

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 Storage | Australia

Keith Storage 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.

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In the final instalment of *Our Principles in Action: Appreciative Inquiry for Justice & Belonging*, Faith Addicott presents “Bringing It Home – the Positive Principle” and expands on its hidden treasures and power to move us forward. I would like to thank Faith Addicott and Stacey Randle for such a necessary and insightful series that has challenged, inspired and developed our understanding of the AI principles.

Continuing with another transformational series – in her second article of this four-part presentation, *A Practitioner's Journey to Living with Climate Change* – Alex Arnold shares an overview of the Climate Coaching Alliance Global Festival that was held in March this year. “Which Door Are You Going to Choose?” is a compelling essay that considers three ways to spark climate conversations.

I am also pleased to introduce Rolene Pryor. Her article, titled “Growing Towards the Light” reveals her AI journey and how it has transformed her work and her life, leading to the development of Beyond Baseline™, an approach to planning that embraces the power of the AI principles and processes.

Bringing It Home: The Positive Principle

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.

Throughout this series, as we have examined the ways in which our AI principles open the doors to inclusive, equity-centered practices, we have spoken to the unique mindset that each principle invites. For all of them, there is a lens that underlies our day-to-day understanding as it applies to our AI work.

There is a deeper layer.

Beneath the core concepts of our principles – Anticipatory, Constructionist, Simultaneity, Poetic, Wholeness, Awareness, Enactment, Narrative & Free Choice – there is a truth. Simply put, we cannot appreciate where we do not include. The appreciative eye is the eye that holds the whole, in all its awkwardness and splendor.

Likewise, the inquiring mind – inquisitive, full of wonder, never ceasing in the search for truth and beauty – is a space where the kind of false certainties that lead to racist and oppressive ideologies cannot exist. Because a mind (or a person, or a community) dedicated to asking is always open to discovery, and discovery inevitably unearths the connections and meaning that lie between us all.

The Positive principle is the action principle, the call to move into the pursuit of our questing in full, to ASK QUESTIONS. “Momentum for [small- or] large-scale change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding. This momentum is best generated through positive questions that amplify the positive core.”¹

A single frame of reference

We ask without fear of the answers, in complete acceptance of contradictions and complexities, in the pursuit of wonder, and we explore the fullness of what it means to be human by framing consistently in the positive. We intentionally seek what is best in all of us, in all people. Our exploration brings us into the stories of other cultures, of different ways of knowing. We set the context for

¹ <https://www.centerforappreciativeinquiry.net/more-on-ai/principles-of-appreciative-inquiry/>

The Positive principle is the action principle.

The real heart of the positive principle is in generativity.

mutual understanding in a single frame of reference: what is BEST in you? What is best in me? What is best in us?

This principle is the one that gets the most negative reactions from people ... it's easy to think positive = Pollyanna, a false shine that silences the very real harms and traumas that make our experiences visceral. As discussed in the work of Gervase Bushe,² the real heart of the positive principle is in generativity, not simple positivity. This principle moves us, pulls us, draws us into a best possible future by inviting us into a mindset that demands a positive option, not just dystopian wastelands.

In the context of Justice & Belonging work, the Positive principle looks beyond what we don't want and asks us what good is possible for a just society. Intentionally, it asks that we pursue these questions not only with an expectation of wonder, but also that we do the work with each other, together.

The dance of ask-and-answer

Because the dance of ask-and-answer always involves more than one person; it also always includes more than one viewpoint. Intrinsically interconnected, our principles again lead us to each other, to amazement in the possibility of it all, and in the child-like glee of asking.

Thank you all for taking this journey with me. I hope these thoughts have informed your own sense of what is possible for justice in our work.

Growing Towards the Light

Rolene Pryor | Canada



Rolene Pryor is a facilitator, planner, trainer and management consultant who loves supporting her clients to get beyond baseline. Rolene uses her background in facilitation and planning to understand client context, needs, goals and strengths, and applies that learning to co-create compelling visions for the future. Rolene holds a master's degree in Applied Social Psychology and is energized by people and teams.

