

## Chapter 4: Appreciative Inquiry in Coaching

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## Chapter 4

### Appreciative Inquiry in Coaching

*“You are never given a wish without also being given the power to make it true.” Richard Bach*

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After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- Name and discuss the five basic principles of Appreciative Inquiry (AI)
- Name and discuss each stage within the 5-D Cycle of AI
- Demonstrate facility with the Appreciative Inquiry Protocol
- Demonstrate the skill of positive reframing within a coaching conversation
- Use AI to facilitate the development of a client's positive vision (or desired future) within a coaching conversation
- Use AI to co-create goals and action plans in the service of that positive vision (or desired future) within a coaching conversation
- Keep coaching conversations light, interesting, and engaging
- Use AI to improve and transform the coaching relationship

## THE FIVE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF AI

Appreciative inquiry is a philosophy, as well as an approach for motivating change that focuses on exploring and amplifying strengths. AI was developed initially in the late 1980's as a transformational change process for organizations and groups by David Cooperrider and his colleagues in the Department of Organizational Behavior at the Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, (Hammond, 1998, Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). It has since been adopted by many other disciplines, including positive psychology, sociology, and coaching, including health, fitness, and wellness coaching.

AI does not focus on weaknesses and problems to fix. Instead clients are encouraged to acknowledge strengths and imagine possibilities in order to rise above and outgrow their problems. Carl Jung, a 20<sup>th</sup> century psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology, describes the process this way:

*“The greatest and most important problems of life are all in a certain sense insoluble.... They can never be solved, but only outgrown.... This ‘outgrowing’, as I formerly called it, on further experience was seen to consist in a new level of consciousness. Some higher or wider interest arose on the person’s horizon, and through this widening of view, the insoluble problem lost its urgency. It was not solved logically in its own terms, but faded out when confronted with a new and stronger life-tendency.”* (Jung, 1931, 1962, pp. 91f)

## FIVE PRINCIPLES OF AI

Building upon Jung's insights, Appreciative Inquiry offers five principles that undergird its practice

1. *The Positive Principle: Positive Actions & Outcomes stem from Positive Energy and Emotion.* The Positive Principle asserts that positive energy and emotion disrupt downward spirals, building the aspirations of people into a dynamic force for transformational change. Positive energy and emotion broaden thinking, expand awareness, increase abilities, build resiliency, offset negatives, generate new possibilities, and create an upward spiral of learning and growth.

*How do we get that?* By identifying, appreciating, and amplifying strengths, people go beyond problem solving to bold shifts forward. Demonstrating “why it’s good to feel good,” their actions become positively charged and positive outcomes are evoked (Frederickson, 2003).

The Positive Principle asserts that positive actions and outcomes stem from the unbalanced force generated by positive energy and emotion. Newton's first law of motion states that objects at rest tend to stay at rest while objects in motion tend to stay in motion--unless acted upon by an unbalanced force. Applying this law to human systems, the Positive Principle holds that the negative energy and emotion associated with identifying, analyzing, fixing or correcting weaknesses lacks sufficient force



to transform systems and propel them in new directions. At best, such root-cause analyses will only correct the problems. At worst, they will cause a downward spiral.

2. *The Constructionist Principle: Positive Energy and Emotion stem from Positive Conversations and Interactions.* The Constructionist Principle asserts that positive energy and emotion are generated through positive conversations and interactions with people, leading to positive actions and outcomes.

*How do we get that?* Through our conversations and interactions with other people, we don't just interpret and understand the world of experience; we also create the reality in which we live. "Words create worlds" is the motto of AI in general and the Constructionist Principle in particular.

More than any of the other five principles, the Constructionist Principle makes clear the importance of the social context and environment in creating the present moment and changing future moments. Inner work and self-talk alone are not sufficient. Different environments generate different truths and different possibilities. They even generate different dimensions of individual experience. As Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander (2000 p.12) summarize the Constructionist Principle: "It's all invented! So we might as well invent a story or framework of meaning that enhances our quality of life and the lives of those around us." We invent those stories and frameworks together, in conversation with others.

3. *The Simultaneity Principle: Positive Conversations and Interactions stem from Positive Questions and Reflections.* The Simultaneity Principle makes the following, astonishing claim: conversations and interactions become positive the instant we ask a positive question, tell a positive story, or share a positive reflection. Positive questions and reflections are themselves the change we seek. They are not just a prelude to change; they are change. They don't just begin a process that leads to a positive future. Rather, they simultaneously create a positive present.

