

Nourish to Flourish



Nourish to Flourish brings together practitioners' voices and creative practices, and appreciative reviews of resources that support strengths-based approaches to human interactions.

Voices from the Field



Keith Storace

Keith Storace is a Registered Psychologist with the Psychology Board of Australia (PsyBA) and Associate Fellow with the Australasian College of Health Service Management (ACHSM). He has designed and implemented health and wellbeing frameworks across the community, health and education sectors. His development of the Appreciative Dialogue (ApDi) therapy program continues to assist individuals move toward what matters most to them and bring it to life in the world.

At the recent Global AI Jam April 2022, organised through The Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry, I had the pleasure of being on the Australian Panel discussion on hope for a global future, and the related article can be read following Faith Addicott's and Stacey Randle's article on the Appreciative Inquiry Poetic principle that emphasises we can choose what we study.

Our Principles in Action: The Poetic Principle

What do you choose to know?

Choice is something people often take for granted. As we discussed in our previous article about the principle of Free Choice, being able to choose something– or at least think we have chosen something – is very important to our human sense of self and autonomy. After all, we tend to think that free choice and being able to think critically separates us from animals.

Faith Addicott | USA



Faith Addicott, MPA, MPOD is working to improve the intersection of work and life through innovative and human-centered process design. Her consulting work has centered on nonprofits and local government using Appreciative Inquiry and other strengths-based processes. She is a champion for inclusive workplace design.

Stacey Randle | USA



Stacey Randle, MPOD is a human resources professional passionate about creating workplaces focused on helping people grow and learn. She is also an advocate for ensuring equity and justice in every aspect of her private and professional life.

Much of the conversation today around critical race theory (CRT) revolves around parents or politicians being able to choose what their children learn in school. So why would people choose for their children to be ignorant of history, even if it is painful? Perhaps on some level these folks know what we know – if we choose to study something, we shine a light on it: the light of our intellect and intention, of our acknowledgement of the basic reality of that which we study. While CRT is taught in graduate level courses and at law schools, even there the truth sometimes gets in the way of what folks want to politically acknowledge. And by then it's often too late for the choice of study to truly move the world – academia is already rarified, not universal.

At this moment in history we are seeing, in America particularly, the reality of the Poetic principle. The move to block the teaching of Black history, to ban books whose stories conflict with a desired narrative, to ban language itself in some states ... these are not just existential threats. They are, at the heart of a battle over what is REAL. By choosing to continue the vital study of race in America, the history, the victories and the losses, the people and movements which have led to this moment we validate our shared humanity across color and creed. We open the door to new possibilities.

To choose to study the history of Black and indigenous peoples, to study the homesteading of Chinese and other Asian-American groups, to learn about what folks have endured and conquered, the whole amazing resilience of people who are not white, is to validate the reality of this lived experience. And when we do that, we create a different, more universal, platform for defining who “we” are. We open to a shared reality instead of a colonizing mindset which only knows the story of one kind of people.

One thing is for sure, what we choose to study makes a world of difference when navigating the changes required to move towards real racial justice. In fact, what we choose to study just plain makes a world. Our world.

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Appreciative Inquiry: Hope for a Global Future – An Australian Perspective

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a promise, a process and a way of life that continues to foster good change for individuals and communities. It encourages each of us to move along the good side of human history as it embraces, ponders and elevates us to the reality that we are connected --we are each other – and together we have what it takes to co-create a future that is best for all life on this planet. This became all the clearer to me during the Australian panel discussion at the 2022 Global AI Jam.

Facilitated by Sue James and Libby Mears, the focus for the panel was on what it takes to foster and sustain hope for a global future. Panel members included Kate Heron, Repa Patel, David Lees, and me, Keith Storace. With an emphasis on AI and each individual panel member's experience of what it offers, four themes emerged: the AI journey; bringing AI to life; strengthening the common voice; and from little things big things grow.

The Appreciative Inquiry journey

Appreciative Inquiry is a good example of the value of connecting with people.

