

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 manages a private practice at Kiku Imagination where he applies the Appreciative Dialogue (ApDi) therapy program to assist individuals move toward, strengthen, and enjoy what is meaningful while dealing with the challenges they encounter along the way.

Contact: keithstorace@kikuimagination.com
Website: kikuimagination.com

Continuing their ongoing series titled: Our Principles in Action: Appreciative Inquiry for Justice & Belonging, Faith Addicott and Stacey Randle ponder the AI Principles of Enactment and Simultaneity and how these principles move us to understanding the power, value, and transformational aspects of "Being the question".

Also, in a new series for Voices from the Field, A Practitioners Journey..., Alex Arnold will present four articles over the next four issues of *AI Practitioner* that focus on living with climate change. In her first article titled: Bringing All Voices into the Room, Alex provides us with an initial overview of the current state of climate change, listening to the science, and how all this challenges contemporary thinking.

The final article is one I was invited to write following a short film created by Joep C. de Jong where he interviewed me while I was in the Netherlands in 2022. In *Reflections on the Discovery of Self*, I was encouraged to explore questions on the emerging self, Appreciative Inquiry, and the Inner Child.

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, where she has undertaken organizational assessments and strategic planning using AI and other strengths-based processes. She is a champion for inclusive workplace design.

Stacey Randle | USA



Stacey Randle, MPOD is a Human Resources professional who is 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.

Being the Question: Opening to Change: The Principles of Enactment & Simultaneity

What is equity? We hear that word all the time; in fact, it has become a buzz word that sounds good. So many companies and organizations have initiatives and employees whose sole role is to ensure equity, but what is equity really? In many places equity is defined as ‘a condition of being fair or just’. Sounds straightforward, but with people it’s not that straightforward at all. This can be problematic because we, in the world, have competing ideas about what fairness is and what justice is. We often see things based on our lived experiences, which complicate how people see fairness and justice. This attempt to both name equity and to advocate for the application of fairness and justice in our systems is messy and leads to a proliferation of meanings that aren’t necessarily aligned towards the same goals, diluting the power of our work.

If, however, we apply the AI **principle of Enactment** to the task, we learn that the most important word in the definition of equity, above, is ‘being’. In enactment, we are called to ‘be the change we want to see’. In our diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work, this means embodiment of equity, being in our own actions and stories, both fair and just. It’s not that we don’t need the application of these concepts to our systems and institutions (we do!), it’s that through enactment we bring them into being in a way that influences every situation.

In this frame, Appreciative Inquiry asks us to BE equity, to manifest and occupy the space of justice with our own lives. This is revolutionary.

In a system dominated by tokenism and performative actions related to equity (start DEI projects but don’t fund them, hire diverse candidates but don’t address the racist cultures that harm them and force them out, or just check the boxes), the enactment of equity is soul-deep. It resonates through us, and we ring like bells in the halls of change, clarion calls shattering the falseness of racist systems. Enactment of equity silences rooms and erupts in cheers in the same breath.

How do we come to embody justice? We ask ourselves and others deep questions. We ask, in the spirit of complete exploration, what is equity? What is fairness? What is justice? In short, we come to enactment through inquiry – **the Simultaneity principle**, which says that inquiry is an intervention. The moment we ask a question, we begin to create a change. When we ask those questions

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of ourselves and others, we open the space for being – for the creation of new pathways, both neural and generational.

These two principles are deeply entwined when applied to the work of belonging. We ask; we become. We ask others to become.

When fully realized, our questions become more than generative; they are transformative, alchemical. Because, in the face of centuries of inertia (these harmful ways of thinking and doing have been around a long time), questions are an acknowledgement of possibility. The possibility of something else, something better that we have only to find.

We find a more just and equitable world first in our own humility, in our love of others, in our curiosity and in our being. Through these principles, we come to be what we seek.

Alexandra Arnold | USA



Alex Arnold (she/her) MSPsy, MSHR/OD, ACC, is program director at [The Taos Institute](#) and a climate resilience coach at [Alma Coaching](#), where she uses positive psychology and Appreciative Inquiry to help introverted and highly sensitive people shift from climate anxiety to inspired action.

