

# Micropractices

Here are our favourite “micropractices” of appreciation or inquiry. These are things that anyone can use naturally in everyday interactions, and they deserve spreading!  
**Nick Heap**

<p><b>Of appreciation</b></p>  <p>An employee of the Oberoi Hotel at New Delhi doing <i>namaste</i>, a traditional Indian greeting. Photo by Saptarshi Biswas</p>	<p>Give genuine recognition or a sincere compliment to someone for their efforts, such as, “You handled that situation ABC very well” (be specific). Then ask, “How did you manage to do that?” Then listen actively for their answer (repeat via rephrasing, verify understanding, while being gentle at all times).</p> <p>I ensure that I recognise people who exist, be they homeless people, street cleaners, counter assistants, etc., and where possible, when receiving invoices, etc., I brush people’s hands as they appreciate this.</p> <p>I say, “You look great! Where did you get these great styling ideas from?”</p> <p>I travel a lot, so I say thank you to the drivers who take me to my destination. Saying “thank you” to a bus driver, colleagues, friends, and people you interact with is a way of showing appreciation for every little thing.</p> <p>If someone expresses something positive about how they experience me, e.g., a co-volunteer on a mental health swim appreciated how I engage with anxious participants, I thank them for their offering rather than downplaying it by ignoring or rejecting it.</p> <p>Saying “I appreciate you” instead of “I appreciate that” when someone does something, like hold a door open.</p> <p>Smile and mouth the word thank you for all the service workers you encounter in every store.</p> <p>So, I try to indicate that someone has done something that deserves appreciative recognition by saying something like: “I like/d how you did ‘that’, with a reason ... “it was considerate, well thought through,” etc. I also try to avoid simplistic cliches such as “Well done.” I say, “You did that well.” I ensure that I use the word “you” or their name.</p> <p>The <i>namaste</i> greeting means “I honour you” and “I see the divine in you.” (This is an oversimplified explanation of a centuries-old practice.)</p> <p>The Zulu greeting <i>Sawubona</i> (I see you) is about truly seeing and recognising the other person for who they are – their emotions, their being, their worth. It’s a way of showing respect, presence, and attentiveness. When someone responds with <i>Ngikhona</i> (I am here), it shows that the person feels validated and recognised as an individual.</p> <p>When someone appreciates me, I say, “Thank you for noticing”.</p> <p>When someone smiles at you, smile back and say, “Thank you for your smile!”</p>
<p><b>Of inquiry</b></p>	<p>Ask people, “What’s the best thing that happened today?”</p> <p>I love this question on an embroidery I recently saw at an artist shop in Bayfield, Wisconsin: “What’s the Best...That Could Happen?”</p> <p>In the safety world, debriefing after a completed job is important for learning. Appreciative inquiry questions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- What positive things did we do?</li><li>- What unexpectedly happened that contributed to the job’s success?</li><li>- What went well?</li></ul> <p><b>In your family, group or organisation when you have had a great day say “We’ve had a great day! How can we have more days that are as good as this?”</b></p>

	<p>When someone is excellent at something, ask them, "What is your secret?" (My father was a superb primary school teacher. His secret was to "Love children and make the lessons interesting".)</p>
<b>Other</b>	<p>Combining happy hour on my back porch with gratitude practice.</p> <p>I work in the hospitality industry, and it is friendly to try to greet our regular guests by name. For the new ones, I always try to find out their names too. By so doing, our guests feel a sense of belonging and are willing to advise us on issues that may need our attention. Our welcome ensures they make our facility their number-one choice, are loyal to the brand, and recommend us to others.</p> <p>When I took a certification course taught by David Cooperrider, he shared stories of using AI on his kids when they were young. He would ask one sibling what they appreciated about the other's performance (such as at a ball game). He said that this was how AI started, well before he wrote the book. That story has stayed with me for 15 years. Now, I incorporate curiosity into many of my discussions with people.</p> <p>It's a small thing, but I've worked to change my language around common sayings. For example, why do we always assume the negative and say, "Don't forget?" Let's focus on what we want and say, "Remember!" It's small, subtle and powerful.</p> <p>A practice I apply in talking to others is that whenever they diminish the value of what they do, I challenge them to consider whether anyone would have done the same. By doing so, they become aware of the actual value of their actions.</p> <p>Every person gets my full attention. They're not competing with something else or someone else.</p>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<p>There must be many more small natural things we can do daily to move our lives and culture towards celebrating and growing good things. We know that what we appreciate flourishes and that systems move forward when we ask positive questions. Let's do more of both.</p>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<p>I want to thank all the contributors to this article for their wisdom and for taking the time to share it.</p>

[Back to Table of Contents](#)