'Everything begins with an idea.'

Earl Nightingale

My AI story starts with a big idea from a cherished colleague and friend, Dr Kelly Josephson.

In 2010, Kelly and I were working together in the Institutional Research and Planning team at a higher education institution in the Middle East. Our institution was a satellite campus of an established Canadian organization and had never been asked to create a strategic plan that was specific to the needs of our campus.

² http://www.gervasebushe.ca/AI_generativity.pdf

When the call for a strategic plan came, a team was assembled to get the job done. The challenge was that this team didn't have a lot of experience with strategic planning. Plus, the timeline was short. And the needs were complex.

Enter Kelly. One of her most beautiful strengths is her love of new ideas and models. Kelly had been reading about Appreciative Inquiry (AI) and its potential to bring large groups together to align on vision. She was intrigued by the potential to use AI in our work and suggested that we get trained in AI so that we explore further.

'Viva, Las Vegas!'

Elvis Presley

In those four days, we were continually inspired and energized with all the ideas.

The training was in Las Vegas, USA; I was sold! So, we made the long journey from Qatar to Nevada to take our four-day Appreciative Inquiry Facilitator Training (AIFT) with Company of Experts. In those four days, we were continually inspired and energized with all the ideas that were coming up for us, and the ways we could see the potential to meaningfully use AI in our work. Before our trip, I was excited to see Las Vegas. After our trip, I was excited about what we were about to try.

Kelly and I returned to the Middle East with enthusiasm and energy, and pitched our idea to the strategic planning team. Given the timelines and the other pressures, they agreed to let us run the process with what we had just learned in our time away.

'You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.'

Martin Luther King, Jr

And we were off! Through our planning process, we did a lot of great stuff. We engaged more than 400 key partners through the planning process in both English and Arabic, we built a culturally appropriate space to hold our events (a majlis), we heard inspiring and energizing stories of institutional excellence, we co-created directions for the future, and we created a compelling multi-year strategic plan.

The best part of it all was the bonds that were created.

But the best part of it all was the bonds that were created, the relationships that were deepened, and the shared understanding that was built that cut through the challenges being faced at the institution. Kelly and I saw, firsthand, the power of Appreciative Inquiry. We left our planning sessions each day with tired feet and electrifyingly energized minds – I will always remember that feeling. Together, we had unlocked real magic.

It became clear that, despite their uniqueness, AI could have a positive impact for all of them.

More than a decade later, I look back on our AI-for-strategic-planning process as a peak career experience and something that forever changed how I move through the world, both at work and at home.

'Unlimited. Together we're unlimited.'– Stephen Schwartz

I left that institution in 2012 to start a career back in Canada as a management consultant. As I began to work with clients in different industries who were all presenting with unique challenges and needs, it became clear that, despite their uniqueness, AI could have a positive impact for all of them – just as it had for our campus in the Middle East back in 2010.

As I used AI more and more with my clients, I started to realize that the power of focusing on strengths, finding ways to create more of those strengths, and creating an expansive view of the future was allowing my clients to get well beyond where they were now and where they thought they could be in the future. My clients were getting beyond the baseline that they had set for themselves; instead, they were realizing that their future was truly unlimited.

I took what I had learned from years of facilitation, research and planning, combined that with the power of the principles and process of AI, and created an agile planning process called [Beyond Baseline™](#). This approach meets people, teams and organizations where they are, seeking to understand their context, pain points, fears, and concerns. That, combined with additional research, becomes the starting point for future-state visioning, action planning and implementation. Each client engagement is different, and the specifics of the approach are highly customized and flexible for each clients' needs, goals and preferred outcomes. One thing remains the same – the process is grounded in finding, appreciating and amplifying the strengths present in every team and organization.

As I learn more, try more and explore more, I add to and adjust the model.

