

Appreciative Resources

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Practical Appreciative Inquiry: How to Use This Leading-Edge Coaching Method Confidently with Teams and Small Groups

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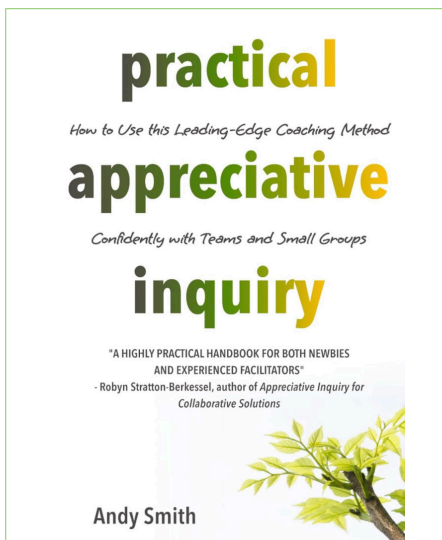
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Practical Appreciative Inquiry: How to Use This Leading-Edge Coaching Method Confidently with Teams and Small Groups by Andy Smith draws on the pioneering work of David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva. They developed Appreciative Inquiry (AI) at Case Western Reserve University in the 1980s. Their shift from deficit-based analysis to an approach that focuses on strengths marked a pivotal moment in organisational development. This method moved away from identifying problems to spotlighting the positive core of individuals, teams and organisations. Building on this foundation, the author offers a practical, nuanced guide designed to empower leaders, coaches and facilitators to foster meaningful change.

Practical tools for real-world application

The book is a thoughtfully written guide that offers an enriching approach to fostering change. Through a clear lens of positive inquiry, it invites coaches, facilitators and leaders to explore new possibilities beyond traditional problem-solving methods. The emphasis on focusing on strengths over shortcomings reflects the essence of AI – a refreshing shift in perspective – cultivating environments where creativity thrives and teams find renewed energy. Shifting away from a deficit-based approach, this work emphasises that real transformation is possible when we focus on what works.

The author's approach moves the reader beyond academic abstractions to present a structured, hands-on approach. The detailed breakdown of the 5D cycle that drives AI – Definition, Discovery, Dream, Design and Delivery – guides readers through each phase, ensuring they can apply these insights with confidence. Real-world examples breathe life into these stages, making the theory accessible and immediately applicable, particularly in team settings.



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The neuroscience of positive inquiry

A notably distinctive contribution to understanding the effectiveness of AI is the explanation of how neuroscience adds depth, linking the activation of the brain's empathic network with the positive emotions generated through AI. This connection not only emphasises the practical benefits of AI but also offers a compelling rationale for its effectiveness in creating collaborative, high-trust cultures. By grounding ideas in research about how positive emotions affect the brain, the book offers unique reasoning for the effectiveness of focusing on strengths. This is not just a feel-good approach; it aligns with how our minds work best, and the discussion of neuroscience never feels heavy-handed. An entire chapter is devoted to neuroscience and AI, clearly explaining that when positivity and curiosity are cultivated, parts of ourselves – and our organisations – that might otherwise remain dormant can be unlocked.

Overcoming resistance and facilitating change

The author acknowledges the varied contexts in which AI can be applied, offering pathways for both large-scale change and intimate coaching sessions. This versatility ensures that readers, regardless of their experience level, can find valuable strategies to enhance their practice.

Addressing scepticism, the book takes a pragmatic approach for those encountering resistance to AI. Framing discussions around tangible benefits helps make a persuasive case for the strengths-based approach, while advice on integrating AI incrementally shows an understanding of organisational dynamics, where gradual shifts often prove more sustainable.

A philosophy grounded in stories and strengths

The writing transcends the procedural, breathing life into the process of change with a focus on human stories and their power to reshape perspectives. Stories are more than just anecdotes; they are the fabric through which an organisation's values and aspirations are woven. In generating stories of success and peak experiences, leaders can build a more resilient culture, one that is grounded in a shared vision of what is possible. Guidance on how to facilitate these conversations, how to listen deeply, and how to create space for new stories to emerge adds a rich layer to the process of AI.

There is a keen awareness that every organisation holds a reservoir of untapped potential, hidden beneath the daily grind of deadlines and targets. This potential is best uncovered not by zeroing in on faults, but by shining a light on those moments when people and teams are at their best – a theme revisited

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throughout the book. It's in this space that fertile ground for growth is found, where a simple shift in focus can change the narrative of an entire organisation.

Rather than merely offering a toolbox for change, the narrative is as much about philosophy as it is about practice. The approach is nuanced, aware that the terrain of organisational change is often complex. Challenges are not shied away from; instead, they are met with a blend of practicality and compassion, offering insights into how even the most hesitant participants can find their place in the process. The tone is never prescriptive; it is invitational, drawing readers into a world where transformation is less about fixing what is broken and more about nurturing what already thrives.

Realising potential through shifts in perspective

Practical Appreciative Inquiry makes change feel possible, even in the most entrenched environments. It captures the magic that occurs when teams begin to see themselves through a new lens – one that highlights their achievements, strengths and capacity for growth. This shift in perspective doesn't just change outcomes; it changes how people relate to their work and to each other, fostering a sense of connection that goes beyond the typical transactional nature of organisational life.

Ultimately, *Practical Appreciative Inquiry* is as much about fostering a mindset as it is about implementing a methodology. The narrative helps facilitate this through its inspiring and realistic approach, reminding readers that small shifts in perspective can lead to profound changes over time. The insights offered remind us that by focusing on the best in people, we not only enrich their experience but also unlock potential that drives meaningful change.

It's a vision that reminds us of the potential for growth that often lies just beneath the surface.

We are invited to see beyond limitations, finding a pathway where collective vision and strengths lead the way, and how a shift in focus might bring about deeper, more lasting change. It's a vision that reminds us of the potential for growth that often lies just beneath the surface, waiting for someone to notice. By guiding readers through this journey of noticing, the author has crafted a book that is as enlightening as it is practical – one that will leave a lasting impression on anyone who is committed to positive change.

[Back to Table of Contents](#)