Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry

Richard Seel, January 2008

1: Introduction

Why is Change So Difficult?

We all have experience of change, whether at the personal or organisational level. It often feels hard or unsatisfactory. There are lots of reasons for this. One of the most common is that we don't feel involved. Far too often change feels as if it is being done to us rather than done with us. "I don't mind change but I don't like being changed" sums up how most of us feel.

Today, more and more organisations are trying to address this by using forms of *collaborative inquiry* as the way to involve as many people as possible in the change process. Appreciative Inquiry is a form of collaborative inquiry in which lots of people can become involved.

Another reason why change initiatives seem to flounder is that they often bring up so many negative feelings. They ask us to look deeply into the causes of our 'failure' or to discover the reasons why we have so many problems. This is an inherently demoralising approach which rarely seems to lead to lasting improvement.

Appreciative Inquiry takes a different approach. Instead of focusing on the negatives in an organisation and trying to change them it looks at what works well and uses that as a foundation for future development. It is essentially life-affirming rather than deficit-based and this has the effect of increasing the amount of energy and enthusiasm in the organisation.

2: The Power of the Positive

Appreciative Inquiry builds on what is positive in organisational life. It seeks out stories of success and tries to ignore stories of failure. To some, this sounds unrealistic, a rather idealistic approach, not rooted in the 'real world' of problems and failures. Yet there is evidence from a number of different fields to show that a focus on positive reinforcement can have real and lasting effects.

Blue Eyes, Brown Eyes

In 1968, after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jane Elliott, an American third-grade teacher conducted a famous experiment on her children. She was concerned to expose the horrors of discrimination and she told her pupils that blue eyes showed people who were cleverer, quicker, more likely to succeed. They were superior to people with brown eyes, who

she described as untrustworthy, lazy and stupid. She made a point of praising the blue-eyed children, and being more negative to the browns. She also gave the blue-eyed extra privileges.

Within a day or so, the blue-eyed children had improved their grades, and managed tasks which had proved out of their grasp before whereas previously well-achieving brown-eyed children found even simple tasks hard. A few days later, Jane Elliott told her class that she'd got the eye-colour information wrong and that it was actually brown-eyed people who were superior. The situation quickly reversed.

Elliott's aim had been to give her children an experience of discrimination and show them how artificial it really is. But she also showed the power of positive reinforcement: the children whom she praised and who believed themselves to be gifted performed better than they had previously—and this applied to both blue-eyed and brown-eyed children as the experiment singled out first one group and then the other.

Jane Elliott's work can be seen as just one example of what is sometimes known as *labelling theory*—the belief that we tend to act out the labels that others give us, or that we give to ourselves. Thus if we believe that we can achieve and start to label ourselves as 'winners', we are more likely to do so.

The Placebo Effect

The placebo effect is now widely accepted by doctors: the majority of people will experience relief of physical symptoms if they believe that they are taking an effective medicine even if the medicine is actually a completely inert substance. For instance, if people believe that they are taking a pain reliever then many will experience a reduction in pain even if they are actually taking a placebo. Furthermore, the brain has been observed to release opioids (natural pain relievers) in such cases.

The conclusion is clear: if we believe that something is going to happen, it is more likely to do so—certainly as far as our own bodies are concerned.

The Dynamics of High Performance Teams

The work of Marcial Losada is not as well-known as it should be. In the 1990s he observed business teams at work, recording and analysing their interactions. On the basis of their business results, customer satisfaction and the opinions of their managers and peers he divided the teams into high-, mid- and low- performers.

There were clear differences in the way they interacted. One key difference was what Losada called the 'emotional space'. In essence, emotional space is defined as the ratio of positive to negative comments. The high-performing teams had up to five times as many positive comments as negative, while the low-performing teams showed just the opposite—they were characterised by negativity.

