

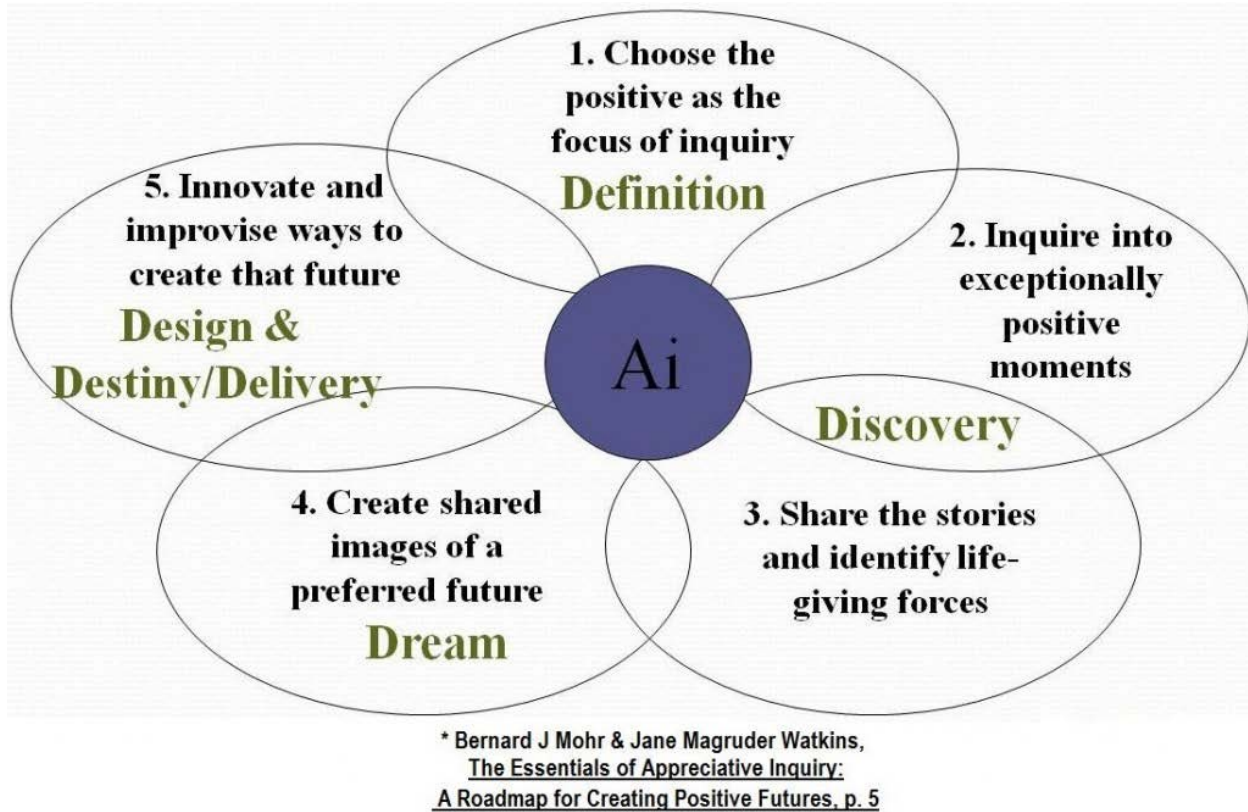
# Assessment Resources

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## Definitions of Appreciative Inquiry<sup>1</sup>

The following is a collection of definitions of **Appreciative Inquiry** which have developed over the years. We invite you to quote these definitions or develop your own. Let us know how people respond to these as you share them with clients, students, colleagues, and inquirers.



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**“Appreciative Inquiry is the** cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discover of what gives a system ‘life’ when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system’s capacity to heighten positive potential. It mobilizes inquiry through crafting an “unconditional positive question’ often involving hundreds or sometimes thousands of people.”Cooperrider, D.L. & Whitney, D., “Appreciative Inquiry: A positive revolution in change.” In P. Holman & T. Devane (eds.), *The Change Handbook*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., pages 245-263.

**“The traditional approach to** change is to look for the problem, do a diagnosis, and find a solution. The primary focus is on what is wrong or broken; since we look for problems, we find them. By paying attention to problems, we emphasize and amplify them. ...Appreciative Inquiry suggests that we look for what works in an organization. The tangible result of the inquiry process is a series of statements that describe where the organization wants to be, based on the high moments of where they have been.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/definition.cfm>

Because the statements are grounded in real experience and history, people know how to repeat their success." Hammond, Sue. *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*. Thin Book Publishing Company, 1998, pages 6-7.

