AI Practitioner

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Appreciative Inquiry in Coaching: Exploration and Learnings

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Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Coaching is the practical application of AI Principles to the process in which a trained Coach is engaged by a person (or by an organization on behalf of a person) to function as a counselor and advisor. In fact, AI Coaching describes this process as a co-creative partnership between the client, the Coach and the clients' relevant social system.

Over the last decade this practice of using Coaches has become perhaps the fastest growing innovation in the behavioral science field of Organization Development. There is a growing demand for skilled Coaches and a comparable growth of methods and training institutions that prepare people to act as Coaches. While many of these methods are both innovative and effective, it is our conviction that the Appreciative Inquiry philosophy and practice is in and of itself the ideal process for both enabling people in organizations to become more aware of their own strengths and abilities in ways that increase their effectiveness in all parts of their life and to create robust support for change in the client's social system.

AI Coaching is highly effective for a variety of specific coaching purposes, including leadership, transition, development, working relationships and life planning. The principles of AI influence all stages of AI Coaching, from the initial contact through the final follow-up sessions. The phases of AI guide the general sequence of activities. Both the principles and phases provide guidance in the improvisational dance of the coaching process.

The hallmark of AI Coaching is robust awareness and appropriate engagement of the social network of which the client is a part and which is relevant to the objectives of the coaching. The following describes the impact of the principles of AI in AI Coaching, adding

Wholeness to the well recognized five Principles of Constructionist, Positive, Anticipatory, Simultaneity and Poetic.

Constructionist Principle
The principle of Social Construction recognizes that meaning is made and futures are created through conversations; that our perceptions of reality itself are the product of these conversations; and that our perceived reality defines what we see or do not see (Discover Phase). The stories that are told and retold both formally and informally create and perpetuate the reality of our perceptions. These stories have the power to limit our options as well as to expand the possibilities we can imagine and create. Social construction is happening all the time, everywhere. In organizations, we refer to the socially constructed environment and belief system as the organization's culture.

In AI Coaching, we intentionally engage the social system in support of the desired outcomes of the coaching. We use a wide angle lens, if you will, to engage significant others in conversations specifically designed to:

- Deepen the client's appreciation of her/his unique contributions and accomplishments (Discover)
- Contribute to energizing dreams for his/her future and the future of the social system to which they all belong (Dream)
- Contribute to ideas for practical actions to realize the dream (Design)
- Actively support the client in the destiny/delivery phase of his/her development, forming the social architecture to sustain energy for change (Destiny/Deliver)

Positive Principle
At any moment we can choose to focus on deficits or strengths. From the first contact, including a request for coaching and what might be considered a contracting (Define Phase)[i] conversation, AI Coaching unabashedly focuses on the positive and the strengths, even in the midst of challenges or "problems" that may have led to the request for coaching. Recognizing that each conversation has the capacity to either further cement existing perceptions or to open awareness to strengths and new possibilities, each interaction in AI Coaching is guided by the appreciative principle. Since "we find what we look for," the AI Coach looks for what is appreciative.

We are learning much more about the impact of this positive principle through the work of Barbara Fredrickson. Her innovative experiments have led to the "broaden and build" theory of positive emotion, that positive emotions are not only markers of well-being but creators of well-being. She has shown that positive emotions lead to expanded awareness and thinking, greater creativity and enhanced capabilities. Positive emotions create a shift from an "I" to a "we" perspective and so develop robust networks of social support. So positive emotions and the results they create form a self-reinforcing spiral in which individuals flourish and continually grow towards optimal functioning. In the authors' experience, when a community of people collectively experiences positive emotion,

appreciates strengths and imagines an energizing future, positive change is accelerated and momentum sustained. [ii]

In a related hypothesis, Fredrickson holds that positive emotions should be antidotes to any lingering effects of negative emotions. The authors have also experienced this not only at the individual level in coaching but in transformation of the social system by being engaged in the AI Coaching process.

