

## What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative Inquiry is the study and exploration of what gives life to human systems when they are at their best. It is an approach to personal and organizational change which believes that people can shift their attention and action away from problem analysis to create new possibilities and actions for the future. This is accomplished through a cyclic process, known as the “4-D cycle”, using inquiry and dialogue about strengths, successes, values, hopes, and dreams. AI investigates what an organization wants more of, and helps spotlight the positive elements already present within the organization that can catalyze and support growth and change.

### How does Appreciative Inquiry work?

AI posits that organizations move in the direction of what they consistently ask questions about, and that the more affirmative the question the more hopeful and positive the organizational response. Instead of directly enacting organizational change, AI aims to uncover and bring forth existing strengths, hopes, and dreams to uncover and amplify the positive core of the organization. With this focus on the positive, AI aims to shift a deficit-based change system to a positively-oriented one.

	<b>Deficit-based Change</b>	<b>Positive Change</b>
<i>Intervention Focus</i>	Identified problem	Affirmative topics
<i>Participation</i>	Selective inclusion of people	Whole system
<i>Action Research</i>	Diagnosis of the problem Causes and consequences Quantitative analysis Profile of need Conducted by outsiders	Discovery of positive core Organization at its best Narrative analysis Map of positive core Conducted by members
<i>Dissemination</i>	Feedback to decision makers	Widespread and creative sharing of best practices
<i>Creative Potential</i>	Brainstormed list of alternatives	Dreams of a better world and the organization’s contribution
<i>Result</i>	Best solution to resolve the problem	Design to realize dreams and human aspirations
<i>Capacity Gained</i>	Capacity to implement and measure the plan	Capacity for ongoing positive change

## Guiding Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

### **Constructionist Principle: Words create Worlds**

- Reality, as we know it, is a subjective vs. objective state
- It is socially created, through language and conversations

### **Poetic Principle: We Can Choose What We Study**

- Everything is open to interpretation
- We choose what we see and how we interpret the world as we know it

### **Simultaneity Principle: Inquiry Creates Change**

- The moment we ask a question we begin to create change
- Inquiry is intervention

### **Positive Principle: Positive Questions Lead to Positive Change**

- Momentum for large-scale change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding

### **Anticipatory Principle**

- Human systems move in the direction of their images of the future
- The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present-day action
- Pictures & images are more powerful than words

## Why does Appreciative Inquiry work?

The “why” of AI success is closely tied into the “how.” By redirecting the focus of an analysis to the positive, AI allows people and organizations to move beyond the conditions in which the problem was initially created. AI energizes participants as they become the builders of the future they envisioned, and also liberates power through its non-hierarchical structure, encouraging people to see and support the best of others, generating unprecedented cooperation and innovation through all roles.

From interviews about why AI works, the following six themes were distilled:

- It builds relationships enabling people to be known in relationship, rather than in role.
- It creates an opportunity for people to be heard.
- It generates opportunities for people to dream, and to share their dreams.
- It creates an environment in which people are able to choose how they contribute.
- It gives people both discretion and support to act.
- It encourages and enables people to be positive.

# The AI 4-D Process



## **ap·pre·ci·ate**, *verb*:

1. to recognize the best in people and the world around us
2. to perceive those things which give life, health, vitality, and excellence to living human systems
3. to affirm past and present strengths, successes, assets, and potentials
4. to increase in value

## **in·quir·y**, *verb*:

1. to ask questions
2. to study
3. to search, explore, delve into or investigate

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Information for this handout was quoted or adapted heavily from: Whitney D, Trosten-Bloom A. *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry: A Practical Guide to Positive Change*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2003.

## Resources

To learn more about Appreciative Inquiry and its different applications, please consult these resources:

### **Internet**

<http://appreciativeinquiry.virginia.edu> Appreciative Inquiry at the University of Virginia

<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/> Appreciative Inquiry Commons (AI Commons is a collection of information and resources from AI practitioners all over the world.)

### **Articles**

- Becker DM. The Hospital Is Its Own Story: An Appreciative Inquiry Model for Institutional Change. Medical Encounter Spring 2009
- Carter CA, Ruhe MC, Weyer S, Litaker D, Fry RE, Stange KC. An appreciative inquiry approach to practice improvement and transformative change in health care settings. Qual Manag Health Care. 2007 Jul-Sep;16(3):194-204.
- Havens DS, Wood SO, Leeman J. Improving nursing practice and patient care: building capacity with appreciative inquiry. J Nurs Adm. 2006 Oct;36(10):463-70.
- Haizlip JA, Plews-Ogan ML. Successful Adaptation of Appreciative Inquiry for Academic Medicine. AI Practitioner Aug 2010: 44-49.
- Plews-Ogan ML, May NB, Schorling JB, Becker DM, Frankel R, Graham E, Haizlip JA, Hostler S, Pollart S, Howell RE. Feeding the good wolf: Appreciative inquiry and graduate medical education. ACGME Bulletin Nov 2007:5-8.

### **Books**

- Hammons, S. Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry. Bend, OR: Thin Book Publishing Co., 1996.
- May N, Becker D, Frankel R, Haizlip J, Harmon R, Plews-Ogan M, Schorling J, Williams A, Whitney D. Appreciative Inquiry in Healthcare: Positive Questions to Bring Out the Best. Brunswick, OH: Crown Custom Publishing, Inc., 2011.
- Whitney D, Trosten-Bloom A. The Power of Appreciative Inquiry: A Practical Guide to Positive Change. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2003.
- Whitney D, Trosten-Bloom A, Cherney J, Fry R. Appreciative Team Building: Positive Questions to Bring Out the Best of Your Team. Lincoln NE: iUniverse, Inc., 2004

### **Contact Us**

Julie Haizlip, MD: [jah4ub@virginia.edu](mailto:jah4ub@virginia.edu)

Natalie May, PhD: [nbmay@verizon.net](mailto:nbmay@verizon.net)

Peggy Plews-Ogan, MD: [mp5k@virginia.edu](mailto:mp5k@virginia.edu)

John Schorling, MD: [jbs7f@virginia.edu](mailto:jbs7f@virginia.edu)

Anita Thompson-Heisterman, MSN, APRN: [aat8a@virginia.edu](mailto:aat8a@virginia.edu)



*The Appreciative Inquiry at UVA image, the rotunda collage, is by Lucia Cushman. Ms. Cushman was a 90-year old woman, nearly blind from macular degeneration. Her collages are constructed with paint peeled from the oft-adorned Beta Bridge on Rugby Road.*