Marcial Losada later worked with the psychologist Barbara Frederickson who has argued that positive emotions give us access to a wider range of ways of thinking and acting. Their research suggests that human beings flourish when the positive/negative ratio is 2.9 or higher.

Solutions-Focused Brief Therapy

Solutions-Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) arose from Family Therapy in the late 1960s. as its name suggests it avoids looking at problems or trying to discover root causes for the issues which the client presents. Instead it assumes that there are solutions to whatever difficulty the client is experiencing and that these will be discovered.

Three key approaches are characteristic of SFBT. Firstly, the therapist will ask questions which elicit exceptions to the problem. The questions are asked in such a way that it is assumed that there have been times when the problem has not been experienced, so not. "Has there ever been a time when…" but rather, "Tell me about the times when…"

The second distinctive approach is the use of the 'miracle question', which is sometimes used in Appreciative Inquiry too. The general form of the miracle question is like this: "Suppose that when you go to sleep tonight a miracle occurs and the things that have been troubling you have all been resolved. What would life be like for you? How would you know that things have been resolved? What would you find yourself doing? What would others notice?"

Finally, solutions-focused therapists use scaling questions: "If 1 represents how you felt when you first came to see me (on a scale of 1 to 10), how are you feeling now?" Assuming that they no longer feel a '1', this offers scope to focus on the positive changes which have occurred.

SFBT, with its core belief that a positive focus will support positive outcomes, has proved to be very effective and is gaining in popularity amongst therapists.

Conclusions

This is just a brief sample of some of the work being done on the power of positivity. Two things come out of it: firstly, that positive thinking and believing lead to positive results, and secondly that this is largely a matter of choice—it's up to us whether we decide to adopt a positive approach. Appreciative Inquiry builds on this research to provide a way of engaging people in positive ways.

3: The Five Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

Some writers have discerned five principles which underpin the Appreciative Inquiry approach. They indicate what is distinctive about Appreciative Inquiry and show where its transforming power comes from.

The Constructionist Principle

How much influence do we have over the future? Some would argue that the future is largely determined by forces beyond our control; others claim that, within certain limits, we create the future together. Social Constructionism argues that the language and metaphors we use don't just *describe* the world, they actually *create* the world. Just as we saw in the blue eyes, brown eyes work, if we describe someone as clever, they will become clever; if we describe them as stupid, they become stupid.

The constructionist principle argues that what people focus on becomes their reality and that the language people use creates their reality. Appreciative Inquiry therefore takes particular care to encourage a positive focus and encourages the use of positive language because that will lead people to construct a positive future together.

The Positive Principle

We have already looked at the power of the positive in some detail in section two. Together with the constructionist principle, the positive principle is at the heart of Appreciative Inquiry's claim that focusing on the positive can lead to effective organisational change.

The positive principle is expressed in action by always adopting appreciative language when conducting an Appreciative Inquiry; encouraging and supporting the people engaged in the inquiry; helping members of the organisation express the best that they have experienced; and building virtuous circles in place of vicious circles.

The Simultaneity Principle

Classical, linear, approaches to organisational change assume that first you diagnose, then you change. Indeed, the diagnosis stage can take a long time and cost a great deal of money. It is not unknown for 'change initiatives' to get stuck in the diagnosis phase and never get round to actually doing anything about change!

The simultaneity principle suggests that this is not a helpful model. Instead, we see inquiry and change as happening together—just by asking questions, we become engaged in a process of organisational change. And the nature of the questions affects the nature of the change.

So in Appreciative Inquiry there is no separate 'diagnosis' phase; no time is spent looking at root causes or holding inquests into the past. Instead, the change is seen as starting as soon as the steering group gets together to start asking each other appreciative questions.

The Poetic Principle

Classical organisational theory talks in terms of the *state* of an organisation; change is seen as a move from one state to another (as in the much-discussed 'unfreeze-change-re-freeze' model). But the notion that organisations are static (in a state) is problematic. Surely change is happening all the time, even if the large-scale patterns seem reasonably stable.