*How do we get that?* By shifting our conversations and interactions in a positive direction, we simultaneously create a positive present. These positive conversations create the worlds in which we live and work.

Our questions and reflections are fateful. "There are no 'neutral' questions," writes Jacqueline Bascovert Kelm (2005, p. 54). "Every inquiry takes us somewhere, even if it is back to what we originally believed. Inhabiting this spirit of wonder can transform our lives, and the unconditional positive question is one of the greatest tools we have to this end."

4. *The Anticipatory Principle: Positive Questions and Reflections stem from Positive Anticipation of the Future.* The Anticipatory Principle asserts that when we anticipate a positive future, everything tilts in that direction. Positive anticipation of the future is a proleptic force that energizes the present.

The word prolepsis literally means "a forward look." The Anticipatory Principle asserts that it takes a specific, positive



image of the future in order to impact the dynamics of the present. The more concrete and real the image, the more yearning and movement it creates. According to Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus “Vision is a target that beckons” (1985, p. 89). Margaret Wheatley describes vision as a field (1999, pp. 53ff). As such, it is “a power, not a place, an influence, not a destination.” It is best served, then, by imbuing the present with “visionary messages matched by visionary behaviors.” Anticipation becomes the hallmark and herald of change.

*How do we get that?* Equipped with a glimpse of what things look like at their very best, we become more creative, resourceful, and resilient, finding ways to make things happen. Our questions and reflections flow from the outlook we hold. In the absence of hope, it’s hard to seek out what we want, much less celebrate what we get.

5. *The Poetic Principle: Positive Anticipation of the Future stems from Positive Attention in the Present.* The Poetic Principle asserts that the more we attend to the positive dimensions of the present moment, the more positive will be our intentions for future moments. When we focus on problems, we get more problems. When we focus on possibilities, we get more possibilities.

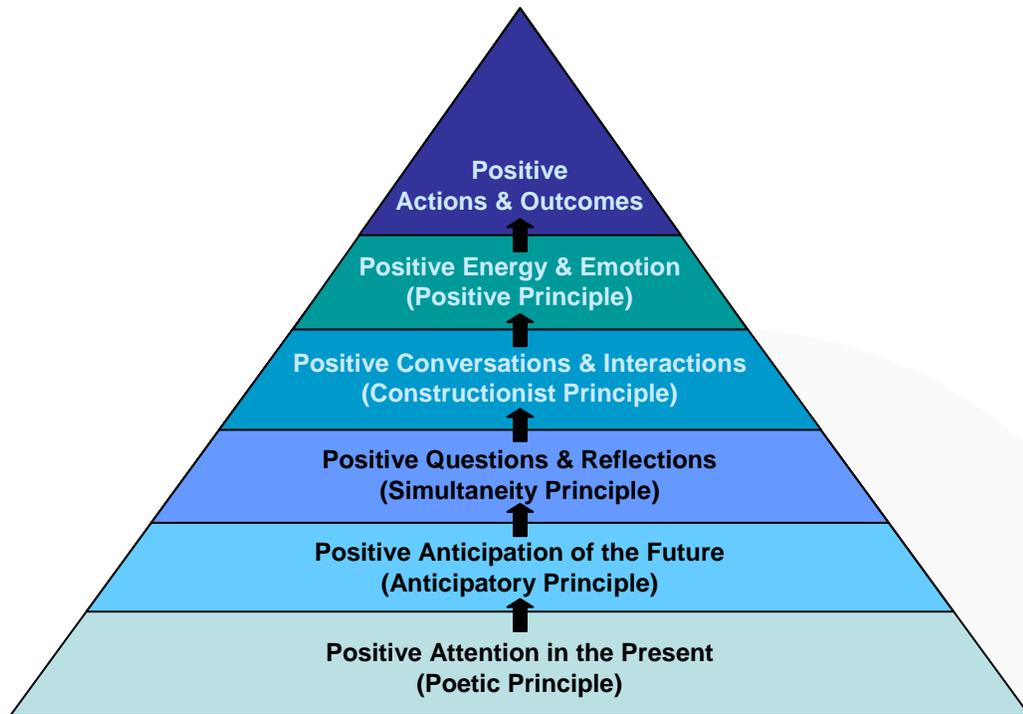
*How do we get that?* By seeing and attending to life’s poetry, we become inspired. It’s not that problems disappear. Rather, other things become more important. That’s because we get more of what we focus on. Life’s poetry evolves into a spiral of positive imagination.