Kate Heron

Having immersed myself in the world of AI for several years, it came as no surprise hearing each panellist reveal a common thread; an inextricable link between their values and Appreciative Inquiry.

Throughout the panel discussion, there was a strong sense of trust in AI, with a clear understanding that good possibilities emerge when we engage in the AI process.

Kate shared that AI has been a life-changing experience where the value of connecting with people is a strong draw for her: "...coming to a conversation with an open heart has been transformative ... AI has been a professional extension to my natural personality."

Similarly, Repa shared: "...there was a lot of alignment with my belief system and AI", adding what had emerged for her was that AI was not just a feel-good temporary experience but one that "...connects heads and hearts". It's the approach she employs when working with leaders, and it produces concrete results.

David said he became immersed in strengths-based practice, as it was called in Australia, and "...began to appreciate there were a whole lot of different conversations around the world about the transition from a deficit-/problem-based approach to a strengths-based approach". He added that exploring AI at a deeper level revealed a clear link between his values and a strengths-based approach with the AI principals, values and assumptions.

I related my own experience of engaging in AI as a re-connection to what I call "appreciative beginnings", meaningful moments across a lifetime that seamlessly connect with what AI offers as a process and a way of life.

Bringing AI to life

Appreciative Inquiry is the bridge between what matters most and bringing it to life in the world.

Keith Storace

Our goals are only as achievable as the actions we take toward them.

It is fair and logical to say, for the most part, that our goals are only as achievable as the actions we take toward them. This is where AI creates the conditions that enable movement in the direction of our goals. One of its key tenets is: "What we focus on becomes our reality" and I see this working as a psychologist, leadership consultant, and especially in developing and implementing AI centric programs. This tenet is also reflected many times over through the countless stories shared across the world by AI practitioners. Some of these experiences have been published in books, articles, and especially in the *AI Practitioner*. When we talk about AI being hope for a global future, we're talking about hope-in-action that is encouraged and supported by the AI framework of Define, Discover, Dream, Design, Deliver. A point I often make is that AI enables us to think differently, and sometimes we need to think differently to live fully; to fully appreciate what can be. This can have a ripple effect at a micro and macro level.

Having embraced AI because it aligns with his beliefs, ethical considerations and strong sense of social justice, along with his desire to bring AI to life, David emphasised the importance of working from a sense of deep respect, where

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difference is embraced through the kind of curiosity that appreciates and builds on what everyone has to offer: “I see myself not as an expert but as someone who adopts a decent position in my work so that I draw on the expertise of the people in the room”.

Like David, Repa agreed with the importance of harnessing each person’s expertise and stated that she walks alongside everyone else, noting that her purpose in life is to elevate consciousness: “Appreciative Inquiry permeates my life, not just my business as a structural tool; it’s the way I interact with my team and my friends. I’ve had colleagues say what I do and how I do it fascinates them, and they walk away thinking and feeling differently.”

With a focus on moving forward and contributing to a good future for all, Kate emphasised the importance of ensuring that the smallest voices are also heard, especially when it comes to protecting the environment. She also added that one of the core values identified by her organisation focuses on being ethical: “What we’re trying to do is advocate, not just for ourselves but for the communities we’re designing for, believing that design is a powerful opportunity for change.” She elaborated, saying that such a strong core value sits at the heart of bringing people back to nature and protecting the environment: “We’re advocating for the environment as much as we’re advocating for people.”

Strengthening the common voice

Appreciative Inquiry is a form of activism.

David Lees

Appreciative Inquiry has all the attributes of what the world needs when it comes to supporting the common voice and moving toward the kind of social change necessary to ensure a good future for all. This is especially evident in the principles of AI, especially the principle of Free Choice that posits people are more committed and perform better when they have the freedom to choose how and what they contribute.

The more we notice change, the more potential there is for that change to grow!

David Lees

When it comes to social change, David talked about how it seems to happen slowly over time. He highlighted the importance of being present and paying attention to the changes that are occurring, as subtle and as slowly as they may be: “The more we notice change, the more potential there is for that change to grow, to appreciate, and so I’ve been occupying myself with that question about how can we better notice and measure progress?”