Appreciative Inquiry sees organisations more as a *story* than a state. The continual conversations and negotiations between people lead to them telling stories about the organisation's past, present and future. Stories are powerful and both shape those who tell them and are themselves shaped by the storytellers.

Appreciative Inquiry taps into this power and encourages the sharing of positive stories, believing that this will itself change the way people think and act.

The Anticipatory Principle

The final principle underpinning Appreciative Inquiry is the anticipatory principle. Essentially it argues that images of the future can affect the way we behave in the present. In particular, if we have a particularly desirable image of the future we are likely to behave in ways that will bring it about.

4: Appreciative Inquiry and the 4-D Cycle

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was developed by David Cooperrider in the 1980s. When he was doing his PhD he interviewed leading clinicians at the Cleveland Clinic about their greatest successes and failures. He found himself drawn to the stories of success and focused exclusively on them. As he reported them back into the Clinic they had a huge impact—so much so that the Clinic board asked that the same approach be used thought the whole 8000-person organisation.

Appreciative Inquiry is based on the premise that *organisations change in the direction in which they inquire*. So an organisation which inquires into problems will keep finding problems but an organisation which attempts to appreciate what is best in itself will discover more and more that is good. It can then use these discoveries to build a new future where the best becomes the norm.

Cooperrider contrasts the commonplace notion that, "organizing is a problem to be solved" with the appreciative proposition that, "organizing is a miracle to be embraced". Inquiry into organizational life, he says, should have four characteristics. It should be:

- *Appreciative*—AI looks for the 'positive core' of the organisation and seeks to use it as a foundation for future growth.
- *Applicable*—AI is grounded in stories of what has actually taken place in the past and is therefore essentially practical. It is not a 'pie in the sky' approach but instead seeks the best of 'what is' in order to build the best of 'what might be'.
- *Provocative*—AI invites people to take some risks in the way they imagine the future and redesign their organisation to bring it about. With the security and energy gained from the exploration of the best in the organisation, people feel able to respond with 'provocative propositions' about the future.
- *Collaborative*—AI is a form of collaborative inquiry. It always involves the whole organisation or a representative cross-section of the whole organisation. In this way all voices can be heard and everyone's contribution valued.

As more and more people have used Appreciative Inquiry it has developed and new understandings have been gained. Although every AI intervention is unique to the organisation concerned, a number of common themes and approaches have emerged. AI has now been used in large organisations and in small; in commercial and not-for-profit; for large-scale organisational transformation and to look at specific issues in particular parts of an organisation. The results are nearly always strikingly positive.

The 4-D Model

It is helpful to think of an Appreciative Inquiry as having four distinct phases though in practice they often merge into one another. Each phase is given a name beginning with 'D' and the model is usually known as the 4-D model:

Affirmative Topic Choice

- DISCOVER — "What gives life?" (the best of what is) APPRECIATING
- DREAM — "What might be?" (what is the world calling for) ENVISIONING RESULTS
- DESIGN — "What should be the ideal?" CO-CONSTRUCTING
- DESTINY — "How to empower, learn & adjust/improve" SUSTAINING

The following briefly outlines the four phases of the model:

Discover

People talk to one another, usually via structured interviews, to discover the times when the organisation is at its best. These stories are told as richly as possible and from them people start to discover the 'positive core' of the organisation, what gives life to it when it is at its best. People start to appreciate themselves and their colleagues and some quite significant transformations start to occur.

Dream

The dream phase is often run as a large group conference where a cross-section of the organisation is encouraged to imagine and co-create the future. They are encouraged to envision the organisation as if the peak moments discovered in the 'discover' phase were the norm rather than the exception. "What would things be like if…?" Working in small groups, they try to put as much 'flesh' as possible on their visions as possible. These are then 'creatively presented' to the rest of the group and worked on further.