Forming the base of a pyramid, upon which all the other principles are built (see below), the Poetic Principle connects hope with mindfulness, and intention with attention. Becoming mindful of what adds richness, texture, depth, beauty, significance, and energy to life awakens us to life's magnificent potential. It's as though life becomes a work of great poetry, filled with hopeful meaning and forward movement toward positive growth and change.

David Whyte captures the heart of this Principle, and of all the AI Principles, in his poem, "Loaves and Fishes" (1997, p. 88):

This is not the age of information.  
This is *not* the age of information.  
Forget the news and the radio and the blurred screen.  
This is the time of loaves and fishes.  
People are hungry, and one good word is bread for a thousand.

The image of a pyramid illustrates how these principles are related to each other and work together to generate positive actions and outcomes (Figure1).



### THE 5-D CYCLE OF AI

The five AI Principles have resulted in the development of a transformational change process that works with large groups, as well as with individuals. Although the process has been described in various ways, the 5-D Cycle (Define-Discover-Dream-Design-Destiny) is the most common and easily remembered (Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

1. *Define*. The process starts by securing an agreement between coach and client as to what the client wants to learn (topic choice) and how the client wants to learn it (method choice). The effectiveness of the AI process depends upon the agreement being both clear and appropriate.



### IMPORTANT

Some people may not be ready, willing, or able to implement a strengths-based approach to transformational change. Get a sense of this by noticing how much they want to talk about their problems and their pains. Express empathy (see Chapter 5) to move the conversation forward. In the absence of forward movement, after a reasonable amount of time, clients may do better with a therapist or counselor.

2. *Discover*. Once the learning agreement is clear, the next step is to assist clients in discovering promising examples of their desired outcomes, both past and present. AI makes the assumption that, in every person's life and situation, some things are always working, even though they may be buried and need to be unearthed. Life-giving examples, images, and stories that support the learning agreement can always be discovered.

To facilitate the discovery process, AI has developed an Appreciative Interview Protocol that can be adapted and used by coaches at any point during the coaching process. It is particularly effective when clients are discouraged or stuck. The Protocol includes four discoveries:



- *Best Experience*. “Tell me about your best experience with this area of your wellness, a time when you felt most alive and engaged. What made it so exciting? Who was there? Describe the experience in detail.”
- *Core Values*. “Tell me about the things you value most deeply, things about yourself, your relationships, and your work. Without being modest, who are you when you are at your best?”
- *Generative Conditions*. “Tell me about the core, life-giving factors in your experience. What are the key ingredients, both internal and external, that enable you to be at your best and to have fun?”
- *Three Wishes*. “Tell me about your hopes and dreams for the future. If you found a magic lamp and a genie were to grant you three wishes, what would they be?”

The purpose of these discoveries is to strengthen the energy and self-efficacy of clients through the vivid reconnaissance of mastery experiences. The more direct, personal, and relevant the mastery experiences the greater their impact on a client’s motivation for and approach to change.



### IMPORTANT

The Discovery phase of AI can be viewed as the most important phase. It elevates self-confidence and lays the foundation for all that follows. That’s why it’s so important to not rush through the discovery process in order to get to goal setting. The Simultaneity

Principle makes clear that asking appreciative questions is not a prelude to the work of coaching; it is the work of coaching. Inquiry into what happens when we function at our best is transformational in and of itself. It not only forms the basis for change, it is the change we seek.

3. *Dream.* Once clients have discovered the best of “what is,” it is time to help them envision the best of “what might be.” The discoveries of the last phase are utilized to create a dream that is grounded in the client’s history, as it expands the client’s potential. Moving beyond the level of three magical wishes to the level of realistic, yet provocative, propositions about the future, the dream will be even larger than the client would otherwise have imagined without the discovery phase having been done.

In the dream-making process, AI encourages the use of both left-brain and right-brain activities. The Poetic Principle goes beyond the limitations of analysis by utilizing stories, narratives, metaphors, and images to make dreams come alive.

Several considerations impact the dream-making process. The first is the question of a calling: What is life calling our client to be? The second is the question of energy: What possibilities generate excitement for our client? The third is the question of support: What is the positive core that supports our client?

When the dream becomes a target that beckons and an anticipatory field that surrounds and supports a client’s best self, it is time to move on to design.

