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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 | Australia

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Much of my work with young people centres on one question: how do I help them pause long enough to notice their own strengths and possibilities? Appreciative Inquiry and the Young Philosophers – Cultivating Hope and Agency in a Complex World explores how the principles of Appreciative Inquiry can support young philosophers to reflect more deeply and discover their own strengths, meaning and possibilities. It's about nurturing hope, agency and the reflective practice that shapes future leaders.

Appreciative Inquiry and the Young Philosophers: Nurturing Hope and Agency in a Complex World

Young people are the thought leaders of tomorrow with the capacity to create futures of meaning, resilience and hope.

Their curiosity, restless questioning and willingness to explore what matters are not just signs of youthful searching, but practices that shape who they are becoming.

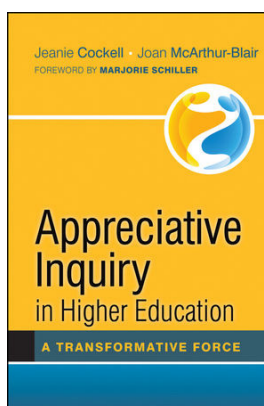
In a time when the world feels increasingly complex and rapidly changing, I like to encourage young people to think of themselves as young philosophers. They're not only dealing with the personal challenges of growing up but also living at the threshold of a global landscape increasingly shaped by technology, uncertainty and cultural change. Artificial intelligence, climate disruption, political instability, and the constant noise of social media create an environment that – to a large extent – influences how their identities are formed and how their futures are envisioned.

Within this environment, their curiosity, restless questioning and willingness to explore what matters are not just signs of youthful searching, but practices that shape who they are becoming. When young people notice that their reflections and inquiries are already influencing how they see themselves and relate to others, they begin to understand that philosophy in everyday life is also the early work of leadership.

Appreciative Inquiry as a guide for young philosophers

Modern life often leaves little time for reflection. Information arrives in a constant stream, and the world presses young people to respond quickly, rather than to pause and think. However, it is precisely this pause – the willingness to ask deeper questions – that builds resilience and vision.

In my psychology and consulting work, I often draw on the principles of Appreciative Inquiry, first introduced by [David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva \(1987\)](#). Over time, these principles have been further elaborated by others within the field and I continue to use them in practice as reflective tools, particularly when engaging with young people. They serve either to frame a conversation or as prompts that encourage deeper reflection. In doing so, they help shift the focus from reacting to immediate pressures towards recognising personal strengths, noticing emerging possibilities, and attending to what truly matters.



Lea Waters and Mathew White (2015), in [Case Study of a School Wellbeing Initiative: Using Appreciative Inquiry to Support Positive Change](#), demonstrate how Appreciative Inquiry at St Peter's College in Adelaide, Australia, enabled students to become active participants in shaping a culture of wellbeing and to see themselves as contributors to positive change. Similarly, Jeanie Cockell and Joan McArthur-Blair (2012), in [Appreciative Inquiry in Higher Education: A Transformative Force](#), show how Appreciative Inquiry can enhance the educational experience by highlighting strengths, successes and aspirations, helping students to view their learning less as a burden and more as an opportunity.

Each principle provides a way of viewing experience that fosters curiosity rather than judgement.

What we choose to notice becomes the story we live.

Ten principles for young philosophers

These ten principles for young philosophers, inspired by Appreciative Inquiry, serve as a guide for reflection. Each principle provides a way of viewing experience that fosters curiosity rather than judgement. By posing new questions about themselves and their world, young people can learn that reflection is not a passive exercise but an active shaping of identity, meaning, and possibility.

1. Constructionist principle

Reflection *Language shapes experience.*

A young philosopher might wonder: If I say I am “stuck,” do I block out the possibility that I’m simply pausing, gathering my thoughts, or preparing? What changes when I say, “I’m learning” instead of “I’m failing”?

2. Simultaneity principle

Reflection *Curiosity itself is an action.*

A young philosopher might consider: What if, during a moment of tension, I asked not “Why is this going wrong?” but “What matters most here?” That single question could already be a step toward change.

3. Anticipatory principle

Reflection *The future takes shape in the images we hold of it.*

A young philosopher may wonder: What future is already running in my imagination? If I rehearse fear, my body tenses as though it’s real. If I rehearse courage or kindness, those qualities begin to grow in me now.

4. Poetic principle

Reflection *What we choose to notice becomes the story we live.*

A young philosopher might ask: What am I choosing to underline in today’s story? Do I highlight the moments of laughter, the mistakes, the kindness I received, or all of them?

5. Positive principle

Reflection *Recognise what strengthens rather than what drains.*

A young philosopher might ask at the end of the day: When did I feel most alive, even for a moment? By collecting these sparks, I learn that resilience is built

from taking the time to notice the energy-giving moments, not in pretending that everything is fine.

6. Wholeness principle

Reflection *How we value every part of ourselves and see how it belongs to the whole.*

A young philosopher might wonder: What would happen if I allowed the quiet or uncertain part of me to speak, instead of keeping it hidden? Wholeness is less about perfection and more about letting the many sides of myself be heard.

7. Enactment principle

Reflection *How we live our values now is already a step toward the future we want.*

A young philosopher might ask: If I hope to be a kind leader one day, how have I already practised even a small fragment of that today? Each choice carries the echo of the future.

8. Narrative principle

Reflection *See that the stories we tell can open or close possibilities.*

A young philosopher might catch themselves saying, “No one cares what I think”, and then ask: Is that the whole story? What other chapters might I write that show my voice does matter?

9. Free Choice principle

Reflection *Notice where choice is still possible, even in small ways.*

A young philosopher might ask: What is still mine to decide here, however small? It may be choosing my words in response to criticism or meeting harshness with gentleness.

10. Awareness principle

Reflection *Acknowledge the full range of what we feel without turning away.*

A young philosopher might reflect: Can I notice my excitement without ignoring my anxiety, or acknowledge grief without losing sight of joy? Awareness is about allowing each feeling to be seen for what it is, without rushing to erase it.

The words we choose, the stories we tell, the futures we imagine, and the choices we make are all acts of philosophy. Through the principles of Appreciative Inquiry, reflection becomes a practice of seeing differently, recognising strengths, exploring uncertainty, and nurturing the agency to contribute to change.

*How we live our values now
is already a step toward the
future we want.*

*Acknowledge the full range of
what we feel without turning
away.*

The journey of young people through Appreciative Inquiry [is] about offering them a way of seeing themselves and the world with greater depth.

The leaders young people are becoming

The journey of young people through Appreciative Inquiry isn't about providing them with ready-made answers but about offering them a way of seeing themselves and the world with greater depth. Reflection becomes both a foundation and a direction – helping them pause amid the noise, recognise the threads of strength already there, and imagine futures that build on those strengths. In this way, philosophy isn't just an abstract idea, but a lived practice, shaping how young people navigate relationships, communities, and the unfolding challenges of their time. They are the thought leaders of tomorrow, with the capacity to create futures of meaning, resilience, and hope.

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