In AI Coaching, when a positive, appreciative context is well established, it is sometimes important to also appreciate a problem or challenge. This can be done with questions to call up strengths that have helped in past difficult situations and lessons learned then that are relevant in the present challenge. Questions can also help the client (and others) to broaden their choices of interpretation and action, to assess what they can and cannot control, what they can influence, and to what they may choose to adapt. What AI Coaching does not do is dig up problems. Rather AI Coaching works with the problem when and if it arises.

Anticipatory Principle

We create what we imagine. As Marv Weisbord says, "If you're going to have a fantasy, why not go first class?" AI Coaching enables the client to create her/his first class fantasy (Dream Phase), with the support of others whose input and support are important to the client's future. To quote Peter Drucker, great "guru" of the management sciences, "The best way to predict the future is to create it!"

Principle of Simultaneity

Change begins with the first question we ask. So AI Coaching begins by asking questions about the best of times and wishes for the future, even in the face of the habitual inclination in our culture to focus on what's wrong and what's missing – to focus on problems. As Barbara Carpenter, a psychotherapist, says, "It's a new now!" And it is in every moment that we are changing and influencing change. AI Coaching is mindful that moment to moment, in every question we ask or statement we make, we are creating the future for good or ill.

Poetic Principle

With the daily demands for productivity in life and work, the poetic, the artistic, the inspirational can easily be lost. In AI Coaching, we begin by asking for stories rather than for lists or ideas. Thus, the poetic principle seeks to give voice to the poetic impulse, to illuminate aspirations and dreams and to create opportunities for deeper connections between people – all toward the creation of a valued, shared future.

Another view of the poetic principle is that of multiple interpretations. Just as a poem can have different meanings for each reader, the poetic principle in AI Coaching legitimizes differing views, expanding the awareness of the coaching client and creating opportunities to deepen understanding and appreciation of those differing views.

Principle of Wholeness[iii]

Wholeness acknowledges interconnectedness rather than divisions. Wholeness has a permeable or flexible boundary and is defined and redefined by the focus on inquiry. So in

AI Coaching, a client may engage his/her manager and his/her staff in inquiry, later expanding this to include colleagues and clients. By engaging the most appropriate and most whole group of people (rather than a sample) in generative conversations, AI Coaching creates widely shared awareness and appreciation of differing views, shared dreams for the future and greater support for meaningful change.

If coaching doesn't include an active interaction between the person being coached and the environment in which the client lives or works, it's not AI Coaching.

The introduction of any new philosophy in organization development processes involves a transitional period when people learn to apply the new philosophy to existing practices; when practitioners walk with one foot in each paradigm. Several articles in this special edition do just this, comparing AI with other schools of coaching and describing how AI and another approach to coaching can be mutually enriching. You will hear how several authors have adapted their approaches to incorporate AI in different ways. At this stage we hear about AI *in* coaching.

Our aim in this special edition of the AIP is to introduce AI Coaching as a full application of AI in its own right. We also aim to illuminate the many ways in which AI Coach practitioners are using AI in their work and combining it with other schools of coaching or using it to support larger change initiatives.

Overview of Articles

Section 1: Foundations – Social Construction in AI Coaching & Overview of Inquiry about AI Coaching

Our lead article by Barbara Sloan, guest co-editor, explores how mindfulness of Social Construction can enhance coaching and the results it achieves. She suggests that it is the primary differentiator between an AI Coaching initiative and other coaching frameworks. Barbara presents guidelines for effectively engaging others within the client's social system in generative conversations that support both the client and the wider organization or social system of which s/he is a part. Using this wholistic approach, individuals and their systems are able to create and sustain meaningful and productive change.

Next, Trudy Canine, guest co-editor, presents highlights from her interviews of 35 coaching practitioners, blended with some of her own coaching practices. When specifically asking coaches about their use of social construction in coaching, she found very few who consciously apply social construction theory to their work. Thus, her article also features some brief comments on how she applies social construction theory in AI Coaching.

Section 2: AI & Other Coaching Approaches: Similarities, Impact on Practice, Innovations and Two-Way Enhancement

It is no surprise that the five principles of AI play a significant role in coaching, as practiced by all of our authors and described in their articles. For most of us, these principles influence every stage of our coaching. Our next article by Bob Tschannen-Moran illustrates how he has applied the AI principles to his "5PC Coaching" in a more linear fashion offering yet another perspective on the significance of AI principles in coaching.

