

## A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

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*Appreciative Inquiry, or AI for short, is a value-oriented approach from the field of team- and organizational development that promotes an appreciative and affirmative attitude in teams, organizations or communities, in which appreciative questions (or exploration) are a central element. It was developed in the 1980s by David Cooperrider of Case Western Reserve University in the USA. (Wikipedia)*

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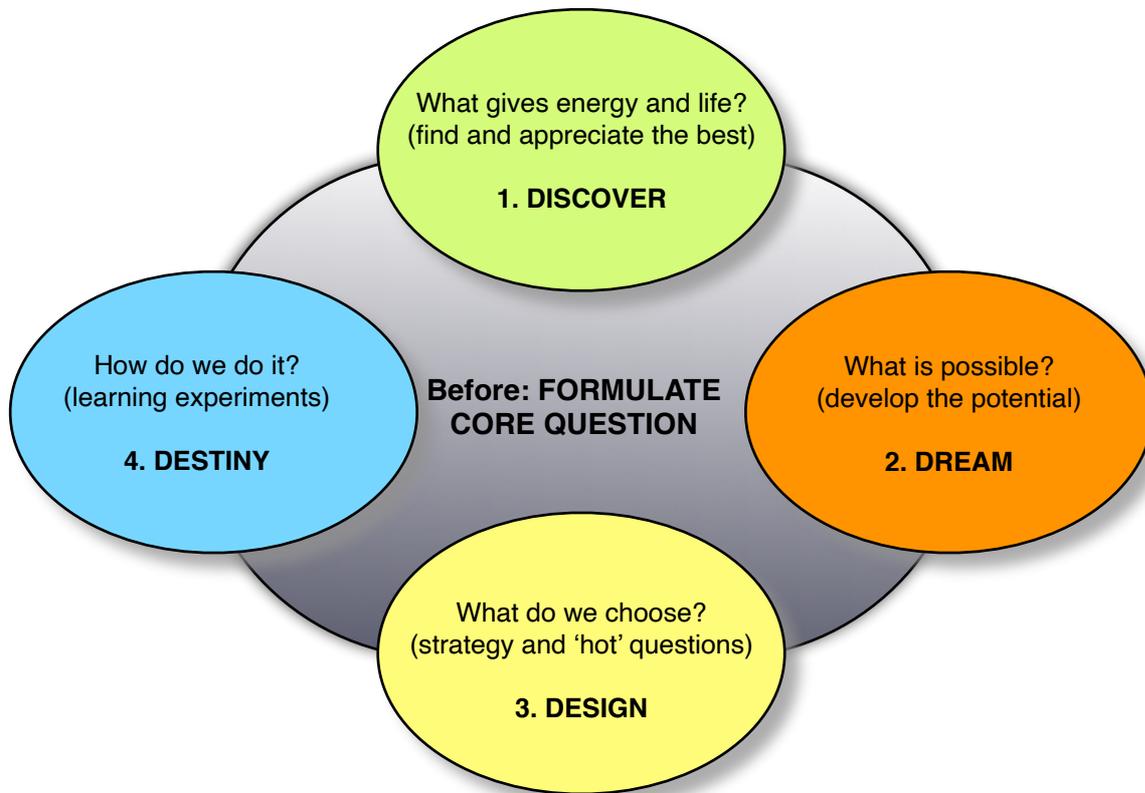
Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is both an attitude and a method that aims to make the potential of an individual or group visible in order to use it as a starting point for further growth. Instead of pointing out problems, questions are asked about successes and top moments. Instead of analyzing the mistakes and problems of the past, the focus is on the desired future situation. Not: "What do I not want anymore?" But: "What do I desire most?" The successes from the past provide the elements for the realization of this vision.