Design

In the early days of Appreciative Inquiry the design phase was delegated to a small team which was empowered to go away and design ways of creating the organisation dreamed in the dream conference(s). Although this still happens, Gervase Busche has found that transformational change is more likely to occur if the design phase is undertaken by as wide a group as possible. In this collaborative design approach the group first derive a design possibilities map, which contains, in three concentric circles, the dream for the organisation, the key relationships which have an impact on the dream, and key organisational design elements which will be needed to deliver the dream.

In small groups participants then 'sign up' to explore particular design elements which they have energy for and these groups craft 'provocative propositions' which challenge the organisation to adopt a new and healthier future. These are shared with the large group and further refined.

Deliver

The final phase is to deliver the dream and the new design. Because the term 'deliver' has a rather mechanical feel to it, many AI workers now prefer the term 'Destiny' which continues the future-facing theme. Whichever term is chosen, the final phase is one of experimentation and improvisation, sometimes described as 'organisational jazz'. Small implementation teams will be formed to follow up on the design elements and to continue the appreciative process. The deliver phase may itself contain more small-scale Appreciative Inquiries into specific aspects of organisational life.

The 4-I model

The 4-D cycle is not the only way of thinking about the process of Appreciative Inquiry. Some writers have offered another way of looking at the process, the 4-I model.

Initiate

In this phase the principles of AI are introduced; project teams are formed; the overall project focus is decided; preliminary project details are decided.

Inquire

Use the generic interviews; develop customised interview protocol; train interviewers; conduct appreciative interviews as widely as possible throughout the organisation.

Imagine

Collate and share the key themes from the interviews; develop provocative propositions which give a grounded vision of the desired future; validate propositions with as many people in the organisation as possible.

Innovate

Involve the maximum number of people in conversations which engage with the proposed new ways of organising; implement the changes; review change in an appreciative way.

The Appreciative Inquiry Summit

When Appreciative Inquiry started it was usual for the four phases to be spread out over a long period of time. But today it is more common for the whole process to take place at an 'Appreciative Inquiry Summit', a large group event lasting four days. Each phase takes place on a separate day and the energy and momentum gained can be significant.

Although the cost of the AI Summit can seem high in terms of 'lost' work, the value of getting so many people together in an appreciative climate can easily lead to productivity benefits which are significantly greater than the costs.

For instance, Roadway Express, a US trucking company, increased its fourth quarter turnover by 25% just a few months after holding an AI Summit. Nutrimental in Brazil hosted an AI Summit for 750 people. Six months later revenues were up 300% and staff morale up 200%. John Deere took 250 people offsite for 5 days. As a result they improved product cycle time, saved $3 million and projected both income growth and further cost saving over time.

5: The Appreciative Interview: Practice & Practicalities

The appreciative interview is at the heart of the AI process. It forms the basis of the Discovery phase and provides the impetus for the rest of the inquiry. Although each Inquiry has its own tailored interview protocol, based on the affirmative topic choice that has been made (see page 17), there is a fundamental structure which has been found to be very effective in a wide range of organisational situations.

 In this section we will look at this generic interview and use it for practice. We will also look at some of the practical issues involved in appreciative interviewing.

Selecting and Training the Interviewers

It is usual to select a largish number of interviewers for training. As far as is possible these should represent a cross-section of the organisation as a whole. By the 'organisation' in this instance we mean that system which is the focus of the inquiry. It is good to use those who are most enthusiastic but sometimes a degree of persuasion is necessary to get a good representative distribution.

Each interviewer needs one or two day's training in the principles of AI and the practicalities of conducting the interviews. It is sometimes appropriate to leave the final topic choice to these training days.

Each interviewer is then invited to conduct a number of interviews within the organisation—about ten interviews over a five week period seems to work reasonably well. The interviewees may be chosen by the organisation, or by the interviewer, or as a mix of both. In this way you can try to ensure a representative distribution of interviews.