Each of the next four articles explores how a coach trained in both AI and another well-

developed coaching model combines the two. They share with us the similarities between the approaches and how they have combined them to enhance their coaching methodology. They also note questions that arise as they blend the approaches to coaching. Carol Napolitano is trained in Newfeld Ontological Coaching; Diane Newell's eclectic work blends AI, Gestalt and Spiral Dynamics in her Renewal Model of Coaching; Roz Kay and Robyn McCulloch are trained Somatic Coaches with the Strozzi method; and Susan Donnan uses a blend of Co-Active Coaching and AI.

Section 3: Applications & Case Stories
In our last two articles, we focus on AI applications in client organizations. Gloria Henry, an internal practitioner at National Public Radio describes her work in relationship coaching and her work with a senior executive who now uses AI in his own work. We also hear from the senior executive how AI has influenced his work and enables him to coach others more effectively. He feels that his work with Gloria and AI revolutionized his leadership, enabling him to build strong support for a major change initiative. And our final article, by Tom Osborn, is a great story about using AI in Coaching as a part of a change initiative that transformed a hospital department, taking it from "near death" to a thriving, respected internal operation.

In this special edition we hope to help coaches feel comfortable blending AI with all that they already know and, at the same time, recognize the power of full or fuller use of AI principles and practices in coaching. We hope our colleagues will join us in continuing to expand our intentional use of social construction theory in our coaching work. We hope to stimulate dialogue and continued innovation based on a solid understanding of the principles of AI, and in doing so, to enable our clients to realize their fullest potential.

Footnotes

i. In *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination*, Watkins and Mohr added the Definition Phase to the original 4-D Model of AI, which included Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny/Deliver.

ii. *Broadening and Building Through Positive Emotions*, Barbara Fredrickson. Transcript from voice recording. 2002, Positive Psychology Summit

iii. Ken Wilbur describes wholeness in his notion of *nested holons*, in which one level of consciousness is included and transcended in the next level of consciousness, in his book, *A Theory of Everything*, Shambhala Publications, Inc., 2000.

About our Contributors – in order of appearance
Guest editors

Barbara Sloan is a leader in the field of Appreciative Inquiry with 30 years experience in strategic planning, team building and leadership coaching. A founding member of AIC LLC and a co-creator of NTL's AI Certification Track, she has led AI in Coaching sessions at conferences and at the NTL Institute.
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Social Construction in AI Coaching
Barbara Sloan (see above)

An Inquiry into AI and Coaching
Trudy Canine (see above)

Five Principle Coaching
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Personalizing the Power of the Positive: AI and Ontological Coaching
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Building Capacity for Change: The Power of the Body

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Appreciative Inquiry and Co-Active Coaching

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Coaching for Effective Working Relationships

Gloria Chiantella Henry, an Organization Development Manager at National Public Radio, has worked in individual and organization development for 20 years. Her background includes coursework in AI at NTL and The College of Executive Coaching, a Graduate Certificate in Organization Development and an M.S. in Pastoral Counselling.
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AI in Coaching: The Crucial Success Element of a Large Systems Change Initiative

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About the August issue: SOARing to High and Engaging Performance: An Appreciative Approach to Strategy

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Social Construction in Appreciative Inquiry Coaching

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This article explores how mindfulness of Social Construction can enhance coaching and the results it achieves. The author presents guidelines for effectively engaging others in the client's social system in generative conversations that support both the client and their wider organization or social system. Using this new approach, individuals and their systems are able to create and sustain meaningful and productive change.

It's 1985 and I'm well into what looks and feels like a successful coaching assignment. My client, who I will call Sam, is a manager in an international development agency who considers our coaching a success because he has developed new insights about his motivations and behavior, reconnected to his strengths and capabilities, understood the negative impact of some of his past behavior, created a clear idea of what he wants to change and accomplish and made specific plans for how to achieve these goals. Sam feels enlightened. He's sure he knows how to make it happen. Then, the surprise. The very people who want him to change don't like it when he does. They say things like, "Well, I didn't like how he behaved before but at least he was predictable,"; or "This isn't him. It must be just an act,"; or, "This won't last."

