on the belief that human systems are made and imagined by those who live and work within them. AI leads systems and individuals to the life-giving and creative images in their most positive core”

Magruder and Mohr, *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*

Characteristics of Appreciative Inquiry

1. Philosophy for creating evolutionary change
2. Flexible process for engaging employees using positive thoughts and feelings
3. Information gathering tool that allows bosses and employees to share the very best information
4. Questioning strategy that employs the use of fateful questions, resulting in interviews, conversations and stories that create positive future outcome

“There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle ”

Albert Einstein

Assumptions About Appreciative Inquiry

1. In every workplace, something works.
2. Looking for what works well is more motivating and effective than looking for what does not work.
3. What we focus on becomes our reality.
4. Conversation and dialogue create images and images create reality.
5. The act of asking questions begins the change.
6. Organizations move toward what they ask about or focus on.
7. We have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future when we bring forward the past.
8. If we bring parts of the past forward, they should be what is best.
9. By the words we use to anticipate and describe reality, we create reality.

Examples of Appreciative Inquiry (You will be asked to partner up and share your answers to the questions below. Use the bottom of this page if you wish to consider some of them in advance.)

1. **Greeting:** “How are you?” or “What’s the best thing that has happened to you today?”
2. **Building teamwork:** ““Imagine a relationship you wish had better teamwork. Tell me the story of a time when you had a similar situation in the past and handled it well? Tell me what this relationship would look, feel and sound like at its best?”
3. **Leader** (i.e., work or elsewhere): “Turn to someone and share one thing you did this weekend you’re proud of.”
4. **During a meeting:** “What outcome would you feel happiest with? How would you and the others be feeling; what would you be doing?”

Contrasting Appreciative Inquiry with Traditional Problem-Solving

Traditional organizational problem-solving focuses on highlighting “deficits in the belief that the organization can be returned to a healthy state. Appreciative Inquiry suggests that by focusing on the deficit, we simply create more images of deficit and potentially overwhelm the system with images of what is wrong.”

Appreciative Inquiry, as a method of organizational problem-solving, takes on a different perspective. A problem is defined as having “an image of how a situation ought to be...Appreciative Inquiry suggests that, by focusing on an image of health and wholeness, the organization’s energy moves to make that image real.”

(Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination, Magruder and Mohr)

Traditional Problem Solving	Appreciative Inquiry
Identify problems. “He never helps with chores”	Appreciate what works. “When were you most in love? What is working?”
Conduct root cause analysis. “I think it’s that his mom did everything for him and spoiled him”	What supports change? “What successes/strengths can help now? What new ideas do you have? What visions?”
Brainstorm solutions and/or actions. “How about making a shared schedule of chores and sticking to it?”	Determine what could be. “What would your marriage look like if it were the most supportive possible?”
Develop action plans. “Write down the plan and review it weekly?”	Create what you want. “We will focus on the loving marriage we want.”
Metaphor: This is a problem to be fixed. “This is a problem and I have to fix it.”	Metaphor: This is a mystery, an opportunity. “This is a great opportunity to re-evaluate what we want and what makes us both the happiest.”

Digging Through Dirt

Panning for Gold

Key Idea: What we focus on becomes our reality. We often focus on what’s wrong or what’s missing and then tend to see everything through that filter.

Consequences of Deficit-Based Approaches

1. Defensiveness and Polarization
2. Separation (not my problem)
3. Slow: Puts attention on yesterday's negative causes
4. Produces "vocabularies of human deficit"

"Significant problems cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were when we created them."

Albert Einstein

Bowling Team Example

There were two bowling teams, and they were both videotaped. The first team's video was edited so that it only showed their bad, weak, bowling moves. The other team's video was edited so that it only showed their strong, correct, bowling moves. Both teams watched the videos for the purpose of improving their games.

Which bowling team was able to improve its bowling game: the team that focused on its mistakes or the team that focused on its successes?

The team that watched its mistakes collectively improved by 30% (not bad huh?!) The team that watched its strengths collectively improved by 100% (doubled) and probably enjoyed its experience more.

Key Idea: Both ways produced results, but the appreciative way is easier, more graceful and efficient (people don't go into **protection** using AI) and works better.

List Your Own

Offer examples of instances in which you focus on *weaknesses*. Then offer some in which you focus on *greatest possibilities*. Describe how you feel and results from each. (You will be asked to share this at Group session.)

From **Weakness/Mistakes**

From **Greatest Possibilities**

Appreciating AI Research

Key Idea: We practice mind over matter, through accessing positive thoughts.

Consider the following and write down any thoughts you have on each:

1. Perspective: Are you a weeder or a feeder?
2. Manifesting: Are you open to miracles?
3. Language: *"Have a good time. I know you'll help if she needs anything!"* vs. *"Be Good! Don't give the babysitter a hard time!"*
4. Medicine: The Placebo effect
5. Education: Rosenthal studies – Tagging high achieving students as *Laggers* vs *Spurters* and setting them back by years
6. Psychology: Cognitive inner dialogue - How we speak to ourselves in such a way that we create new outcomes?
7. **Visualization:** Do you use visualization to bring about what you want?

“Just when the caterpillar thought the world was over, it became a butterfly”

~ Proverb

Be Your Most Imaginal Self!

Consider paraphrased excerpts from *Butterfly*, by Norie Huddle and *Waking the Global Heart*, by Anodea Judith.

