

# APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY - REFLECTION



I ask for what I desire as we begin this topic



I pray that my entire being become open to God's grace



I imagine these texts being addressed to me, and note my response

### Grace: that we grow in appreciation and gratitude to the blessings and gifts received

"It seems to me in the light of the Divine Goodness, although others may think differently, that ingratitude is the most abominable of sins and that it should be detested in the sight of our Creator and Lord by all of His creatures who are capable of enjoying His divine and everlasting glory. For it is a forgetting of the graces, benefits, and blessings received. As such it is the cause, beginning, and origin of all sins and misfortunes. On the contrary, the grateful acknowledgment of blessings and gifts received is loved and esteemed not only on earth but in heaven."

From a letter than Ignatius Loyola wrote to Simon Rodrigues

"Ignatian indifference or freedom flows from a sense of giftedness and gratitude. It is because everything is seen as gift that one can let go and trust in the fidelity of the Giver. Gifts unrelated to a Giver become possessions, attachments, objects of unfreedom that are clung to. A grateful person is a free person because the grateful person holds everything in trust and never mistakes the gift for the giver. Our temptation, of course, is to take things for granted, to claim things as our own or as owed to us. When this happens we are no longer surprised by life, Brother David Steindl-Rast, in his book Gratefulness, the Heart of Prayer comments on the connection between surprise and taking things for granted: "Even the predictable turns into surprise, the moment we stop taking it for granted." He adds: "To recognize that everything is surprising is the first step toward recognizing that everything is gift." Ignatius who saw everything as gift must certainly have been open to the continuing surprise of God."

From a letter than Ignatius Loyola wrote to Simon Rodrigues

"At night Ignatius would go up on the roof of the house, with the sky there up above him. He would sit quietly, absolutely quietly. He would take his hat off and look up for a long time at the sky. Then he would fall to his knees, bowing profoundly to God....And the tears would begin to flow down his cheeks like a stream...."

Father Diego Lainez, S.J.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How present am I to the gifts and graces around me? How often do I seek to find them in others? How can I grow more in appreciation of my current context and notice the invitation it carries?

# APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY - EXERCISE

### EXPLORING LIFE IN OUR GROUP

#### Part 1: Discussions in pairs

Within your group, start a dialogue in pairs to discover and dream a new, more compelling image of your team and its future.

- Describe a time in your team/organization when you felt most alive and engaged.
- What is it that you most appreciate about yourself and your contribution to your group?
- What are the core elements that bring life to your group, and without which it would cease to exist?
- Assume your group undergoes powerful and positive changes and becomes what you dreamt it would be. You are meeting with the group today and are very proud of what you see. What do you notice happening that is transformed, performing and resonant?

#### Part 2: Sharing in groups

Following the paired interviews, join the group and share your stories. Reflect on the impact of the experience. How did it feel to explore common dreams and recognize shared meaning? How did the practice of inquiring about common values and resources that capture your group's core successes impacted your group?

### HELPING OTHERS APPRECIATE WHAT IS GOOD

**Reflection:** Recall a time when a colleague or a team member was under stress.

- From your experience, what approaches and behaviors helped them feel supported?
- What would help them reconnect to their abilities and potential without inflicting help or overwhelming them?

**Action:** Experiment with the below questions next time the opportunity arise:

- Can you help me understand what works best for you when you are feeling ....? (stressed, anxious, overwhelmed,...)?
- What has helped you in the past when you experienced something similar?
- What can I do to help you capitalize on your strengths and skills to handle this situation?

### ADDITIONAL EXERCISES

# APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY- INPUT

## INTRODUCTION

Over the long run, focusing on analyzing problems and looking for appropriate solutions has sapped energy, motivation and good will from people, the very elements needed for transforming teams and organizations. Appreciative Inquiry has offered a paradigm shift by moving from a deficit-based change to using affirmation, appreciation and gratitude as a way to enable human transformation.

## MAIN IDEAS

### Starting with what is already working

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a very effective and popular practice for positive and resonant communication that focuses on what gives life to human systems when they perform at their best. It is a collaborative and constructive inquiry process that encourages people to search for elements that give life to teams, organizations and larger communities when they are most effective, creative and healthy, instead of investing on what's wrong and looking for fixes. To appreciate means to recognize and value the best in our reality. It also means to be grateful for this reality and maintain a positive stance towards it.

The model is rooted in the positive psychology movement and affirms that people are most likely to change when they have: (1) an inspiring purpose, (2) a sense of collective confidence to reach this purpose, and (3) a set of practical steps for moving forward (Hammond, 1998; Ludema, et al., 2003).