And Sam's was not an isolated case. So what was going on? Given all that I knew at the time the coaching had gone very well, the learning was genuine and commitment going forward was strong. Looking back I now see that the most foundational principle of Appreciative Inquiry, Social Construction, could have been used much more fully. Key people could have been engaged in retelling high point stories about their work experiences with Sam. They could have shared in shaping the dream of how he could contribute his best and fulfill his potential to everyone's benefit. And, by engaging in generative conversations about Sam, they would have been more likely to support actively the new behavior and attitudes to enable him to realize his goals.[i] They could even have grown to recognize that they, themselves, had a shared stake in the outcome of the coaching. They might even have realized that they had contributed to earlier success and challenges that created the current situations which led to Sam's need for coaching or enabled him to reach a level of performance that justified investment in his accelerated development.

Relevance of Social Construction in Coaching

With the benefit of an AI perspective grounded in Social Constructionist theory, I now know that thoughtful engagement of others in the process could have created robust support for Sam. And, at the same time, would have strengthened his relationships with people whose insight and support he needed.

Kenneth J. Gergen and Mary Gergen describe social construction as: "…the creation of meaning through our collaborative activities;" and, "As we speak together, listen to new voices, raise questions, (and) ponder alternative metaphors…we cross the threshold into new worlds of meaning. The future is ours – together – to create."[ii]

The people Sam worked with were not engaged in his coaching process other than through conversations between some stakeholders and the coach. There were no conversations with the client and among those in his work community. They simply were not on board with what he was trying to do and were therefore unprepared to understand and support the very changes they had individually said they wanted in his behavior.

> *The community stagnates without the impulse of the individual. The impulse dies away without the sympathy of the community.* William James

Translating this quote into appreciative language and adding to it a bit we might say:

> *The contribution of the individual is the creative impulse. The impulse flourishes with the support of the community. When the community creates together, anything is possible.*

While an individual may be the focus of coaching, real and meaningful change can be more fully realized when the coach recognizes that every individual in a system is an integral part of the whole. Through dialogue, narrative story telling, and the openness created by appreciatively framed questions, a wider group of people can be included in the coaching process. This wider group is identified by the client[iii] and includes people who have a stake in the outcome of the coaching; who have insight and relevant experience with the client (often including his critics); and whose support may be important to the realization of the goals of his coaching.

Recognizing the potency of Social Construction, my role as coach is to establish an appreciative tone and orchestrate generative conversations that enable the coaching client to realize his fullest potential within his social context. In every case the specific ways of accomplishing this are developed with the client. We improvise together based on guidelines that have emerged over time, some of which may seem radical in the context of traditional coaching. I say "radical" because a hallmark of most coaching is confidentiality, an intensely private experience limited, often exclusively, to the relationship between the coach and the client. In contrast, AI Coaching is intentional about engaging appropriate others in the coaching and working with the client to choose the people and groups to engage and how to best engage them in support of the client's desired outcome of their coaching. That said, expanding to include richer "use" of Social Construction[iv] can also enhance the effectiveness of other well developed approaches to coaching.

There are two ways of being creative. One can sing and dance. Or one can create an environment in which singers and dancers flourish. – Warren Bennis

As a coach intent on engaging others in socially constructing the future, my aim is to create an environment in which singers and dancers, my client and his/her social system flourish.

Guidelines for Social Construction in AI Coaching

Socially Construct an Appreciative Tone

It is important to establish AI coaching as a new, whole-system based way of approaching positive change in the individual and the system for the benefit of both. For me, a first step in accepting a coaching project is to establish in the initial contact that the coaching will be framed as a developmental activity demonstrating that the person to be coached is a valued member of the organization and that the coaching is an investment in his/her future to maximize his/her contribution. This is particularly important when I've been called in because the client is in real trouble and may lose his/her job if s/he doesn't make significant change of some sort. I remember all too well when, in an early interview, the colleague of a client said, "So I guess Ellen is in trouble. The last person that got coaching was fired." In this system, coaching had been constructed as the kiss of death. Such situations make it all the more important to establish a genuinely appreciative tone at the outset and in every interaction. It is the coach's job to inoculate the system with new stories about coaching as a positive exercise and to elicit appreciative stories about the client's contributions..