**“Appreciative Inquiry [is] a theory and practice for approaching change from a holistic framework. Based on the belief that human systems are made and imagined by those who live and work within them, AI leads systems to move toward the generative and creative images that reside in their most positive core – their values, visions, achievements, and best practices.”** “AI is both a world view and a practical process. In theory, AI is a perspective, a set of principles and beliefs about how human systems function, a departure from the past metaphor of human systems as machines. Appreciative Inquiry has an attendant set of core processes, practices, and even ‘models’ that have emerged. In practice, AI can be used to co-create the transformative processes and practices appropriate to the culture of a particular organization.” “Grounded in the theory of ‘social constructionism,’ AI recognizes that human systems are constructions of the imagination and are, therefore, capable of change at the speed of imagination. Once organization members shift their perspective, they can begin to invent their most desired future.” Watkins, J.M. & Bernard J. Mohr. *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*, Jossey-Bass, 2001, pages xxxi - xxxii

**“AI is intentional inquiry** and directed conversation and story-telling that leads to a place of possibility. Possibility is fresh, new, and sacred. The story is the genesis of all that is human. Societies are stories, as are companies, schools, cities, families and individuals. There are bricks and mortar and flesh and bones, but all of it comes from a story. Even the flesh and bones of one person comes from a story of two people uniting to form another. I can think of a many moments where groups reached a profound spot with Ai and touched a sense of freedom. Usually one person would say something like, "From what we heard in these stories, we could\_..." and there follows a collective deep breath and then silence as people consider the new "we could". Possibility sits in the room as a space of silence and then thought fills the space. Where does the thought that enters at that time, which has a feeling of vitality and newness, come from? It does not come from the person who spoke because that person would not have developed that thought without the conversations that led to synapses firing in a certain way. The thought is not merely a product of the collective because an individual must form the thought. The thought comes out of relationship, conversation, and newly created images. This "thing called Ai" is one of the finest ways to experience the power of language and to hone our skills with words, ideas, and stories. There are times when the possibility is so stunning the group has to sit in silence if just for a couple ticks before saying, "well, yes, maybe, why not, let's do it." There must be a gap that arises in the field of the known to entertain the unbridled possibility of novelty. There is a break in the routine story and supporting conversations so something new can creep in. This is the opening where novelty can arise. With no gap, we only have the billiard ball predictability of continuity. The openness to new ideas is not coerced. People don't have to force each other to listen to other's ideas and possibilities: minds are opened because the nature of the stories are so compelling and energetic.”

Steinbach, John. Contribution to the AI Listserve, July 2005

## Solution-Focused Questions

### Solution Defining

These questions help family members define the who, what, why, where, when and how of the problem and the solution. It is productive to identify the nature of the problem and the solutions as well as who else is interested in this problem or has information that might be helpful in solving the problem. It helps to provide a video replay of how and under what circumstances the problem occurs.

Examples of solution-defining questions include the following:

- Under what circumstances is this likely to occur?
- When this happens (your husband loses his temper and threatens the children), what do you do?
- What are the positives for you in continuing to stay in this relationship?
- Who else is concerned about this problem in your family?
- What would have to be different for you not to be afraid?
- How often did it happen last week?
- Who was there when it happened?
- Where were you when Johnny had his temper tantrum?

### Past Successes

Through the interview process, you can focus on the family member's past successes, that is, when he or she was functioning well enough not to require child protective services intervention. It is empowering to the family member to realize that there was a period in his or her life when he or she was more successful than he or she feels at this moment.

Examples of past-success questions include the following:

- It's not easy to raise three children on your own. How did you do it?
- After having been through what you've been through, how did you find enough strength to keep pushing on?
- What do you need to do so that you'll feel good about yourself and in control of your life again?
- What would it take for you to bring back the confidence you had when you were in high school?

### Exception Finding

In solution-focused interviewing, exceptions are times when problems could have happened but did not. You and the family need to examine who did what, when, where and how to understand why the problem did not happen this time. Essentially, you are trying to discover how the patterns around the

problems are different, especially what is different when the problem does not occur. In addition, problematic behaviors usually happen only within certain physical, relational or social contexts. It is important to find out in detail what happens when the person does not have the problem. That information can be used to identify the abilities the family uses successfully in one setting. Those strengths/abilities could be transferred to another setting.

Examples of exception-finding questions include the following:

- I can see you have every reason to be depressed. When do you get a little bit less depressed?
- How would you say you are different when you are a little bit less depressed?
- When you force yourself to get out of bed and walk the kids to school, what do you suppose your children will notice different about you?
- What would it take to force yourself to get up in the morning more often?
- You are saying that you didn't drink for five days last week. How did you do it?
- Tell me what is different for you at those times when you don't lose control.
- How do you explain to yourself that the problem doesn't happen at those times?
- What would have to happen for you to do it more often?
  - When the problem is solved, how do you think your relationship with your son will be different? What will you be doing then that you are not doing now?

### Miracle Questions

The miracle question literally asks clients to disregard their current troubles and for a moment imagine what their lives would be like in a successful future. It creates a vivid image or vision of what life will be like when the problem is solved and the family member(s) can see some hope that life can be different.

An example of a miracle question follows:

- Suppose one night there is a miracle while you are sleeping, and the problem that brought you to child protective services is solved. Since you are sleeping, you don't know the miracle has happened or that the problem is solved. What do you suppose you will notice different the next morning that will tell you that the problem is solved?