Insomuch as this Beyond Baseline™ model is agile for my clients, it's agile for me too. As I learn more, try more and explore more, I add to and adjust the model. I recently completed the Appreciative Resilience Facilitator Training (ARFT) course offered by the Center for Appreciative Inquiry and I have folded learnings and insights from that experience into my Dscovery phase flow with my clients, recognizing that hope, despair and forgiveness are normal and fluid in everyone's lives, at work and at home.

Our team understands the power of AI because they've experienced it.

'If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.'

Henry Ford

I am very thankful to work for an organization that embraces the ideas (like Beyond Baseline™!) that passionate practitioners bring to the table – and I am passionate about the power of AI in consulting.

In addition to using Beyond Baseline™ for clients, I've had the support from our team to turn the lens inward for our organization. Our Barrington Consulting team has used Beyond Baseline™, and its grounding in strengths, to build our own corporate multiyear strategy and to understand and celebrate our corporate culture.

Just like that first strategic planning experience in 2010, our Barrington team has worked together to create powerful and compelling visions of the future which were excellent. But the most powerful outcome of the process was the way that relationships were formed, deepened and solidified. Our team understands the power of AI because they've experienced it. We are all excited to bring more clients through the Beyond Baseline™ flow because it's so uplifting and poignant while also being incredibly effective and powerful.

'Ask for what you want and be prepared to get it.'

Maya Angelou

I feel the power of AI in my own life, every day. Being able to reframe an issue or a gap into a request for what it is that I actually want, framed in the affirmative, has been transformational. As an AI trainer, I often hear the question – “aren't we ignoring the problems when we reframe?” I strongly believe that the answer to that is no, we aren't ignoring the problems that exist. Instead, we are asking for what it is that we want, what we want to create, what success looks like, and/or what we want more of.

I believe that *more* is a small word with incredible power. In my life, more has opened many doors for me – doors to hard conversations, doors to increased clarity in relationships, doors to shared understanding, and doors to vulnerability. These are all doors that, when we walk through them, build more and more authenticity within ourselves and our relationships with others.

'Wherever there is air and light and open space, things grow.'

Helen Oyeyemi

So, what does the future hold for me and Appreciative Inquiry? It's more!

My goal is to continue to grow AI in everything I do, in every breath I take, and every interaction I have.

I am excited to build more and more AI into my consulting work. Beyond Baseline™ is growing and I am excited to continue to evolve this method as I have more opportunities to serve current and new clients. I continue to be inspired when I see how widely applicable a strengths focus is across so many specific needs, realities and sectors. I've had the chance to use these techniques and principles on dozens of different client engagements over the years – each one has worked and each one has been transformational in its own way. I trust the process because it works.

I am excited to breathe in the power of more in my daily life. As AI practitioners, we often talk about the difference between being AI and doing AI. Doing AI is about the process – following steps that work to create a vision based on a specific topic or opportunity. Being AI is about how you move through the world, finding the joy in small things, fanning the flames in others, seeing what is possible.

My goal is to continue to grow AI in everything I do, in every breath I take, and every interaction I have. I'm a work in progress and I'm excited to continue to grow towards the light.

A Practitioner's Journey to Living With Climate Change

Alexandra Arnold | USA



Alex Arnold (she/her) MSPsy, MSHR/OD, ACC, is Associate Executive 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.

Which door are you going to choose?

Talking about climate change is not an IF question anymore, it is a HOW question. Thankfully, there are many ways to get started.

Over the course of the month of March 2023, the [Climate Coaching Alliance Global Festival](#) featured more than 50 virtual events on the theme: Tools for Transitions – Navigating the Paradoxes, Polarities and Paradigms in Climate Coaching. Sessions were hosted by people from around the globe on topics that go far beyond traditional news headlines, alarmist messages, or the most common calls for action. In this article, we will explore the wide variety of ways one (whether a coach or not) can start climate conversations, at home, at work, and with oneself. Let's see what happens when we open some of these doors ...

(Most gatherings started with a grounding exercise and lighting a candle, which you may want to do before you read on, allowing yourself to slow down and honor your own experience with this topic.)