Heighten Recognition of Interdependency

In the very first conversation, it is important to plant the seeds that grow into an appreciation of social construction over time. These conceptual seeds sprout into an increased recognition of interdependence. After hearing the hoped-for outcomes in a particular coaching process, I often say something like: "All of us are affected by the organizations or social systems of which we are a part, and likewise an individual's performance is, to some extent, or perhaps to a great extent, dependent on others. So, while the focus is on one individual, it is important to be mindful of this interdependence and to engage "appropriate others" in ways that expand the client's thinking and awareness, and enlist others in supporting the client's ability to achieve his/her goals. What are your thoughts on this?" Or, "In what ways does this make sense to you?" Then, while asking other AI questions, I take care to draw out the shared aspects of success. For example, I might ask a client's manager how s/he supported the client's ability to excel; or to relate a story about the most effective time they gave the client feedback; or how s/he imagines s/he might contribute to the client's development.

I might also ask, "What are the inherent challenges that anyone in the current situation or position would face?" While this doesn't sound like an AI question, it serves to broaden thinking to include the context and system dynamics, rather than just the effectiveness of the client as an isolated individual. It can help to shift the person being interviewed from a critic to a thinking partner, enlisting them in creating the positive change.

Aim for Wholeness of the Relevant Social System
With the purpose of the coaching in mind, ask: "Who are the people and what are the relationships that are now and will be touched in the future if the basic desired outcomes of the coaching are achieved? Who might have particularly relevant information or an insightful perspective? What is the best way to engage them?"

Aim for Relationship Building
Face to face interviews are best. If this is not possible, phone conversations are next best. If absolutely necessary, even e-mail can be worthwhile, although these take particular care to set up effectively. Get others "in the picture" by engaging them in Appreciative Inquiry focused on the aim of the coaching. For example, in life coaching, the family and perhaps business partners may be important to include. Or for coaching goals about development or performance within an organization, you might include the client's manager, colleagues, staff, customers and mentors.

Get Out of the Way ASAP
As soon as the client is on board with the appreciative approach and feels confident in his/her ability to engage others in the inquiry (which s/he has tailored together with the coach), encourage him/her to have conversations directly with selected people. Sometimes as the coach, I have a preliminary conversation with a person if it seems to be a good idea to set the tone and context for the client's conversation with the individual.

Three circumstances lead me to personally interview key people:

1) When the coaching client is uncomfortable doing the interview or may have a poor relationship with the person;

2) When there is some doubt that the person to be interviewed will be sufficiently candid with the client; and/or,

3) When the person to be interviewed is expected to have a perspective that it is particularly important for me as the coach to understand in order to coach my client effectively helping him/her to appreciate a wide variety of relevant points of view and to see multiple "truths".

Involve Others in Many Phases
The client follows up with appropriate individuals or groups by reporting what s/he has learned in his/her coaching (Discovery), what s/he wants to achieve (Dream) and how s/he plans to go about it (Design). S/he asks for feedback and may ask questions such as, "Have I captured what you think is important? What have I missed that you think is important for me to recognize? What do you like about this plan? Am I on target given your perspective and needs? How can I make it even better?"

Sometimes the client may also ask for specific support. "I have a request for how you could help me do this…." Clients frequently ask for support in the form of feedback on specific behaviors, which also serves to encourage open and supportive communication, even on topics that may have been touchy in the past.