4. *Design.* The design phase of the AI process gives the dream legs by working to align the client's infrastructure with the dream. Clients are asked to make proposals and set goals as to how the dream would manifest itself in terms of habits, procedures, systems, technology, roles, resources, relationships, finances, structures, and stakeholders. What would shift if the client's infrastructure were aligned with the dream? Describing those shifts in detail is the fundamental work of the design phase.

It is important to make the design phase as detailed and personal as possible. Encouraging clients to make commitments, offers, and requests with a close horizon, say one to two weeks, is relevant to both this and the final phase of the process.

- Commitments represent actions that clients promise to take in response to the requests of others.
  - Offers represent actions that clients volunteer to take.
  - Requests represent actions that clients seek from others in order to successfully implement the design.
5. *Destiny.* The purpose of Appreciative Inquiry is to elevate both the energy and self-efficacy of clients, in order to assist them in realizing their destiny. It is not just a feel-good process. It is also an action process that makes dreams come true – and makes dreaming intrinsic to the client's way of being in the world. By developing an “appreciative eye,” clients learn to make the 5-D Cycle their preferred approach to problems and opportunities in order to fulfill their destiny. They learn to continuously innovate their way to ever higher levels of performance and life satisfaction.

## IN SUMMARY

AI is a valuable tool for energizing, motivating, and mobilizing a client toward behavior change. It starts with the presumption that anything is possible (the Constructionist Principle) and then employs a methodology (the 5-D Cycle) to help clients make it happen, thus elevating both self-esteem and self-efficacy. The increases in self-esteem and self-efficacy lead naturally to the dream, design, and destiny phases. When done correctly, the mounting energy and motivation for change generated by the discovery phase of the AI process are palpable. The anticipatory consideration of best experiences, core values, generative conditions, and heartfelt wishes, through a vivid investigation of past and present, increases the client's readiness, willingness, and ability to move forward into the future. "Now what?" and "How do we get going?" are the operative questions of the later phases. AI generates an expansive, upward spiral that enables clients to successfully mount the behavior change pyramid (see Chapter 3). By going through the Cycle multiple times, clients and coaches create dreams and designs beyond those initially imagined possible.

AI emphasizes life-giving experiences, core values, generative conditions, and heartfelt wishes as it energizes people and organizations to learn to make new contributions and to express new ways of being in the world. That is the stuff of destiny. The challenge is to enable clients not only to deliver on their promises, but also to go beyond them. This happens when clients learn to experiment, innovate, and improvise, so that they can take bigger, bolder, and better actions in

the service of their dreams. Designs require continuous learning, dialogue, and updating in order to be fulfilled and fulfilling (Figure 2).

The following diagram illustrates how the 5-D Cycle of AI generates a spiral dynamic of transformational change around a positive core:



### Using Appreciative Inquiry in Coaching

The Appreciative Interview Protocol is a great place to start, especially when clients do not have a clear focus. It can kindle the embers of desire until the fire is burning bright. It can also support specific client

learning and development. For example, instead of asking clients for a generic best-experience story related to health and wellness, ask them for a best-experience story that is specifically related to their positive vision (or desired future). Such targeted learning from a positive frame can dramatically accelerate the behavior-change process.

AI can be used week after week in coaching conversations, since people always have new experiences, values, conditions, and wishes to talk about. Instead of starting a coaching call by asking, “So how did it go since the last time we met?” ask a more positive opening question that utilizes AI, such as, “So what was your best experience (or your best learning experience) since the last time we met?” The coach may change the time frame or shift the focus, but should always stay in a positive frame (New & Rich-New, 2003).



### IMPORTANT

Even when people bring seemingly intractable problems to the coaching conversation, it is important to help them look at things through an appreciative frame and a fascinating light. All situations have beauty and value, no matter how difficult. “Tell me a story about the best experience you have had dealing with such problems in the past,” is an example of a way to reframe deficits into assets. Such stories assist clients in remembering that their lives are not problems to be solved but mysteries to be lived, and can instantly their marshal client concentration and energy.

Although coaching is important, serious work, the successful coach keeps the process light and fun. The principles and practices of AI allow coaches to do just that. The coach who endeavors to stay positive, anticipate greatness, reframe reality, evoke insight, and share stories (the five principles), enables clients to experience coaching as bringing out the best in them, rather than the worst. Through the processes of defining ambitions, discovering strengths, dreaming possibilities, designing strategies, and delivering the goods (the five practices), both coach and client alike have their spirits energized and lifted. The issues may be weighty, but the process of AI can lighten the load in the course of moving forward. Using humor, laughter, and playfulness in AI energizes the behavior-change process so that solutions expand in scope, sustainability, and effectiveness.

