

What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a way of making changes in an organization. Members of the organization focus on the positives and strengths. The focus is to identify what is already working and doing more of that, rather than looking for problems and trying to fix them. AI encourages trust in the organization through listening, collaboration and co-designing the work.

How is AI different from other approaches? The AI approach to change in an organization focuses on the work that people are proud of, what motivates them, and where they are getting good results. What about past failures, or where something is not going well? AI does not ignore the failures, but the process builds a positive and open framework allowing for creative and innovative ideas for improvement. Think about it this way. Would you be more productive in a meeting to focus on all you do not have, things you are missing, what is not working, or focus on what is going well or what is working somewhat, but not great yet. What are you people going to be more excited about working with?

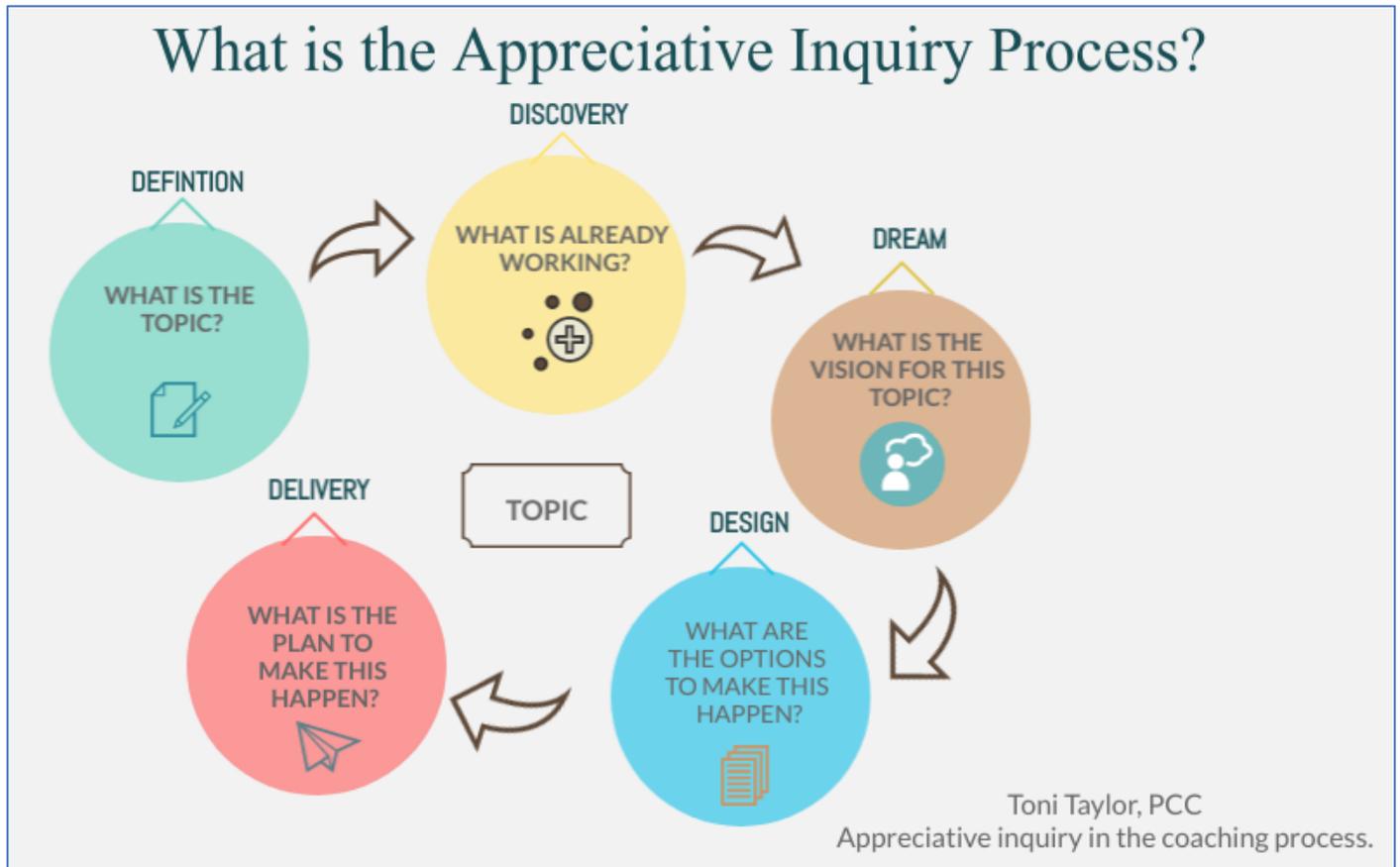
Here is an example of using AI for an area that is not going well. During Covid-19 your church members want more connection than they currently have. They are lonely, feeling isolated and complaining. There is a lot going on here. Instead of trying to fix the problem as if something is broken, instead look at the areas of connection that are working within the church? What stories are you hearing about good connections happening? What do people want more of? What is the desired state of connection in your church? The Problem-solution approach shuts down creativity. You zero in on the problem and ramp up anxiety. You may get a solution to what you think is the problem, but it may not be the best solution or even the right solution.

Comparison with Problem-Focused Approaches

Problem-solving	Appreciative Inquiry
Fix it	Grow it
Thinks in terms: problem, symptoms, causes, solutions, action plan, intervention, and all too often, blame	Thinks in terms: good, better, possible
Breaks things into pieces, leading to fragmented responses, may not be the right solution overall.	AI keeps the big picture in view, focusing on an ideal and how its roots lie in what is already working, what do we want more of?
Slow pace of change – requiring a lot of positive emotion to make real change happen, there is , frustration.	Quickly creates a new dynamic – with people united around a shared vision of the future. Increased in engagement in the possibilities and loyalty to the work
Assumes the church is made up of a series of problems to be overcome,, its broken, creating a deficit culture	Assumes church is a source of limitless capacity and imagination, creating an appreciative culture. Abundance,. God inspired

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was pioneered in the 1980s by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva, two professors at the Weatherhead School of Management at Case Western Reserve University.

The Appreciative Inquiry Change Process



The Appreciative Inquiry Change Process

Define: Topic Example: What will church be like after Covid-19?

Discovery – Share the stories

- What is currently going on that is good right now?
- What new ideas have you tried? What caused you to try these new ideas?
- What areas of ministry have continued during this time of separation?
- What has been life giving for YOU during this time?
- What do we know so far or still need to learn about your situation?
- What do we want more of?

Discovery Part Two: Stories and reflection

How has this time of separation changed you?

What changes do you want to hold onto when we return to worship in our churches?

How has this time of separation changed our people?

What is it you want to learn from church members regarding these questions?

How will you learn this information?

Dream: Create shared images of a preferred future

What's important to you about (_____)?

What's the deeper purpose (the big "why") that is really worthy of your best effort?

What opportunities can you see in (_____)?

What would it take to create change on this issue?

Design:

What could happen that would enable you/us to feel fully engaged and energized about (_____)?

What's possible here?

If your success was completely guaranteed, what bold steps might you choose?

What is your priority to make this happen on a scale of 1-10?

Delivery:

What is your plan to make this happen?

What/Who do you need to develop this plan?

What resources will you need?

What is your timeline?

Who and how will you hold yourself accountable?

How will you know you are successful?