Reporting progress and engaging others in "shared meaning making" encourages honest

dialogue and sets the stage for well supported follow-through in the Destiny/Delivery phase of coaching. For example, one client had established a dream for his future, one element of which was to thoughtfully consider different points of view before leaping to his usual decisive conclusion (described by others as thunderous and intimidating). He asked his team for support in achieving this. To his delight, his team responded by suggesting a high sign whenever he succeeded, a simple thumbs up to indicate that he was on track and that they were noticing. They also suggested a thumbs sideways signal if he was starting to "lose it". In testing this out, he found it a lighthearted and very helpful way to support his efforts to change a long held and destructive habit of behavior. At the same time this feedback modeled the openness, learning and commitment to change that became key elements of teambuilding work he launched later with his staff. By being engaged in their leader's development, his team – his social system – not only accepted but actively supported his changed behavior. Also by opening up his coaching work to include others he set productive ripples in motion in his own team and the larger organization.

See Multiple Realities – Create a Mosaic in the Mind of the Coach
As the coach, I remind myself to see with "social construction eyes," to recognize multiple perspectives and interpretations expressed in the stories I hear. I notice as the many bits of data and the many stories coalesce as mosaics in my mind, some images converge and others diverge. This awareness guides the work with my client, enabling me to help him/her see a fuller picture and to choose thoughtfully the most relevant and generative aspects to support his/her growth and choices. This mosaic can also enable me to help my client absorb important views that s/he has previously rejected or of which s/he has been previously unaware. Occasionally this image of a mosaic helps me to notice holes in the picture, or fuzzy places, either of which can guide questioning that leads to great clarity.

"Here and Now"[vi]
It is tempting to assume that what has been effective with many clients in the past, will be effective for the client with whom I am now working. Earlier coaching experience does provide a rich base from which we may draw, yet it is essential to approach each client as a unique person with unique needs in a unique context and social situation. To this end, when asked for a proposal that outlines my suggested approach to coaching I respond with a generic outline of the approaches developed with other clients. But I emphasize that at the heart of my coaching work is the co-creation of an approach with the client, and sometimes with other key people as well. Creating the coaching "here and now" keeps it fresh, vital and relevant to the client's evolving awareness and dreams. AI principles and generic practices provide the dance floor on which we move.

Enable the Client to "See" Social Construction
My aim is to enable my client to see, plan and act through the lenses of AI, and of Social Construction in particular. "What stories am I telling myself and others? How can these stories be more generative? What questions can I ask others to engage them, to illuminate our shared desired future, to imagine innovative ways to create this future?" This broadened perspective significantly enhances the client's effectiveness long after the coaching has concluded.

The client learns to construct appreciative questions, to engage appropriate others and to hear and consider multiple perspectives before making significant decisions. S/he also learns to engage others in the decision making process when this will serve to create a more robust social construction of the desired future.

Conclusion

Mindfulness of social construction and innovative ways of engaging appropriate others can enhance the results of coaching. By engaging the right people throughout the coaching process – perhaps only a little; perhaps a lot – the social system engages in generative conversations and relationships are strengthened. The coaching client becomes aware of a broad range of relevant views, often by hearing them directly and appreciatively from key people, rather than filtered or distilled through the lenses of the coach. The client also generates true support for achieving his dreams – dreams that others have helped create. Having developed the ability to "see through social construction eyes," the client is well prepared to sustain his own efforts and knows how to engage others in wider systems change.

> *We cannot live only for ourselves. A thousand fibers connect us with our fellow men; and among those fibers, as sympathetic threads, our actions run as causes, and they come back to us as effects.* Herman Melville

Footnotes

i. I wouldn't have had the courage back then to call them dreams.

ii. *Social Construction: Entering The Dialogue*, (2004),by Kenneth J. Gergen and Mary Gergen, Taos Institute Publications

iii. Often the client's manager and HR specialist also contribute to the list of people to productively engage in the coaching, sometimes only through interviews and sometimes more extensively.

iv. "Use" of Social Construction seems a bit odd since Social Construction is going on all the time, whether or not anyone is aware of it or being intentional in its "use."

v. The client described this as "taking his coaching out of the closet."

vi. A phrase the birds have been trained to say on an island that designed to support ideal human development in the novel *Island* by Aldus Huxley (1962, Harper & Row).

