



## Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is about the coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organizations, and the relevant world around them. In its broadest focus, it involves systematic discovery of what gives life to a living system when it is most alive, most effective, and most constructively capable in economic, ecological, and human terms.

AI involves, in a central way, the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential. It centrally involves the mobilization of inquiry through the crafting of the unconditional positive question often-involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people. In AI the arduous task of intervention gives way to the speed of imagination and innovation; instead of negation, criticism, and spiraling diagnosis, there is discovery, dream, and design.

AI seeks, fundamentally, to build a constructive union between a whole people and the massive entirety of what people talk about as past and present capacities: achievements, assets, unexplored potentials, innovations, strengths, elevated thoughts, opportunities, benchmarks, high point moments, lived values, traditions, strategic competencies, stories, expressions of wisdom, insights into the deeper corporate spirit or soul-- and visions of valued and possible futures.

Taking all of these together as a gestalt, AI deliberately, in everything it does, seeks to work from accounts of this positive change core and it assumes that every living system has many untapped and rich and inspiring accounts of the positive. Link the energy of this core directly to any change agenda and changes never thought possible are suddenly and democratically mobilized.

**Appreciative Inquiry then is a philosophy** - a certain way of looking at the world - as well as a process. It is a philosophy, which states that we create our world and we therefore need to consciously set about creating the sort of world - and organisations (including schools) which we want. It is a hopeful and pragmatic philosophy. It is a very positive philosophy which claims that we can choose whether to be optimistic or pessimistic - we can say that our glass of water is half empty or half full - it is our choice.

### Process - Steps of Implementation

The process usually takes participants through the stages of **the 4-D Cycle**:

- Discovery -- Appreciating & Valuing the Best of "What Is"
- Dream -- Envisioning "What Might Be"
- Design -- Dialoguing "What Should Be"
- Destiny -- Innovating "What Will Be"



**AI Principles** are adapted and customized to each individual situation; the Full AI process typically includes:

1. Selecting a focus area or topic(s) of interest
2. Interviews designed to discover strengths, passions, unique attributes
3. Identifying patterns, themes and/or intriguing possibilities
4. Creating bold statements of ideal possibilities ("Provocative Propositions")
5. Co-determining "what should be" (consensus re: principles & priorities)
6. Taking/sustaining action

At the heart of any AI process are unconditionally positive questions that assume health and vitality in the system. Common appreciative questions include variations on the following:

- High point experiences: 'Describe a time in your life when you felt alive and engaged'
- Valuing: 'What do you value most about yourself, your work, your organisation?'
- Core life-giving factors: 'What are the core factors that give life to this organisation? What are the unique attributes of this system, without which it would not be the same?'
- Wishes for/images of the future: 'What three wishes do you have to enhance the vitality of this system? Imagine this organisation five years from now, healthy and vibrant - what does it look like?'