It may be possible to also conduct some interviews with representatives of the wider environment—customers, suppliers, regulators, stakeholders, etc. This gives a greater breadth to the inquiry and is usually greatly appreciated by outside agencies as a sign of trust, partnership and openness.

The appreciative interview protocol is there as a guide but it should always be servant rather than master. It offers a framework for conversation and story telling. As an interviewer, your job is to help the interviewee tell their own stories with as much rich detail as possible.

So, when you ask questions it is always with the aim of helping the other person to open up. Questions should always be affirmative: "What was good about that?", is better than "So how did you solve that problem?" Try, also, to build on a 'half-full' assumption: "What else was good about it?" Wherever possible use expansive, affirming words: "When you think about this event, what delights you?"

Good affirmative questions open up possibilities. They are sometimes intentionally vague so as to offer the maximum encouragement for the other to tell their story more fully. A good appreciative interview is like a conversation; the interviewer is not a detached observer but more like a friend sharing experiences.

Before starting the interview, say a little about AI. Your interviewee may well be used to seeing organisational life as a problem to be solved and it may take a bit of time until they 'get' the appreciative perspective. Don't lecture but let your own enthusiasm be the guide.

Explain that you are going to ask some questions which focus on the *positive*; that you will ask about the experience of times when things worked really well. Point out that we usually start with stuff that isn't working and then look at how to fix it. Suggest that this usually leads to more negativity and decreased morale. This time we are trying something different. By focusing on the positive we can build energy for change that is strong and effective.

What to do with Negatives

A good introduction will usually be enough to get people to engage with the appreciative process, at least as an experiment. Once they are into it they usually get energised and the power of the positive takes over. However, occasionally you will get an interviewee who simply refuses to engage with the positive: "There hasn't been a single moment when this organisation has worked as it should!" In cases such as this there are a couple of approaches you can try.

Put the negative to one side for the time being—sometimes you can persuade your interviewee to 'park' their negative thoughts for the period of the interview. Make a note of their concerns and say that you will return to them later. The 'three wishes' section at the end is a good place to address the negatives since you can now ask them say how they think things 'ought' to be.

Listen supportively—if you sense that there is real energy around the negative then just listen for a while. Use as much empathy as you can to put yourself in the other person's place. Do not comment or make judgements, just listen. Then ask if, while respecting their position, it would now be possible to move forward with the interview. It is good to briefly summarise what you have just heard: "I appreciate that you have (had this experience) and I would like

now to guide us back to considering how things are when they are at their best. Is there even one small instance when things were good?" This will often be effective.

Using the shadow—if all else fails, let the interviewee tell their negative "ain't it awful" story. Then suggest that all negative stories are the shadow of something good. Ask them to imagine how things *ought* to have been, how they wish they had been. Ask them to consider what might have been different and how that could have led to a positive story. In other words, use the negative as a signpost into the positive.

Start with Specifics, Move to the General

The rhythm of the appreciative interview is that it starts with an invitation to tell specific stories about an actual incident: "Tell me about a time when…" The interviewer then probes gently into the details of the story, "What was it that led to this happening?", "What was supporting this good example?", "What was positive about your own role in this?"

After you have heard their story and got a real sense of what was supporting and enabling the positive experience, go for the generalisations. "What is it about this organisation—its structure, values, systems, processes, policies, staff, leaders, strategy—that creates conditions where (the topic of the inquiry) can flourish?" So, if the topic is co-operation you might ask, "Are jobs designed a certain way, for example, to foster cooperation?" "How does the culture of the organisation foster cooperation?" And so on.

Confidentiality

It is usually helpful to tell the interviewee that all answers can be kept confidential if they wish. Tell them that you want to be able to use stories and wishes but that no names will be associated with these unless they give their express consent. Make sure you make a note of whether they consent or not.

What To Do With the Data From the Interviews

Appreciative interviews generate a lot of data. Yet that is not their principle purpose. The real value of the interview lies in the process of story telling. Remember that the evidence suggests that organisations that tell positive stories perform better.