AI requires clients to utilize a mixture of left-brain / analytic activities and right-brain / creative activities. It is not enough to encourage clients to identify and commit to SMART goals (goals that are Specific, Measurable, Actionable, Realistic, and Time-lined see Chapter 8). No matter how well-crafted the strategy, a purely analytic approach will fail if it is not supplemented by a process that engages the client's heart and stirs the client's imagination. SMART goals must also be compelling goals.

To this end, AI encourages clients to be creative by imagining, articulating, and designing their dreams for the future. Clients can use pictures, images, metaphors, art, movement, music, and/or stories (the Poetic Principle). The more creative the dreams the better, when it comes to making the case and generating the energy for change.

Clients often enjoy the invitation to use their whole selves in the development of their dreams and designs for the future. There is no end to what they will come up with once they have the permission and encouragement to get creative (e.g. changing body position, drawing pictures, modeling clay, standing on tables, stepping over lines, writing poetry, ringing bells, singing songs, stretching muscles, controlling breath, telling stories, shouting affirmations, imagining visualizations).

Creative techniques can be introduced on the telephone, as well as in person.



### IMPORTANT

If we coach without paying attention to the larger dynamics, we are coaching less than half the situation. AI avoids such fragmented interventions by recognizing the totality of the whole. For example, one of the more impactful consequences of the Constructionist Principle for coaching is in the area of self-improvement. People do not change by themselves, solely from the inside out. Rather, change also happens from the outside in, as we engage in conversation with others. Because self-improvement is influenced by relationships, it's very important to use AI to open up the conversation to include environments, systems, communities, organizations, networks, movements, relationships, processes, policies, practices, structures, and resources.

It is tempting to think that the outcome of using AI in coaching is a clear plan with detailed next steps. While that is often the case, it is not the

only or ultimate outcome. AI sets in motion an appreciative and innovative approach to lifelong learning. The Destiny phase of the 5-D Cycle has been described as going back around the Cycle, again and again, in perpetuity. When clients learn to Define-Discover-Dream-Design, Define-Discover-Dream-Design, Define-Discover-Dream-Design as their way of being in the world, they end up realizing their Destiny as they grow into their best selves. The 5-D Cycle is not just a tool or technique for coaches to master. It is also – and most importantly – a way of living. By using and sharing AI with our clients, we empower lifelong upward spirals of personal and organizational development.

### **Solving Problems the AI Way: A Strengths-based Approach**

It is human nature to notice, analyze, and solve problems. But that does not necessarily make it the best or most effective strategy to use. Indeed, tackling problems head on often provokes discouragement and resistance rather than fostering encouragement and readiness to change.

This insight is what led to the development of AI as a way of solving problems through the back door. Instead of tackling problems head on, AI assists clients to outgrow problems through engaging in new and stronger life urges. In the process, problems that once seemed overwhelming and intractable lose their energy and sometimes even fade from view.

When working within the framework of AI, it is important to keep the following in mind:



*“You have what it takes to succeed.”*

This is the posture of great coaching. If we do not believe in the ambitions and innate abilities of our clients, we cannot assist them in becoming successful in achieving their health, fitness, or wellness vision. If we find ourselves questioning our clients’ desires and capabilities, and do not believe they have what it takes to succeed, then it may be time to refer them to another coach or a helping professional.

*“My certainty is greater than your doubt.”*

Great coaches come from this framework – but know that it is better not to directly make this argument to their clients. We provoke skepticism and resistance when we attempt to persuade clients that they can do something (see Chapter 5). We evoke confidence and movement when we stay with clients in the muck until they become clear about where they want to go, how they want to get there, and how they will generate the energy. Great coaching communicates a calm energy of confidence that clients can build on and learn from.

*Speak the truth in love.*

Without falling into the trap of arguing for change, it is important for coaches to honestly share what they see. If there is an elephant in the room and the client fails to notice, it may be time for the client to hear the coach speak the truth in love. The energy for change is not created by naïve or delusional self-appraisals. Clients not being fully engaged,

not being honest with themselves, not following through on their promises, not working hard, and not making progress may benefit from coaches reflecting these perceptions. Returning to the 5-D Cycle is another way to encourage the client to move forward.