Kate suggested that that being aware of our own natural defenses that may emerge when it comes to difficult situations is helpful: "...letting down some of those barriers and being open to change and doing that from a place of humility I think, for me, that's the most important thing".

[Listen to a YouTube short history of the story and the song.](#)

Repa reiterated the importance of conversation and how this facilitates change at an individual and collective level. This resonated with me, knowing that conversations can have a life of their own, a transformative effect on the other person that we may not be aware of, as Repa identified: "I come back to the fact that I never know what the impact is of anything that I say or do, but I have to do it with the belief that if I do something in the right way with the right intention, I don't control what happens afterwards."

From little things big things grow

The premise of Appreciative Inquiry is that everything we do is going to have an impact on each other.

Repa Patel

The song "From Little Things Big Things Grow", co-written by Australians Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody, was resounding in my head following the panel discussion. It was written as a protest song supporting indigenous people's land rights and reconciliation. It is a reminder that, even against all odds where political agendas seem insurmountable, small steps where subtle action fosters and illuminates the right way forward can create good change.

'Why we're all in Appreciative Inquiry is because we are stimulated by the thought that actually our connections really do matter.'

Kate Hunt

One of the strengths of the AI process is that it can be subtle and powerful at the same time without compromising the necessary awareness needed to move in the direction of our goals. This rang true for me when Repa talked about the possibility of change through AI on a global scale. She explained that if we start from a point of compassion, where we recognise and embrace our differences in opinions and viewpoints or beliefs, which is where AI becomes pivotal, then good change is possible: "Appreciative Inquiry has a lot to add if we can just embrace it to help us with some of the thornier issues and the more difficult issues that we're dealing with ... the whole concept that we can, as a global community, operate as one community rather than different nations and different political persuasions within those nations is where Appreciative Inquiry can really help at a macro level."

Kate added when we come from a place of love and connection, as Michele Hunt talked about in her presentation, what may seem as an unrealistic dream can be possible as a result of the connections we develop and nourish through AI: "Why

Developing a process that is inclusive begins with conversation.

we're all in Appreciative Inquiry is because we are stimulated by the thought that actually our connections really do matter and that we have the possibility of making change, whether it's on the micro or macro level, and sometimes it is the micro level that matters the most because you can fundamentally change the course of human behaviour and of an ecosystem."

I remember smiling and feeling that the world is in good hands when Kate said this. It resonated true for what AI has achieved to date across the globe and is prepared to take on in the future, especially as we are facing numerous challenges that are having a global impact.

David added that a fundamental aspect of the AI process is that it enables us to think in different, radical ways: "...you know, the kind of reframe where we see things. Appreciative Inquiry gives careful attention to process and not just outcome so it's not just about achieving particular things but the way you engage in the change process, who you include and how this is critical. I reckon that's got some potential at a global level, to think about how we can construct a process that is inclusive, curious and builds change from the bottom up."

It begins with conversation

Developing a process that is inclusive begins with conversation. When you begin to have a conversation, you're developing a story, and this is fundamental to the AI process; the kind of story that incorporates, grows and appreciates with time, so much so that it has a good impact. As I noted earlier, one of the key tenets of AI is "What we focus on becomes our reality"; this all starts with conversation; it's an important leadership skill: knowing how to listen, when to speak and when to be silent, all couched in an atmosphere of kindness.

A good example of this was seen some years ago when New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, gently embraced a woman of the Muslim faith who had lost family members in a terrorist shooting. Jacinda did not have to say a word, it was a quiet conversation, she had connected at a deeper level that the whole world seemed to understand; it was subtle and powerful at the same time.

Hope for a global future where love, kindness, creativity and justice permeate the way we interact is a challenge we all face, considering the current discord we are experiencing across the world. Our hope rests on our hope-in-action where we embrace humanity for what it can be, through every interaction we experience with each other; through an appreciative lens.

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