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Door #1: Gut microbiome

When it comes to climate change, the scale of the problem can make us feel very small, as when we stand in a forest surrounded by really tall trees, looking up. Cara Wheatley-McGrain, host of the session [Compassionate connection to our inner and outer ecosystems](#), invited us to look down instead: at the fallen leaves, the earth, the small creatures and plants on the ground, and to consider that, from this perspective, we are standing on the rooftop of a whole world. Indeed, there are more microbes in a teaspoon of soil than there are people on the earth! It is with this vantage point that Wheatley-McGrain guided her audience through a visualization to visit the garden of their guts, which hosts the largest bacterial ecosystem in the human body. We've all heard the term "gut feeling", and for a good reason.

Recent research on psychobiotics led by Professor [John Cryan](#) suggests that our gut health is not only linked to our physical, but to our mental, health. When it comes to microbes and bacteria, our gut thrives on abundance, diversity and balance. Unfortunately, in addition to being the principal cause of habitat loss (in turn contributing to species extinction), the industrialization of our food system has been leading to an invisible extinction of our gut microbiomes. A conservative estimate is that modern city dwellers have lost around 50% of their microbes through urbanization. If it is sometimes hard to relate to larger ecosystem changes taking place due to climate change, looking – or rather feeling – right inside of our guts may be a powerful motivator for positive change.

Door #2: Conscious influence

Many of the ideas brought forth by Stephanie Trager in her session entitled [The Art of Conscious Influence for Change Agents](#) will sound familiar to Appreciative

Map of Consciousness

Developed By David R. Hawkins

	Name of Level	Energetic Log	Predominant Emotional State	View of Life	God-view	Process
Spiritual Paradigm	Enlightenment	700-1000	Ineffable	Is	Self	Pure Consciousness
	Peace	600	Bliss	Perfect	All-Being	Illumination
	Joy	540	Serenity	Complete	One	Transfiguration
	Love	500	Reverence	Benign	Loving	Revelation
Reason & Integrity	Reason	400	Understanding	Meaningful	Wise	Abstraction
	Acceptance	350	Forgiveness	Harmonious	Merciful	Transcendence
	Willingness	310	Optimism	Hopeful	Inspiring	Intention
	Neutrality	250	Trust	Satisfactory	Enabling	Release
	Courage	200	Affirmation	Feasible	Permitting	Empowerment
Survival Paradigm	Pride	175	Scorn	Demanding	Indifferent	Inflation
	Anger	150	Hate	Antagonistic	Vengeful	Aggression
	Desire	125	Craving	Disappointing	Denying	Enslavement
	Fear	100	Anxiety	Frightening	Punitive	Withdrawal
	Grief	75	Regret	Tragic	Disdainful	Despondency
	Apathy	50	Despair	Hopeless	Condemning	Abdication
	Guilt	30	Blame	Evil	Vindictive	Destruction
	Shame	20	Humiliation	Miserable	Despising	Elimination

As conscious influencers, we have a deeper ripple impact from the inside out, through power versus force.
Stephanie Trager

Inquiry practitioners. Rather than taking a “fix it” attitude, she calls for a reverse engineering process by asking “What is the future asking of us? What does that energy feel like?” Visualization, non-linear perception, and using a vocabulary of increase are tools that can replace the current narratives that keep us stuck with the constructs that got us where we are in the first place. By using other tools, we clear ourselves on the inside so that we can emanate conscious influence, or positive energy frequency. Check out Dr. David Hawkins’ [map of consciousness](#) to find out what emotions you want to cultivate to create the highest frequencies, life energy or level of enlightenment. Doing so, as Trager said in her session, “in ourselves and others, is the most accelerated path to a thriving and sustainable world ... As conscious influencers, we have a deeper ripple impact from the inside out, through power versus force.”

Door #3: Cosmology

Cosmology is the study of the origin and structure of the universe. For Drew Dellinger, host of [Planetizing the Movement with the Powers of Dream, Story, Art, and Action](#), cosmology is also a worldview, a story of separation of humans and nature that has been dominating a large part of the world. “How do we move from a cosmology of exploitation to one of interconnectedness?” he asks.