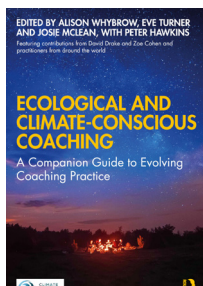
As coaches, consultants, educators, leaders and change agents, we are 'change experts'.

A Practitioner's Journey to Living With Climate Change

This article, the first in a series of four that focus on climate change, is an invitation to AI practitioners to help shift the paradigm of “fighting the climate crisis” to one of deep transformation so that we, our organizations, our communities, the world at large, and the more-than-human world can learn to live with the undeniable and irreversible changes occurring on our planet. “Living with” does not mean accepting passively what is happening. Rather, it calls us to acknowledge, adapt – and imagine new ways to thrive.

As coaches, consultants, educators, leaders and change agents, we are “change experts”. What better position to be in to shape the future of our world? Sure, it's an enormous responsibility. But, with AI at our side, we are well equipped to step up to it. For a start, we know the benefits of bringing all voices into the room.

In their recently published book, *Ecological and Climate-Conscious Coaching: A Companion Guide to Evolving Coaching Practice* (Whybrow, Turner, McLean, 2022), members of the [Climate Coaching Alliance](#) discuss the “eco-phase cycle”, originally developed by Peter Hawkins. This model suggests that each of us finds ourselves in one of five eco-phases: eco-curious, eco-informed, eco-aware, eco-engaged or eco-active. Indeed, our journey to living with climate change begins with curiosity, and by listening to more than just one story.



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Whybrow et al.

Listening to science

There is a lot of data available, varying opinions, and all sorts of messages – from “it’s too late anyway” to “someone else will fix it”. We could talk about degrees, pounds of carbon dioxide, or number of years before we reach one catastrophe or another. How much do we really need to know?

The causes and effects of climate change reported by the [United Nations](#) can be summarized in one paragraph:

The world is losing species at a rate 1,000 times greater than at any other time in recorded human history. Melting ice sheets cause sea levels to rise, threatening coastal and island communities. Cyclones, hurricanes, and typhoons feed on warm waters at the ocean surface and destroy homes and communities, causing deaths and huge economic losses. Changes in the climate and increases in extreme weather events are among the reasons behind a global rise in hunger and poor nutrition. Wildfires start more easily and spread more rapidly when conditions are hotter. Changing weather patterns are expanding diseases, and extreme weather events increase deaths and make it difficult for health care systems to keep up. Climate change increases the factors that put and keep people in poverty.

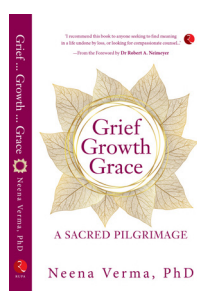
Given the enormity of what we are facing, it is easy to go from denial to despair, or to listen to lots of facts without fully integrating them. Yet it is important that we “not only listen to the science with our conceptual mind, but also listen with our hearts and guts and whole being”. (Whybrow et al., 2022).

Listening inside

In any form of change, and for a new way of life to emerge, we must first acknowledge what has been lost or must be left behind; this isn’t a logistical problem, it’s an emotional one.

Climate grief, or ecological grief, is now recognized by the American Psychological Association. This [Canadian Climate Institute](#) article (Cunsolo & Rezagian, 2021) breaks it down into four types: grief from acute disasters; grief from slow-onset changes like loss of ice, habitat or species; vicarious grief when witnessing suffering in faraway places; and anticipatory grief, which is closely tied to eco-anxiety. There is no shame in adding to this list: grief for a way of life, for the comforts, conveniences, habits and traditions that are no longer sustainable, and the realization that change is inescapable.

'Climate grief differs from other forms of grief in that rather than one loss, we experience multiple losses, past, current, and anticipated.'
Cox & Flynn



“Climate grief differs from other forms of grief in that rather than one loss, we experience multiple losses, past, current, and anticipated. Where the pain of a more traditional form of loss may lessen over time, climate grief may keep returning, ever sharp and differently textured, with each new loss. If we can learn to grieve well – making space for it, and knowing that it will not destroy us – we can accept grief as a familiar friend, and that acceptance might allow us to experience a deeper connection to our world. If we can do that, then there is a gift in this time of sadness and anxiety; in surrendering to grief, we can connect to love.” (Cox & Flynn, 2022)

According to Neena Verma, author of *Grief, Growth, Grace: A Sacred Pilgrimage* (2021), grief is an inevitable part of life, and so is “the human capacity to grow strength in the garden of sorrow and seek the path of deep growth, transformation, and grace.” Death and growth are not separate or consecutive. They are intertwined. What would it look like to allow death and grief to also hold beauty and hope? In some parts of the world, dying leaves in autumn are celebrated for their vibrant colors. In our gardens, it is decaying organic matter that provides nutrients for new food to grow.

