

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is an approach to use when creating positive change. It's not just about being positive and optimistic or ignoring problems and reality. It's based on the assumption that every person, group, organisation or community has something they do well and assets they can draw on.

Starting from a positive experience or place of success encourages active participation and increases ownership. It also draws on the imagination which generates energy, creativity and inspiration. This leads to more forward movement, actionable ideas and successful outcomes. When people work from their strengths, they apply and develop these further and become stronger in the process.

In contrast, the problem-solving approach starts with the problem to fix, the weakness to overcome, what's missing or not working. When we start with the problem, we're more likely to get stuck on the negative which tends to generate negative emotions, making it harder to think creatively and find a solution. Problem-solving is still useful but needs to be used selectively. The key is to understand both approaches and know when to use each one so that they are complementary.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

Focus is on what's positive and most effective

- What's gone/going well?
- How can we build on these best moments?
- What do we want to see happening more?
- What do we want for the future?
- How can we use our dreams to make things better?

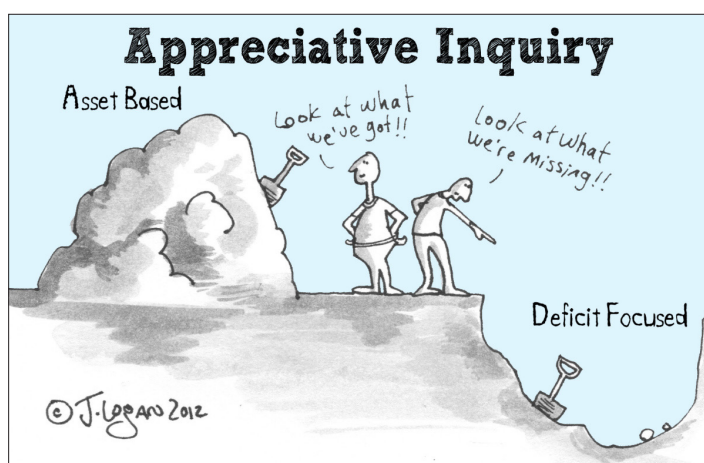
PROBLEM SOLVING

Focus is on what's negative and not working

- What's the underlying problem or issue?
- What isn't working?
- What do we want to stop from happening?
- How can we fix this problem or issue?
- What are possible solutions and any consequences?

Appreciative inquiry is like a swimming medley relay where each swimmer brings their unique skill and strength to the race. The team uses their best asset for each part of the race. Problem-solving is like a hurdle race where each problem is a barrier that needs to be overcome to reach the finish line.

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY APPROACH



Cartoon: © J Logan 2012

World Vision uses appreciative Inquiry in its development work with communities living in extreme poverty. The approach helps people to identify and value skills and resources they already have and use them to bring about change. World Vision's approach is often called Participatory Learning and Action and uses tools such as community mapping.

More about Appreciative inquiry: <https://appreciativeinquiry.champlain.edu/learn/appreciative-inquiry-introduction/>