An Inquiry into AI in Coaching

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This article highlights results of interviews with 35 coaching practitioners from the United States, Europe and Australia who have integrated Appreciative Inquiry (AI) with their coaching work. The author, herself a coach for many years, also shares her own insights about how AI has enhanced her coaching effectiveness and contributed to her clients' successful results.

In a quest for capturing best practices of coaches who assimilate AI into their coaching, I inquired into how AI influenced and enhanced the work of 35 coaching practitioners. Through appreciative interviews, coaches shared high-point coaching stories, what they value about how AI influences their coaching, how they apply social construction theory to coaching, how AI helps their clients achieve better outcomes and what wishes they have for making the fullest use of AI principles and practices in their work. This story outlines the inquiry protocol, presenting each question followed by highlights of the appreciative conversations and a few of my own coaching practices.

"Tell me a story about your best experience using AI in coaching – a time when your client achieved breakthrough understanding or progress regarding their coaching topic."

Many coaches told stories of times when client's eyes lit up and the air felt electric with infectious energy. One high-point coaching story was Robyn McCulloch's. Her client had involuntarily lost a highly regarded job and was in the midst of a "what do I want to do next" mindset. He was feeling betrayed by his former employer, unappreciated by others he'd led and unworthy of whatever "next" might be. The coaching process ignited openness to new possibilities and the client found real reasons to celebrate and let go of the job to which he had been clinging. This celebration and self-discovery led to a wish to thank past colleagues for what they had given him and disclose what it meant to him. Meaningful conversations ignited a new vision and a renewed self-confidence. The client landed a job as chief musical officer at a major computer manufacturer well known for its positive culture and innovation. Robyn said, "He changed his focus to what he wanted more of – and he got something even beyond what he dared to imagine."

The coaching for him might have included questions like, "Tell me a story about a person in your life whose career was influenced by your insight and leadership ability. What was the situation, what did you do, in what ways did your actions positively impact this person's life or career? When you are at your very best as a leader, what purpose, principles and practices in yourself are most animated? What are the people around you empowered to be like?"

In coaching individuals with similar career quests, Ralph Weickel might ask, "Imagine you are in your car and your favorite song comes on and you crank up the volume – what do

you want to crank the volume on? If you want to do more of that, what do you need to do? When you walk out of the door from work, what puts the smile on your face? It's three years down the road, give me a two page letter on what your day is like." (One client wrote an eight-page narrative!)

"What do you particularly value about what AI brings to your coaching work? What two or three key AI elements especially stand out that strike you as having been the most important in really enhancing your work?"

Coaches value how AI creates a generative coaching framework. It centers on what is uniquely important to each client in the moment, on what is working. The client is the expert; the coach is not a mechanical implementer of an expert model. AI is not a cookbook. According to Maureen Motter-Hodgson, "AI is a beacon that informs my work and my life; it radiates possibilities and repels downward spirals." Coaches appreciate the process of discovering the positive core, the power of generative questions and language, and the transporting potential of positive imagery.

The Positive Core
AI is grounded in the assumption that every living system has a core of strengths – the positive core – that when identified and unleashed provides the direction and energy for transformation. Steve Wolinski says he always looks for creative and effective ways to discover and connect a client's positive core to the overall coaching process. "I simply ask clients to share personal peak experience stories. We then unpack these experiences to find the qualities, capabilities and beliefs that made them possible. I like to have the person narrow it down to the three, four, maybe five they feel are the most compelling. It is helpful and fun to then create some type of graphic representation or a written positive core statement to ground our coaching conversations."

The Power of Questions and Language
AI enhances language both in terms of formulating generative, thought-provoking questions and in choosing words that bring conversation potently alive. This directly influences the dynamics of the exchange. For example, "What would you like to learn today" with AI can change to, "To walk out of here feeling thrilled…imagine you are tingling with unleashed energy…what would we have done together to have you feeling that way?" Or, as Esther Ewing says, "What would it look like if you nailed that – if, like in gymnastics, you were to 'stick the landing'."