Examples of follow-up questions include the following:

- If the miracle happened, what would be the first thing you would notice?
- If the miracle happened, what would be the first change you will notice about yourself?
- What would your spouse notice different about you?
  - If you were to take these steps, what would you notice different around your house?

Minor-miracle questions also help family members to look at a more hopeful future. It helps you and them to envision positive outcomes that can become part of the change process. An example of a minor-miracle question follows:

- If you had three wishes, what would they be?
- If you had a magic wand and could grant yourself one thing that would solve the problem/meet the need that your family is now facing, what would you wish for?
- If you could paint a picture for me of what your family would be like if all this were solved, what would that picture look like?

### Scaling Questions

Scaling questions are an interesting way to make complex features of a person's life more concrete and accessible for both the family member and the child protection worker. Scaling questions can be used to assess self-esteem, self-confidence, investment in change, prioritization of problems, perception of hopefulness, etc. They usually take the form of asking the person to give a number from 1-10 that best represents where he/she is at some specific point. Ten is the positive end of the scale, so higher numbers are equated with more positive outcomes or experiences.

Examples of scaling questions include the following:

- On a scale of 1-10, with 10 meaning you have every confidence that this problem can be solved and 1 means no confidence at all, where would you put yourself today?
- On the same scale, how hopeful are you that this problem can be solved?
- What would be different in your life when you move up just one step?

You can use scaling questions to assess client motivation to change:

- On a scale of 1-10, how much would you say you are willing to work to solve the problem?

If the client gives a low answer, you could ask, "What do you suppose your husband would say you need to do to move up one point on the scale?"

### Coping question

Coping questions are designed to elicit information about resources that will have gone unnoticed by a person or family. Even the most hopeless story has within it examples of coping that can be drawn out: *"I can see how things have been really difficult for you, yet I am struck by the fact you get up each morning and do everything necessary to get the kids off to school. How do you do that?"* Genuine curiosity and admiration can help to highlight strengths without appearing to contradict the person's perception of "the problem."

- I can see how things have been really difficult for you, yet you find a way to get up each morning. What gets you up?

## Build Resiliency<sup>2</sup>

- **Promoting the person's ability to develop and build relationships**
  - ♦ Ask about important people in their lives; include important people in the plan
  - ♦ Provide opportunities for parents and caregivers to participate in trauma-informed parenting classes (recommended use of "Caring for Traumatized Children: A Resource Parent Curriculum" – presently offered by GHS)
  - ♦ Communicate new information as honestly and truthfully as possible (building of relational safety)
  - ♦ Educate the child's placement in knowing how making a child feel safe is a precursor for developing relationship
  - ♦ Treat birth parents with respect
    - Recognize the likelihood of parent's own history of trauma and how this may affect relationships with the children
    - Engage parents' participation in decision making during periods of change, crises; but also in common child caring responsibilities such as medical and academic planning
      - ✓ Find at least one way to build caseworker relationship with child
      - ✓ Reframe the need for "attention" for caregivers as seeking relational connections
  
- **Promoting the person's mastery/competency**
  - ♦ Identify areas of strengths; include the strengths in the case plan
  - ♦ Create opportunities to use their strengths to experience success
  - ♦ Teach that frustration and/or failure is a component of developing competency
  - ♦ Reframe victimization as an outcome of being traumatized and not necessarily how the world has to be defined
    - Support the child and/or adult in accessing opportunities to develop and utilize strengths
    - Support the person's participation in activities that build efficacy even when the person is struggling with emotional and/or behavioral control
    - Recognize and validate successes
    - Consider efficacy building as a component of self-empowerment and self-esteem that extend beyond therapy

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Jim Henry

- **Improving the person's ability to regulate emotion and behavior**
  - ♦ Develop calming strategies through the acknowledgement and attention to a person's vulnerability to traumatic stress reactions (emotional state)
  - ♦ Identify and model emotional identification and expression by caregivers and adults
  - ♦ Recognize a person's emotional and behavioral responses as survival driven and "doing the best they can"
  - ♦ Teach caregivers/birth parents to help child identify/label emotions they are feeling
  - ♦ Encourage practice of calming strategies for child to learn to manage emotions
  - ♦ Do not react to the child's behavior/emotion, but rather be an emotional container for the child's emotions
  - ♦ Make a plan for safety that recognizes how traumatic experiences have affected a child's triggered reactions to people, places, and experiences. Pay particular attention to times that the child struggles to self-regulate based on the environment and context they are in.
  - ♦ Use caution when interpreting a child's reaction before, during, and after parenting time. Develop a safety plan that engages parents and caregivers, which provides structure and safety during transitions and periods of separation.
  
- **Foster development of self-esteem**
  - ♦ Practice giving specific praise and encourage/model caregivers/parents practicing it as well
  - ♦ Catch the person doing something good
  - ♦ Remind the person of her or his positive qualities
  - ♦ Utilize a non-judgmental focus – remind self and caregivers that bad behavior may reflect survival strategies and does not define the person's character
  - ♦ Honor the child's relationships with biological family, discuss their parents' need for help in an age-appropriate, non-judgmental and honest manner