

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was developed to help create change in organisations; however, it is equally transformative when used by individuals. AI focuses on the positive of what is happening already but is not just about asking positive questions; it is also about learning to see the world anew with fresh eyes. AI does not ignore negative emotions or circumstances but helps to shift your perspective from pessimism and helplessness to one of possibility and opportunity. Uncovering and celebrating what is right with others, and anything that may arise in your life, is a mental habit that can be learned through deliberate, mindful practice.

THE MODEL



THE PROCESS

1. DEFINITION

The AI approach is to choose to uncover what is already good and working well when you want to make a change, instead of taking a “fix it” approach.

The difference is in the questions. Instead of asking “What can I do to minimise my own disappointment and frustration in my performance?”, with an AI approach, you might ask, “When have I been most pleased with my performance and what can I learn and apply from those moments of success?”

It is important to define what you want more of. Sometimes it is easier to identify an important gap, issue, or problem (what you want less of) first and reframe it into what you want more of.

2. DISCOVERY

In AI it's your story that illuminates your strengths:

- When am I functioning at my best?
- What characteristics are present at those times?

Positive stories – unlike data, graphs, lists, etc. – stir the imagination and generate excitement about the ways in which you might build on what is already working.

The language of the questions will determine the direction the inquiry will take (negative or positive), and the results of the inquiry (negative or positive). Just asking the questions of yourself begins to bring about a change, so be careful what you ask for.

Find the elements that are common to the moments of greatest success and fulfilment for yourself. Ask yourself, ‘What are the most promising and inspiring components of my desired future?’ Imagine if all those exceptional moments were available to you in the future!

Look for the elements or experiences that represent your strengths when you're at your very best. This could be a single moment in time, or it could be a way of being. It can be any aspect that contributes to your highest points and most valued experiences or characteristics.

3. DREAM

Continuing with the energy in stage 3, it is time to dream of a future in which the high points identified in your stories are your everyday reality. The visioning or dreaming process consists of both a visual and a word image.

Your visual image can consist of drawings, videos, paintings, collages, etc.

Your word image translates from the visual image into a Dream Statement, bridging the best of ‘what is’ with your/their own speculation or intuition of ‘what might be’. It stretches the realm of the status quo, challenges common assumptions or routines, and helps suggest real possibilities that represent desired possibilities for the individual, group, or organisation.

4. DESIGN

This step brings your dream to life by designing your future in practical terms, mapping out how you will set about achieving the outcomes you desire. You will literally design the structure in terms of resources, processes, activity, boundaries, and commitments that will allow you to achieve your desired future. You will improvise and innovate to devise a plan that incorporates the key elements of your dream in a way that makes that dream achievable.

5. DELIVER

This is the point at which you implement your design and start to take action in a positive and realistically optimistic way. You will start to notice and celebrate successes that are moving you towards your preferred future. This might mean committing to new behaviours, new exercises, new dietary habits, new ways of being with others. Whatever you have designed in stage 4. Is what you will be delivering at this stage. It's your plan, so why wouldn't you commit to honouring the dream?