The method is based on the supposition that dialogue and questions that draw on assets, accomplishments, core values, deep aspirations, and desires for the future have a transformative impact on individuals and systems. It is grounded in the belief that people and organizations possess a unique and unlimited set of gifts to share with others and the world. When these human social systems are given the opportunity through inquiry and dialogue to positively construct and articulate their vision of the future, they are able to shift their focus and action from problem analysis to valuable ideals and creative possibilities that will shape what is yet to come. (The Power of Appreciative Inquiry (2003).

### Appreciative Inquiry Principles

*(adapted from Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2010)*

- Dialogue and words shape one's understanding and view of reality.
- Questions create change.
- What we choose to focus on (whether positive or negative), will determine what we learn.
- Creating images of the future can inspire action.
- Positive questions promote positive change.
- People perform better when given a choice about how and what they contribute.
- Every team/organization has at least one thing they do well. Focus on finding and developing this area.
- What the team or organization focus on will grow bigger, so pay attention to areas where they are excelling and seek to develop them.

## The 4Ds of the Appreciative Inquiry Cycle

(David Cooperrider and Diana Whitney)

A typical appreciative inquiry model (called the 4D cycle of Appreciative Inquiry) consists of four steps:

1. Discovery - This step inquires into the best of the past and the present.
2. Dream – Based on the findings and stories from the Discovery phase, this step aims to create a compelling, memorable and ambitious picture of the desired future.
3. Design – This step creates shared images of a preferred future (what should be).
4. Destiny – This step looks for innovative ways to create that future ( what will be).

## Common Tools

AI is more about inquiring, learning and understanding something —and thereby valuing it—than it is about only seeking to be positive, or engaging in expressions of appreciation.

Common tools of Appreciative Inquiry focus on:

- Asking questions that invite and inspire people to have a more integral, systemic and future-oriented thinking
- Analyzing the narratives used individually and collectively and reimagining them under the best light
- Eliciting affirmative learnings from previous experiences
- Inviting individuals and organizations to re-discover their positive core and ground themselves in their values and ideals
- Engaging people to share their dreams and aspirations with others and be heard
- Creating opportunities for people to decide on the contributions they want to make, as realistically and full of commitment as they choose
- Empowering and supporting people to take positive and future action at their own discretion.

## When practicing appreciative inquiry:

*Adapted from Practical Appreciative Inquiry, Coaching Leaders 2015*

- Assume wellbeing and strength rather than deficit. Keep looking for examples and experiences where things are working well.
- Remember that the process of inquiry is an intervention in itself. It is not simply about gathering information. The questions we choose to ask impact the emotional state of the individual or the group we are working with, and the image they hold of the situation.
- The way we ask the questions also matters, as it shapes people's expectations about the value and authenticity of the interview. Be focused and interested.
- Look for stories and genuine experiences, not opinions or formal analysis. It is not about what people think of the experience today, but more what they thought and felt about it at the time.
- Once the story and its related emotions have been expressed, you can shift the focus to values, life-giving factors and wishes. The motivating power of values and wishes comes from their emotional charge.

## Example of questions

(adapted from Ludema, et al., 2003; Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2010)

- Tell me about your past experiences with this team/practice/organization.
- What brought you here? What did you like about the team/organization? Why do you stay?
- What do you value the most about this organization/team/relationship...?
- Going back to a time when you were operating at your very best, what made that possible?
- Tell me about what beneficiaries experience at your centers.
- Who are we at our best?
- What does the world need us to be? What do beneficiaries need our service to be?
- What are the most life-giving opportunities for us in the coming future?
- What inspires and energizes us? What gives us hope?

The practice of Appreciative Inquiry is built around the ability to perceive and appreciate those things that give life to living systems. This fundamental attitude of openness and gratitude that underlies Appreciative Inquiry is at the core of Ignatian spirituality.

## IGNATIAN NOTE

*"Among all the virtues that our Father (Ignatius) possessed was one by which he was especially distinguished: the virtue of gratitude. In that he was simply wonderful. "*

Pedro Ribadaneira, one of Ignatius' early companions

For Saint Ignatius, gratitude was rooted in his relation with God and came as a response to his experience of God's never-ending generosity. Through discernment, Ignatius' growing awareness of God's graces and work in his life made him open and grateful. He started recognizing the gift-nature of everything and experienced gratitude as a response. This experience energized him to share the gifts received and offer the Spiritual Exercises as way to allow others to experience similar graces.