*Use AI to handle a client's self-sabotage.*

Avoid “wrestling” with clients who are not meeting their goals or following through on their promises week after week. Instead, use the 5-D Cycle to make sure the goals and promises are exciting to the client, and appropriately scaled to the client's capacity. Setting goals or making promises because they would be “good for the client,” represent something the client “should” do, or are designed to “please the coach” will generally fail over time. Setting goals or making promises which stretch the client's capacities must include appropriate, capacity-building strategies in order to be stimulating and effective.



#### IMPORTANT:

If you cannot assist a client to move forward, and you are sure you are not provoking resistance, you may be dealing with client issues that go deeper than coaching can resolve. If so, it may be time to make a therapeutic referral. To determine if a referral is indicated, you may want to take the following steps:

1. Honestly share your perception of the situation using perceptive reflections and open-ended questions. For example, you might

say “You may be getting in the way of your own success here. What do you think is going on?”

2. If the client is taking responsibility for what is going on, you can return to the 5-D Cycle of AI to generate new goals and promises. Be sure to consider the client’s readiness to change. If clients are in the precontemplation or contemplation stages, then thinking/feeling goals are more appropriate than action goals. The 5-D Cycle will make this clear as it bolsters the client’s energy and self-efficacy for achieving desired outcomes.
3. If the client is denying responsibility for what is going on, you might say, “There may be things going on here that are hurting your motivation which I’m not qualified to handle.” Recommend that the client see a therapist or join a support group. The client can work with both a coach and a therapist concurrently, or can return to coaching after resolving the issue in therapy.
4. Clients who fail to obtain outside help and/or to participate fully in a coaching program after appropriate intervention may not be in a space where they can work productively within a coaching relationship. Letting go of uncooperative clients who are unwilling or unable to work on their deeper issues is in everyone’s best interest.

### *Coach the client and the environment*

Designing environments to be supportive of a client's goals and promises is essential for client success. A strength-based approach to coaching does not work in isolation from a client's environment. Indeed, the design phase of AI makes clear the importance of whole-system frameworks, including various internal/external and individual/collective dynamics.

In the design phase of the 5-D Cycle, the role of the coach is to make sure that a client does not overlook or ignore any aspect of the system. For example, the client may need to learn new skills, modify his or her environment in order to eliminate triggers, or gather social support. Friends, colleagues, and relatives can provide emotional support, practical support, partnering, or listening ears. Examples include:

- Exercising with someone
- Phoning someone daily or several times a week
- Reporting progress regularly to someone
- Eating with someone and gaining support for health-supporting choices
- Sharing goals, food logs, exercise goals
- Joining a gym with a friend or spouse
- Having a spouse watch the kids while the client exercises

Often clients' behaviors can be changed if they can observe or track others with similar goals taking the necessary steps toward a goal. For example, an overweight client who wants to start a walking program

may find it easier to start if s/he sees other overweight people walking on a regular basis or engages in an email dialogue with another overweight person on the same path.

Sometimes encouraging clients to join support groups, such as Weight Watchers or Overeaters Anonymous, can reinforce what they are learning through coaching.

Online chat rooms, mailing lists, and bulletin boards can be helpful in gathering support, especially when clients don't have other people to support them or if they don't wish to reveal their issues to friends and colleagues. Advise clients however, to watch out, for unproven diets, weight-loss gimmicks, and unreliable advice.

*Stay in a positive frame.*

As we have already said, it is human nature to notice and focus on problems. That's why news headlines tend to focus on tragedies, terrorism, and scandals. Bad news sells papers. The 5-D Cycle of AI shifts the spotlight away from train wrecks and onto the positive aspects of the past, present, and future. When clients drift into an analysis of past or present failures, it is important to gently but firmly bring them back to an appreciative frame. Acknowledge the problem and then invite them to look at it from a different perspective. Two questions you may want to ask to make the shift from a traditional problem solving approach are: "How did this make a positive contribution to your development?" and "How else could you describe this situation?" When the coach stays in a positive frame, the client will eventually follow. By

using the generic Interview Protocol, it is possible to quicken the interest of clients in the life-affirming and life-giving dimensions of their own experience.

*It is “trial and correction” not “trial and error.”*

Trial and correction, rather than trial and error, underlies AI. The process is analogous to the near-universal human learning experience of learning how to walk. Those first, few, tentative baby steps occur after months of watching other people walk upright. These role models awaken in toddlers the desire and ambition to walk, and, at the appropriate developmental moment, begin to encourage them. They stand the toddlers upright, hold their hands, and move them forward. With outstretched arms, they cheer and cajole until the brave youngsters take their first, unsupported steps.