Or, as cultural historian Thomas Berry puts it, “from viewing the universe as a collection of objects to a communion of subjects”. One way, Drew Dellinger suggested in his session, is to bring the arts back from the fringe to the center, to remember that art is how heart speaks to heart; it is essential to who we are, and we are all artists in our own way. Art has a central place in activism. Art puts pressure with joy and love. Slowing down, being in stillness, spending time alone, and meditation can be ways to activate our innate creativity and perhaps even connect with the wisdom of the universe.

Other topics included: How we can draw on indigenous wisdom for the challenges facing us now; Successfully attract your clients to climate action; The self in a zillion eco-transitions; How to become a resilient and confident female leader for climate change?; Preventing climate burnout; Our traumas hold the key to the more beautiful world; How can the 3Cs of inclusive leadership enhance leading for sustainability?; Glorious 2030 – How to guide topic discussions and the building of desirable futures; How can playfulness help unlock climate action?; and many more.

As you can see, ways to enter conversations about climate change are endless, and sometimes quite surprising. Even so, there are common themes that emerged from all of these sessions. Clover Hogan, activist, entrepreneur, global speaker, and only twenty-three years old, captured them in a powerful opening session:



Clover Hogan, activist, entrepreneur, global speaker

- *Acknowledging eco-anxiety* (a chronic fear of environmental doom) and *ecophobia* (an ethical undervaluing of the natural environment that can result in cataclysmic environmental change). In a survey of 10,000 young people, 70% reported being eco-anxious. Denial, grief, sadness, hopelessness, loss of faith in institutions, burnout, confusion, a sense of betrayal ... all are now part of the dialogue. But they are not problems to be fixed: they are “beautiful evidence of our humanity”. Processing rather than bypassing these emotions is important, with someone who can hold the space and facilitate empowerment and agency rather than allowing despair to set in.
- *Finding community*. We can’t do this alone – and we are not alone. We all need to be with others, in a group or an organization, to find validation, motivation, support and accountability. Taking a collective approach also means bringing many voices into the room and genuinely listening to diverse views, especially those that have been largely ignored or suppressed.

Hogan has a special request for the adults who so often instinctively want to remove the pain and suffering for young people. This has to stop, she says,

It's time to have honest conversations about the reality, the losses and the pain among people of every age.

as it only fuels the feeling of betrayal. It's time to have honest conversations about the reality, the losses and the pain among people of every age. Hold these conversations with tenderness and care to rebuild trust. In her view, "it is intergenerational wisdom and action that will make a difference".

- *Choosing a focus.* Too many are stuck because they feel too small to make a difference, think that the system is too broken, or don't know where to start. Empowerment comes from finding a unique way to contribute. Rather than trying to fix it all, let's ask "what is the one thing I can show up to solve, where does my impact come from?" Coaches and AI practitioners can play an important role in helping individuals identify the values, skills, unique gifts – the positive core – that will ignite sustainable action and a sense of agency. Here again, it's essential to team up with others and not try to go at it alone.
- *Changing the story.* Being exposed to constant stories of disasters around the world in the news and social media is too much. Pointing out that consumption is at the heart of the crisis and asking people to sacrifice their habits and lifestyles is not working. Vilifying those in power is too easy. Relying solely on technology to solve it all is spreading false hope.

Instead, Hogan encourages us to create a compelling message, an invitation for people to be part of something bigger, a reminder that true happiness comes from within, and a celebration of the fact that there is already a shift toward increased spirituality and connection with nature. "How do we make climate action irresistible?!"

The message throughout this month-long festival, across 50 virtual sessions hosted by change agents from around the globe, is loud and clear: we won't solve the climate crisis with the same people and thinking that created it. It's time to open up new doors, tell new stories, and pick up new tools. It begins at the personal level and requires a "going back to nature".

This event was made possible by the dedication and generosity of CCA volunteers and has resulted in a fantastic library of resources. Watch the recordings available on each event page at www.climatecoachingalliance.org/global-festival-2023 and spread the word.