

Principles of Appreciative Inquiry in Coaching

1. CONSTRUCTIONIST PRINCIPLE

An understanding and acceptance of the social constructionist stance toward reality and social knowledge i.e.-- that what we believe to be real in the world is created through our social discourse – the conversations we have with each other and the stories that we tell and create -- that lead to agreement about how we will see the world, how we will behave, what we will accept as reality and what we will believe to be possible.

- Recognizes individual as part of a social system – individual behavior and performance is affected by and exists within socially constructed reality – Individual is a participant as well as a recipient of the reality that is socially constructed about his/her effectiveness on the job.
- Engages client and usually the relevant social group in generative conversations and shared images of the future – conscious social construction of the best of the client’s contributions and performance to date and images of the client realizing his/her fullest potential.
- Frames coaching as focusing on an individual and also focusing on the social system of which the client is part and that development may benefit from or may require involvement of others in the system.
- Stimulates conversations to build agreement on coaching goals and support real change.
- Opens communication between the client, manager, colleagues and direct reports to build shared agreement and commitment to coaching goals.
- Uses coaching to build relationships that support action

2. POETIC PRINCIPLE

A valuing of story telling as a way of gathering holistic information that includes not only facts, but also the feelings and affect that a person experiences. Recognition that stories (like all good poetry) can be told about any aspect of an organization’s existence or an individual’s performance. Recognition that stories are open to multiple interpretations – meaning making.

- Seeks the best stories from the others and usually individuals in the work social system, about the past and present and imagined future.
- Acknowledges and values multiple realities – sees no single “Truth”.
- The coach’s role is to help the client see themselves more fully, appreciate behaviors or traits that were previously considered weaknesses or problems (rather than just “fixing”), and develop multiple interpretations and possibilities for the most effective use of self.
- Emphasizes vivid recollection, imagination, evocative language.
- Open to interpretation & multiple stories.

3. POSITIVE PRINCIPLE

A belief that a positive approach to learning, change and even solving problems (what's working?) is more generative and effective than a negative approach that focuses primarily on what's wrong or what's missing.

- Doggedly positive – looking for stories and descriptions of when the client was at their best and the attitude and conditions that supported this level of excellence.
- Looks for positive images of the future to work toward – the heliotropic principle of growing toward the light or the positive image.
- Creates a positive and compelling image of the future.
- Believes that the coaching clients, their managers and colleagues, in fact any system grows in the direction of what they focus on and inquire into.
- Positive questions and taking the positive stance can illuminate the wishes that may hide in cynicism – the positive approach can be the antidote to cynicism.

4. PRINCIPLE OF SIMULTANEITY

*A realization that **inquiry is change**; that the first question we ask is fateful in that the organization, or individual client, will turn its energy in the direction of that first question (whether positive or negative) and, as a result, the seeds of change are sown. Inquiry is intervention.*

- Every moment of contact with anyone in the system, every conversation, every interview, every written assessment is recognized as having an impact – on the organization, on the perceptions of the coaching client and on the coaching activity itself.
- Thoughts and images are shaped by the first question that is asked.
- Coach themselves consistently demonstrates AI principles in all interactions.

5. ANTICIPATORY PRINCIPLE

The impact of anticipatory images – understanding that behavior and decisions about actions are based not only on what we were born with or learned from our environment, but also on what we anticipate, what we think or imagine will happen in the future.

- The AI Coach helps the client to capture their experiences of brilliance, no matter how rare, and to use these high points to spark images of their inspiring future, galvanizing energy and action to realize that future.
- Places great importance on working with the coaching client, and often key stakeholders, to carefully craft images of the future that are so compelling that they inspire extraordinary performance and unprecedented support for desired development on the part of the client.
- Coaching clients are more likely to approach change with confidence when their image of the future is grounded in the best from their past, anchored in their personal strengths and actively supported by their manager (and often colleagues and direct reports).

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