

SURFACE TO SOUL

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Appreciative Inquiry Principles & Practices

A relatively new approach to coaching called Appreciative Inquiry Coaching (AIC), which has its roots in Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI evolved in the 1980s as a revolutionary and positive philosophy towards organizational change and is a process that focuses on leveraging an organization's core strengths rather than seeking to overcome or minimize its weaknesses. Appreciative Inquiry Coaching focuses coachees on both the positive present and possible future, rather than on the problems of the past and present. AI recognizes the best in people or the world around us. It affirms past and present strengths, successes, and potentials. It focuses on health, vitality, excellence, and what's already present.

Two essential components of AI are its five core principles and five core processes. These principles and processes are understood to have emerged from theoretical and research foundations grounded in, and research on, the power of imagery. The five core principles and five emergent principles that serve as the basis for AI are listed below.

THE FIVE PRINCIPLES

- 1 | Constructionist Principle** (words create worlds). Reality, as we know it, is a subjective vs. objective state and is socially created through language and conversations.
- 2 | Simultaneity Principle** (inquiry creates change). The moment we ask a question, we begin to create a change. "The questions we ask are fateful."
- 3 | Poetic Principle** (we can choose what we study). Teams and organizations, like open books, are endless sources of study and learning. What we choose to study makes a difference. It creates the world as we know it.
- 4 | Anticipatory Principle** (images inspire action). 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.
- 5 | Positive Principle** (positive questions lead to positive change). Momentum for small or large-scale change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding. This momentum is best generated through positive questions that amplify the positive core.

THE 5-D PROCESS

- 1 | Define** – What is the topic of inquiry? – It is important to define the overall focus of the inquiry (what the system wants more of). Definition is a recent addition – the 5Ds were originally the 4Ds, including discover, dream, design, and destiny. Definition defines the project's purpose, content, and what needs to be achieved. In this phase, the guiding question is, "What generative topic do we want to focus on together?"
- 2 | Discover** – Appreciating the best of 'what is' – Discovery is based on a dialogue, as a way of finding 'what works'. It rediscovers and remembers the organization or community's successes, strengths and periods of excellence.
- 3 | Dream** – Imagining 'what could be' – Imagining uses past achievements and successes identified in the discovery phase to imagine new possibilities and envision a preferred future.
- 4 | Design** – Determining 'what should be' – Design brings together the stories from discovery with the imagination and creativity from dream. We call it bringing the 'best of what is' together with 'what might be', to create 'what should be – the ideal'.
- 5 | Deliver/Do** – Creating 'what will be' – The fifth stage in the 5-D process identifies how the design is delivered and embedded into groups, communities and organizations. In early appreciative inquiry development, it was called 'delivery', based on traditional organizational development practice. The term 'destiny' is more prevalent now.



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