Nevertheless, it is worth sharing the best stories and the wishes and aspirations for the future of the organisation. This can be done in many different ways: a bulletin board on a company intranet, a wiki which allows others to add their stories even if they haven't been interviewed, newsletters, podcasts—especially if the story tellers are prepared to re-tell their stories for the microphone, videos, and so on. These are not mutually exclusive, the more the merrier; the aim is to get as many people as possible exploring positive stories and responding to them.

The Generic Questionnaire

Below is the generic questionnaire which underpins every appreciative interview. Working in pairs, take turns to interview one another using it:

Take a few minutes to jot down some notes to yourself in response to the following questions. Your partner will interview you and help you to explore these questions in depth.

1.   Think of a peak experience or 'high point' in your work or experience of your organisation

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2.   In that experience, think about the things you valued most about...

(a) Yourself_____

_____

_____

_____

(b) The nature of your work_____

_____

_____

_____

(c) Your organisation itself_____

_____

_____

_____

3.   Think about the core factors that give 'life' to your organisation; the really positive values it can build upon

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4.   What three wishes which would you like to have which would heighten the vitality
        and health of your organisation

l)_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2)_____

_____

_____

_____

3)_____

_____

_____

_____

6: Affirmative Topic Choice

What should you inquire into? Your choice of topic for your inquiry is important and we will look at it briefly in this section. Because Appreciative Inquiry is based on the assumption that organisations change in the direction of the things they inquire into, you need to take some care with the focus of your inquiry.

Because of this we need to avoid inquiring into the things which are negative or problematic. Instead, we are looking to amplify those things which give life to the organisation. Sometimes these are immediately obvious but sometimes we need to do some research first.

This is where the 'generic interview' (see page 15) comes into its own. Not only does it offer practice in appreciative interviewing but it also offers a route into discovering the most potent topics for inquiry. Because the generic interview invites participants to say what they feel are the core values of the organisation and to express their own wishes for the future, it soon becomes clear which are the topics which are most likely to breathe life into the organisation.

Sometimes the choice of topic is predetermined—'customer service', for example. But even here there will be scope for an initial inquiry: which aspects of customer service are most likely to give life to the whole customer service operation?

7: AI for Strategy, Teams & Individuals

Although Appreciative Inquiry was developed as an approach to organisational change it can be used as an approach to developing strategy and also with small groups and even as a basis of individual coaching and development.

An Appreciative Approach to Strategy

Since Appreciative Inquiry is fundamentally about co-creating the future it is no surprise that people have started using its principles in strategic planning. Organisations like BAE Systems, John Deere and others have used an Appreciative approach to strategic planning and have found it very effective.

In classical strategic planning the SWOT tool is widely used. It invites us to look at the organisations strengths and opportunities but also at its weaknesses and threats. The AI principle that positive image leads to positive action challenges us to concentrate on the positive rather than spend half our time looking at the negative and sending mixed messages. In order to cope with this, the SOAR framework was developed by Jackie Stavros.

Instead of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, SOAR invites us to look at Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and (measurable) Results. One approach to SOAR has an expanded version of the 4-I model as its basis:

Initiate

Start a leadership strategic conversation on how to apply and integrate SOAR with existing strategic planning methods. Discuss how to bring the relevant stakeholders into the process.

Inquire

Conduct an Appreciative Inquiry into values and mission, internal strengths and external opportunities as well as aspirations and results. Out of this may come clarity about core values, vision, mission and guiding principles.

Imagine

The Imagine phase initiates a creative dialogue that considers strengths and opportunities, as well as aspirations and the preferred future. The strategic vision will emerge here.

Innovate

Often using a large group process, stakeholders are engaged in designing how to deliver the strategy. Strategic initiatives are identified and prioritised to enact change to existing processes, systems, structures and culture. These changes take advantage of strengths and opportunities to achieve aspirations and results.