### HOW DOES AI RELATE TO THE PROBLEM-ORIENTED 4 PHASE APPROACH?

PROBLEMORIENTED APPROACH	APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY APPROACH
1. Identification of the problem	1.1 What desire does the problem stand in the way of? Formulate the goal. 1.2 Collect successes, energy moments, best practices. 'What gives life here?'
2. Root-cause analysis	2. Leap forward: what would be possible, what new ideas are there - inspired by the findings of the previous phase? Invite the participants to dream.
3. Deciding on solutions	3. From the abundance of images and ideas of the participants, principles and condensations are developed and decided what is necessary to achieve the desired future. In this phase, the associated fears, problems and limitations are also discussed.

PROBLEMORIENTED APPROACH	APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY APPROACH
4. Work on To-Do list	4. Innovate and experiment. The participants themselves decide which aspect they want to realise, how and with whom. This realises 100% commitment. Process support is offered to support the step by step growth into the new reality.

**VISUALISATION OF THE FOUR STEPS ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE TABLE:**



**THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND THE APPRECIATIVE APPROACH**

The following five principles were formulated by Prof. Dr. David Cooperrider. The number of principles changes continually, this is exactly the strength of the AI approach: it is flexible and can be combined with other approaches.

1. **The poetic principle.** Imagine the change phase like a chapter in a book. It is necessary to give the participants space to tell their story to find new perspectives. Storytelling is therefore a central aspect of AI. The quality of questions we ask determine what we discover and how we move forward.

2. **The social constructivist principle.** This principle states that people construct their social reality and social phenomena. By helping them to look at themselves / their organisation in a new way and to tell different stories, change already sets in. AI is a relationship-oriented approach, in which the participants of the respective system are actively involved.
3. **The principle of simultaneity.** In an AI process, the analysis- and change-phase run synchronously. Collecting stories is therefore not a preliminary phase, but an important part of the change intervention. The formulation of 'generative questions' is therefore given much attention. AI has its roots in action research.
4. **The anticipatory principle.** The way we describe our future is an important source of inspiration. People change in the direction of their vision of the future. Creating and sharing these images in a team creates a collective future. This collective picture provides the necessary focus to subsequently agree on concrete measures for change.

#### **WHEN DOES AN AI-PROZESS WORK?**

- More cohesion and trust - at the central office or across home offices.
- Wanting to know one's strengths and use them more often.
- Looking back on the Corona period - what have we done well? What has worked? How can we prepare ourselves for the future?
- We want to hear and include all voices in our system - also the quiet ones.
- We don't just want to become 'better', we want to become 'excellent'.
- AI is ideal for coaching, evaluations, purpose and brainstorming processes.

#### **WHEN RATHER NO AI-PROZESS?**

- When there is only one correct answer/direction.
- When there is already a tight implementation plan, without room for participation for those involved.
- When those affected need time to mourn or are too angry to want to build. Then, a process based on Deep Democracy could be helpful first.

## THE AI-SPIRIT

"My genius lies not in the answer, but in asking the right questions." (Albert Einstein)

"The task of leadership is to align the strengths so that the weaknesses of a system become irrelevant. (Peter Drucker)

"Every change begins as a desired image. With AI, we shift the images of the future based on our strengths." (David Cooperrider)

"We always talk about change, but so little about continuity. No matter how much we change, what good do we want to preserve?" (David Cooperrider)

## MORE INFORMATION

[www.appreciativeinquiry.eu/community/](http://www.appreciativeinquiry.eu/community/) (European AI Practitioners introduce themselves)

[aipractitioner.com](http://aipractitioner.com) (AI-Practitioner-Magazine)

[appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu](http://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu) (central international AI-Website)

## CURIOUS? GET IN TOUCH FOR MORE INFORMATION!



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Heike Aiello is coach, trainer, author and lecturer in the Stuttgart area. She got to know Appreciative Inquiry in 2006 in the Netherlands and has been using it as a basis for her international consulting and coaching activities ever since. "AI offers participants an atmosphere in which they are allowed to be intelligent and creative. One relaxes, there is laughter, suddenly ideas flow and new things become possible".