*“Caterpillars are consumers that eat non-stop. They become heavy; outgrowing their skin until they become too bloated to move. Attaching to a branch, they form a chrysalis and within that chrysalis, a miracle occurs. Tiny cells that biologists call “imaginal cells” begin to appear. These cells are wholly different from caterpillar cells, carrying different information, and vibrating to a different frequency – the frequency of the emerging **butterfly**.*

*At first, the caterpillar’s immune system perceives these new cells as enemies and attacks them, (much as new ideas in science, medicine, politics, and social behavior are viciously denounced by the powers now considered mainstream). But the imaginal cells are not deterred. They continue to appear, in even greater numbers, recognizing each other, bonding together, until the new cells are numerous enough to organize into clumps. When enough cells have formed to make structures along the new organizational lines, the caterpillar’s immune system is overwhelmed. The caterpillar body then becomes a nutritious **soup** for the growth of the butterfly*

Eventually, the entire string of imaginal cells suddenly realizes that all together it is something different from the caterpillar. Something new! Something wonderful! And then the butterfly emerges - vibrant, beautiful, and free!

How amazing that something can completely reorganize from one state into another, exhibiting totally different gifts, assets, and strengths. Something equally profound is happening with Appreciative Inquiry, as proactive, conscious, intentional thinking and behaving replace limiting beliefs and scarcity thinking.

Though we are awe struck by the incredible beauty of a butterfly, we often forget that the caterpillar had to first disintegrate into a *messy, disorganized soup*! What this means for those using appreciative inquiry is that they must stay vigilant in speaking, focusing on and feeling what is most positive and allow habits (e.g., gossip, blaming, resenting) to disintegrate and transform into something entirely new. You allow positive thoughts to predominate when problem-solving to create the best and most beautiful outcomes possible.

You will be asked to share the following answers with a partner or your team at your next group session.

1. **What concepts are relevant in both the transformation of a workplace culture and a caterpillar into a butterfly?**
2. **Are YOU like an *imaginal* cell in a caterpillar, within culture change? Name 1-2 ways you are part of this change process?**
3. **What is helpful about knowing there’s a period when it looks what’s known and familiar, is dying, dead and messy?**
4. **Name at least one messy thing that you personally dismantled. What positive result did you bring forward?**

Celebrate What’s Right in the World

Key Ideas:

1. Believe it and you’ll see it
2. Recognize abundance
3. Look for Possibilities
4. Unleash your energy to fix what is wrong
5. Ride the changes
6. Take yourself to the edge
7. Be the best for the world

Work on the 7 concepts below. You will be asked to share your answers at your next *Group* session

Dewitt Jones’ Concepts

Directions: Decide whether you agree or disagree with each of the following concepts presented by Dewitt Jones, photographer for National Geographic. **Circle your choice.** In the spaces provided, give a reason for your choice. Use the question asked to stimulate your imagination. *Be prepared to share your answers below at your group session.*

1. What do you think about ***Believe it and you’ll see it?*** Do you think you need some idea that what you’re striving for that is realistic and attainable?
2. What do you think about ***Recognize abundance?*** Can a presumption of scarcity can become a self-fulfilling prophecy?
3. What do you think about ***Look for possibilities?*** Is the opposite of scarcity not necessarily abundance but possibility?

4. What do you think about ***Unleash your energy to fix what's wrong?*** Does focusing on the positive give us energy to fix what is wrong?

5. What do you think about ***Ride the changes?*** Does change hold the most potential for success? Is it negative? Can you think of a period in your life that was a time of great change? How did this influence you?

6. What do you think about ***Take yourself to the edge?*** Do you think you always need to take yourself to your edge? Are there times when “good enough” really is good enough? How does “going to the edge” apply in your job? What will I gain even if my efforts fall short?

7. What do you think about ***Be the best for your world?*** List 2-3 attributes you have and can use to “be your best for the world” and in your job, life, or community?

Appreciative Inquiry

1. Creates a critical mass of people drawing on positive images
2. Focuses healthy chaos to generate quick, new, creative, solutions
3. Focuses self-determination and purposefulness (personal power)
4. Work with others, not do to them
5. Leverage the power of language, images and feelings and use them to create.

Effects of Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry deeply, positively impacts individuals, teams, and entire organizations. Effects include:

- Creates a critical mass of people drawing on positive images
- Focuses healthy chaos to generate quick, new, creative solutions
- Focuses self-determination and purposefulness (personal power)
- Works *with* others, not do *to* them
- Leverages the power of language, images, and feelings and uses those to create the desired outcome

Directions: Consider and prepare your answers to the following questions. **They will be discussed at your group session.**

1. In an earlier session, you learned about the 4 intrinsic motivators. The first one is a *sense of meaningfulness*. Creating a critical mass of people who draw upon positive images and elevate enthusiasm IS meaningful. **Like the company giving out gas cards to strangers, can you give one example of re-energizing that you've experienced?**
2. **Consider chaos** (the kind that happens during innovative change when there's no defined method for doing things). **How does appreciative inquiry support chaos that's positive rather than negative?**
3. In an earlier session, you learned that one of Alfred Adler's concepts is that we are all always *purposeful*. **How does Appreciative Inquiry direct purposefulness that moves people out of victim-thinking and behaving?**
4. Working with others, not doing to them is much like moving from chaos (trying to fix, convert, heal, or change people) to empty. **Give an example of a situation in which you have disagreed with another person, but maintained working WITH this person in a positive way and refrained from *DOING* anything *TO* them?**
5. **What are some ways you can consciously use language that creates positive images and feelings?**

It Just Got Real!

Name _____

Date _____

A-Ha Idea

Challenge or Barrier

Resources (how will you overcome challenges or barriers?)

Next Step

Date of Completion

A-Ha Idea

Challenge or Barrier

Resources (how will you overcome challenges or barriers?)

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