Throughout the Exercises, he invites us to recall and acknowledge the blessings that we have enjoyed at each phase, as a way to help us foster gratitude and subsequently love and service. The final grace prayed for in the Exercises reminds us of this ultimate end:

*"Here it will be to ask for an intimate knowledge of the many blessings received, that filled with gratitude for all, I may in all things love and serve the Divine Majesty."*

## EXPECTED LEARNINGS AND OUTCOMES

1. Introducing appreciative inquiry as a practice to mobilize and transform teams and organizations
2. Practicing appreciative inquiry to reveal the positive core within your groups/teams
3. Appreciating how a group's strengths and potential flow from personal stories and visions

*"With gratitude, people acknowledge the goodness in their lives. In the process, people usually recognize that the source of that goodness lies at least partially outside themselves."*

# APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY - RESOURCES

## GENERAL LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

Title	Author	Publisher	Year	Link
Appreciative Inquiry Resource Pack		The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and NHS Education for Scotland (NES)	2015	<a href="#">Link</a>
The Appreciative Inquiry Summit: A Practitioner's Guide for Leading Large-Group Change	James D. Ludema, Diana Whitney, Bernard J. Mohr, Thomas J. Griffin	Berrett-Koehler Publishers	2003	<a href="#">Link</a>
Appreciative Inquiry - Short Video				<a href="#">Link</a>
Appreciative Inquiry Handout				<a href="#">Link</a>
Excerpt from Appreciative Inquiry Handbook: For Leaders of Change	David L. Cooperrider, Diana Whitney and Jacqueline M. Stavros	Berrett-Koehler Publishers		<a href="#">Link</a>
Appreciative Inquiry: How To Define Your Affirmative Topic Effectively		Coaching Leaders	2016	<a href="#">Link</a>
The thin book of appreciative inquiry	Sue Annis Hammond	Thin Book Publishing	2013	<a href="#">Link</a>
The Appreciative Inquiry Model		E.H. Kessler, (ed.) Encyclopedia of Management Theory, Sage Publications,	2013	<a href="#">Link</a>
The Essentials of Appreciative Inquiry: A Roadmap for Creating Positive Futures	Mohr BJ, Watkins JM	Pegasus Communications	2002	<a href="#">Link</a>

## IGNATIAN RESOURCES

Title	Author	Publisher	Year	Link
Ignatius Loyola: A Mysticism of Gratitude	Gerald M. Fagin,S.J.	Loyola Lectures in Religion	1992	<a href="#">Link</a>
An Ignatian Path to Gratitude	Wilkie Au	The Way		<a href="#">Link</a>
Ignatian Service: Gratitude and Love in Action	Wilkie Au	Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits	2008	<a href="#">Link</a>
Gratitude and the Spiritual Life	James Martin, S.J.	America Magazine	2010	<a href="#">Link</a>
Ignatius, gratitude and positive psychology: Does Ignatian gratitude develop subjective well-being?	Tom Carson	The Way	2013	<a href="#">Link</a>
Graced Gratitude	Charles M., Shelton	The Way	2003	<a href="#">Link</a>
Gratitude Is the Key	Jim Manney	Youtube		<a href="#">Link</a>
A Gratitude Deficit	Jim Manney	Ignatian Spirituality		<a href="#">Link</a>

## QUOTES

- “. . . In the long run, what is likely to be more useful: Demoralizing a successful workforce by concentrating on their failures? or helping them over the last few hurdles by building a bridge with their successes?” Thomas H. White
- “We can’t ignore problems. We just need to approach them from the other side.” Thomas H. White
- “Any problem is a frustrated dream and the dream came first” - David Cooperrider
- ‘Belief rather than doubt is the stance to adopt. This is not a time for scepticism or for questions that imply a need for “proof”.’ - Magruder Watkins and Mohr, Appreciative inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination
- “The ageless essence of leadership is to create an alignment of strengths in ways that make a system’s weaknesses irrelevant.” —Peter Drucker
- “Every organization has something that works right—things that give it life when it is most alive, effective, successful, and connected in healthy ways to its stakeholders and communities. AI begins by identifying what is positive and connecting to it in ways that heighten energy, vision, and action for change.” Appreciative Inquiry Handbook

- “Appreciative inquiry gets much better results than seeking out and solving problems. We concentrate enormous resources on correcting problems... but when used continually over a long time, this approach leads to a negative culture and a descent into a paralyzing sense of hopelessness. We can’t ignore problems, we just need to approach them from the other side.”  
—Thomas H. White (quoted in Ludema, et al., 2003)
- “The acknowledgment of and gratitude for favors and gifts received is loved and esteemed in Heaven and on Earth” - Ignatius of Loyola
- “What most attracts God’s grace is gratitude, because if we thank him for a gift, he is touched and hastens to give us ten more, and if we thank him again with the same enthusiasm, what an incalculable multiplication of graces! I have experienced this; try it yourself and you will see! My gratitude for everything he gives me is limitless, and I prove it to him in a thousand ways” - Therese of Lisieux, *The Way of Trust And Love*, p.111)
- “At its heart, AI is about the search for the best in people, their organizations, and the strengths-filled, opportunity-rich world around them. AI is not so much a shift in the methods and models of organizational change, but AI is a fundamental shift in the overall perspective taken throughout the entire change process to ‘see’ the wholeness of the human system and to “inquire” into that system’s strengths, possibilities, and successes. ”- Stavros, Godwin, & Cooperrider (2015)