Inspiration for Implementation

Results are used as feedback measures for iterations and course corrections. Implementation involves many people with different skills and competencies aligned and working on linked projects.

Appreciative Inquiry with Teams

A team is really just a small organisation. It can often benefit from appreciative development. For instance, if a team is new, invite team members to share stories about their best experience of working in a team. The shared stories will energise team members and help them to create a vision of how they would like their team to be.

AI can be effective with existing teams as well. If you are looking to develop an existing team it may be good to start by inviting them to share stories of their best experience in the organisation (if you ask them all to share 'best experience' stories from the team you may end up with everyone telling the story of the same occasion.) This will offer a wealth of material which can be used as a platform for the team to dream a new and more effective future together.

Or perhaps an existing team is facing an issue. Using an appreciative approach you can work with them to explore the issue in a way which gets away from blame and other entrenched patterns of behaviour. For instance, if the issue is poor communication, ask members to share stories of a time when they experienced good communication in a team (not necessarily this current team). Help them to draw out the positive core of these experiences so that they can start to dream of a way of moving forward.

Appreciative Coaching

Appreciative Inquiry can also be used as the basis of an approach to coaching. Using the 4-D model the coach would first work with the client to determine the topic or focus of the

coaching relationship. This may involve helping the client reframe their issue in a more positive way: "I'm not very good at managing my staff" might become "How can I get better at managing my staff?"

Appreciative questions can then take the process forward: "What does it feel like when you are comfortable and confident in handling a management situation?"; "What do your staff most value about your management style?"; and so on.

After having helped the client to discover the positive core of their work and what they can value about themselves and their ways of working, the coach can help the client look to the future: "What is your desired future at work?"; "What successes do you see yourself celebrating as a manager in the future?"; "What legacy would you like to leave behind?"

The design phase involves helping the client bring their dreams into clear focus and affirming the reality of the dream. It also involves investigating and supporting the actions needed to bring the dream into being: "Thinking about your dream, what would need to happen for it to come into reality?"; "What have you done in the past that you could do again to help you move towards the dream?"

Finally, the destiny phase. It has been remarked that we are often more afraid of our strengths than our weaknesses. One of the roles of the appreciative coach to is affirm the strengths of their client and to help them acknowledge and accept these. It may also be necessary to be there for support when things get difficult, as they often will. There is rarely a smooth progression from dream to reality and clients will often get discouraged. The effective coach will know how to support without patronising or taking over.

References & Further Reading

Author	Title	Publisher
David Cooperrider, Diana Whitney & Jacqueline Stavros.	*Appreciative Inquiry Handbook.*	Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco, 2003.
Jane Magruder Watkins & Bernard Mohr.	*Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Light.*	Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2001.
James Ludema, Diana Whitney, Bernard Mohr & Thomas Griffin.	*The Appreciative Inquiry Summit: A Practitioner's Guide for Leading Large-Group Change.*	Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco, 2003.
Gervase Busche & Aniq Kassam.	*When is Appreciative Inquiry Transformational?: A Meta-case Analysis.*	*The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 2005, **41**:2, pp.161-181.
Jackie Stavros & Gina Hinrichs (eds).	*SOARing to High and Engaging Performance: An Appreciative Approach to Strategy.*	*AI Practitioner*, November 2007.
Gervase Busche	*Appreciative Inquiry With Teams*	*The Organization Development Journal*, 1998, **16**:3, pp.41-50.

Sara Orem, Jacqueline Binkert & Ann Clancy.	*Appreciative Coaching: A Positive Process for Change.*	Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2007.
Kenneth & Mary Gergen.	*Social Construction: Entering the Dialogue.*	Taos Institute, Ohio, 2004.
Marcial Losada & Barbara Frederickson.	*Positive Affect and the Complex Dynamics of Human Flourishing*	*American Psychologist*, 2005, **60**:7, pp. 678–686.