No one teaches toddlers how to walk. They don't have the biomechanics explained to them. They figure it out for themselves in a gradual process of trial and correction. After the first steps, toddlers inevitably fall down. This does not provoke criticism or condemnation. No one takes it as a failure. On the contrary, toddlers are cheered on, encouraged to try again and again until they master the art.

Enabling clients to loosen up and experiment with different strategies, without the fear of failure, is the essential work not only of AI, but also of coaching. Brainstorming provocative possibilities utilizing the 5-D Cycle is one way to make that happen. Such possibilities can be provocative,

in part, because it is unknown whether or not they will work. Only time will tell through the process of trial and correction.



#### IMPORTANT:

Don't be lured into creating provocative possibilities for the client. "The client finds the answers. The client finds the answers. The client finds the answers." Encourage clients to generate their own possibilities by thinking outside the box, without regard to consequences. After clients have done the work, coaches may or may not offer to put additional ideas on the table for consideration. In every instance, the client retains the choice in creating the dream, design, and destiny.

Sharing stories with each other is a great way to incorporate the richness of "trial and correction" into the coaching conversations. Stories have a way of inducing people to discover and discern their own meanings and movement. Like a toddler watching people walk, when we listen to each other's stories, our ambition awakens, evoking the motivation for change.

*Remind clients of their progress.*

Clients easily lose sight of their progress when they have setbacks or don't reach their goals as quickly as they wish. Keep reminding them of past progress, no matter how much or little they have made. For example: "Three months ago, you couldn't walk a mile! Give yourself credit!" or "Before we started, you wouldn't have even noticed that the restaurant meal was high in calories. You're more conscious of those

issues now, and your body is used to lighter food. Let's celebrate that!" Remember, masterful coaches champion their clients in each and every conversation.

### **Making the Coaching Program Interesting**

It is important to keep coaching sessions interesting by adding variety, changing approaches, using humor, surprising clients, or going the extra mile in your communications and actions. Using the Appreciative Interview Protocol is always interesting, since it brings out the best in your clients and encourages learning in an interesting and informative way.

Here are a few specific ways to make coaching sessions more fun and interesting:

- Ask the client, "What's the best thing that has happened to you since the last time we talked?"
- If on the phone, look at yourself in a mirror to be sure you are smiling while you are coaching.
- Encourage clients to suggest new activities, approaches, and rewards, "just for fun."
- Surprise clients with an email or card suggesting a new idea or approach.
- Periodically assist clients in changing their routines.
- Find ways to spice up the session with new information or assessments.

- Help clients reignite their “inner fire” and motivation by recalling motivators.
- End the session by asking, “What’s the best thing that happened during this conversation?”

### Using AI to Transform the Coaching Relationship

Since coaching promotes client development within a learning partnership, it is important for coaches to solicit feedback from clients. Many clients need permission to honestly share their feelings and wishes about the coaching experience. The Appreciative Interview Protocol can be modified to encourage honest sharing and elicit feedback through a positive frame. For example, at periodic intervals during the coaching program, you may want to ask the following questions:

- “What’s the best experience you have had so far through the coaching process?”
- "What are the values you most often see me modeling as a coach?"
- "What conditions have most helped you reach your goals and move forward?"
- "If a genie were to grant you three wishes regarding our coaching relationship, what would they be?"

Feedback solicited through this appreciative frame is quite different from criticism. By focusing on positive, life-giving experiences, values, conditions, and wishes, both coach and client are empowered to be

honest, and to make the coaching relationship as productive and as enjoyable as possible.

### Review and Discussion Questions

1. What are the five basic principles of Appreciative Inquiry? Give a brief explanation of each principle.
2. What is the 5-D cycle of AI? Describe each of the five “D’s.”
3. Why is it important that the coach not rush through the discovery process?
4. Define reframing. Give an example.
5. If in using AI a coach cannot assist a client to move forward, (and if the coach is certain s/he is not provoking client resistance), what should the coach do?
6. How can the coach keep the coaching process light and fun for clients and why is that important if the client is to be successful?
7. AI encourages the coach to think of problem solving through strength building rather than analyzing and “tackling problems head on”. Explain what that statement means and how to do that in the coaching conversation.

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