In nature, death is everywhere. What else can we learn from the very world we are trying to save?

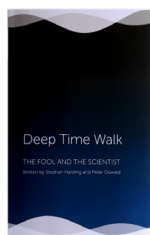
Listening beyond

When reconnecting with our deeper emotions, we are reconnecting with our humanness. As human beings, we are part of the greater living system of our planet. How do we make sure that our non-human neighbors always have a seat at the table? In programs such as the [Dialoguing with the Earth](#) certification, founded by ICF-accredited coach Lilith Joanna Flanagan, you can learn to dialogue and partner with nature to create a collaborative cohabitation with the earth.



Another way to invite the perspective of the natural world in our work is with the [Council of All Beings](#) practice, based on the work of Joanna Macy, where participants are chosen by a non-human life form and speak on its behalf in front of a council in ways that “grow the ecological self, for it brings a sense of our solidarity with all life” (Macy, 2017).

To access knowledge from beyond our limited human experience, let's acknowledge just how young we are in comparison to other species and within the history of this planet. There is a clash between our short-term self-focus and the much longer timeframe that needs to be considered in the context of



climate change, like the [seventh-generation principle](#) found in Indigenous wisdom.

To stretch your time horizon, you may take a [Deep Time Walk](#) (2022), a recording of the earth's 4.6-billion-year history to be listened to on a 4.6 km walk. In this unique experience, science and poetry merge to share the story of how our planet formed, of how life evolved and finally, in the last one-fifth of a millimeter of that walk, of the devastating impact of humanity since the industrial revolution.

When we listen to the natural world we are part of, the deep emotions inside us, or the news around us, we bring a multiplicity of voices into the room, and we take the first step into living with climate change.

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Reflections on the Discovery of Self

During the European Summer of 2022, I spent some time in the Netherlands where I was invited by Joep de Jong to be interviewed for a short film that focuses on the discovery of self. A filmmaker well-known for his work and expertise in Appreciative Leadership, Joep suggested a free-flowing conversation, one that would develop organically. The result was a welcomed exploration into how each person is a story interconnecting with the stories of others, and how Appreciative Inquiry (AI) encourages my personal understanding of these connections. Ultimately, I felt reassured that the more we understand our own story and the things that stir our curiosity, the more likely we will recognise all that emerges to liberate who we truly are.

Many AI practitioners I have spoken with over the years describe their introduction to AI as a kind of homecoming, where they feel a deep sense of connection. I am always intrigued to learn more about their story and how their sense of connection is often a re-connection to something that has remained meaningful to them. I refer to this re-connection as “appreciative beginnings”,



those moments in our early history where we experience a feeling of bliss usually connected to something that we find deeply meaningful.

I use the term “appreciative” in three ways: as acknowledgement of what has brought us joy and what inspired curiosity at such an early time in our lives; how this combination of joy and curiosity continues to hold meaning for us to the present day; and as recognition of how our embrace of Appreciative Inquiry has been influenced by appreciative beginnings.

Since commencing as editor of Voices from the Field in 2016 for the *AI Practitioner* journal, certain aspects of every article written for the column by AI practitioners across the globe can be traced back to each author’s appreciative beginnings. For them, AI has been a bridge between what matters most and bringing it to life in the world. It’s the depth of meaning their work holds for them that is a manifestation of the ripple effect set in motion by those early days of joy and curiosity, a pivotal aspect of self-discovery that eventually leads to good work.

Appreciative Inquiry is a promise, a process and way of life that continues to move each of us along the good side of human history. 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.

Joep C. de Jong has filmed over 70 conversations elaborating on the power, validity, strength, and truth of Appreciative Inquiry. [Reflections on the Discovery of Self](#) is available on Vimeo, along with links to many other conversations, each one a unique and inspiring story revealing what is possible.

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