The Transporting Potential of Positive Imagery
An element added to my coaching since integrating AI is the emphasis of creative renderings and visualization in both the Discovery and Dream phases. In Discovery, I capture my client's words, metaphors and images through graphic illustration and then present it to him as a gift. This provides another tool for encapsulating client themes in preparation for AI's Dream phase.

I interviewed only two other coaches who incorporate some form of visual rendering in AI's Discovery phase. Coaches speak to the power of positive imagery in their group process work yet, surprisingly, only a handful of coaches report integrating it in the Dream phase of coaching. This presents an opportunity for coaches to consider it in enhancing coaching work.

"How do you see yourself applying social construction theory in your work? Perhaps you could give an example of what this looks like in action?"

After presenting this question I was often asked, "What do you mean? I don't think I understand social construction theory." In a few interviews, the coaching stories demonstrated that these coaches were influenced by social construction theory but hadn't realized it. That said, this research hints that the greatest unrealized potential for AI in coaching lies in the broader and more intentional use of social construction.

Social construction theory is at the core of my coaching mindset. An essential component of the Discovery process involves discovery interviews of the client's boss, colleagues, subordinates (and others) for two reasons: first, to capture valuable stories and insights; second, to socially construct openness to and readiness for accepting client behavioral change, building support in the client's social system. Interviews are conducted by me, the coaching client and me together, or coaching client alone.

Capturing Stories and Insight
Inviting the coaching client to engage in interview discovery is both energizing (gratifying to hear others articulate their witness of past success through stories) and illuminating (revealing to hear key messages directly without the coach's filter). An executive coaching client described her inquiry session as "an exhilarating experience. The first time I've had the opportunity to hear such positive remarks from the COO and CEO." Some clients express concerns that the "bosses" won't be comfortable or honest in expressing their views. Her presence did not impede the officers from honestly expressing their development wishes for her. They conveyed expectations and further, she now had a clearer image of what her leaders meant in requesting her to be "more strategic." The crafting of questions is key to the effectiveness of these discovery interviews.

Socially Constructing an Openness to Change
Interview questions are intentionally formed in a way that helps to socially construct positive coaching outcomes. Good questions help interviewees recall and re-focus on what they value about the coaching client. The inquiry itself positions the interviewee to positively support the client's change and development. In coaching an Engineering Vice President who was concerned about a decrease in his leadership rankings (employee opinion survey), we co-constructed an interview protocol asking for high point leadership success stories followed by questions like, "What do you really value about him as a leader? In what ways has his leadership helped you to grow both as an individual and as a supervisor? If he were to focus on strengthening or improving three things related to his leadership in 2007 what would you

wish them to be? How would you picture him doing that? What might you do to help him with that? What would it look like if he were to master those things?"

"How has AI helped your clients achieve better outcomes? In what ways has AI led to better coaching results?"

The most frequent response to this interview question was that using AI in coaching enables clients to dream bigger. "Clients rarely pause to dream. Sometimes they think pretty small. We help them dare. We help them believe they deserve it, that they are worth it." One of the most powerful things we do as coaches is to broaden our clients' understanding of the kinds of choices they have; we help them see that they have more arrows in their quiver, more strings in their bow.

Using AI in coaching helps clients to stop even for a moment and recognize their own success, often seeing it for the first time. Then clients can envision possibility that is anchored in the wealth of their own capacity.

Here is a compilation of favorite practices coaches use to help achieve desired outcomes.

Practicing the Anticipatory Principle
One fundamental coaching question is: "If this coaching engagement were to be successful, what would that look like?" Jenny Hetzel Silbert would add poetic principle influence: "Let's fast forward six months from now. Our effort was a tremendous success. You are being recognized across the organization, applauded for your efforts. It is not just a plan on your desk or a stack of paper with matrixes and graphics. It is action. It is people in action. It is collaboration in action. You are seeing the evidence of change everywhere you go. What do you see? How are things new or different? What was your role in helping to make this happen? Now let's look backward…and what did you do to get to that…and what was before that? And who helped you do this? And what resources and support did you need to make this happen?"

Reframing Statements
The powerful impact of reframing negative statements that describe what isn't working is by asking, "What is the wish in that?" or as Marlo Derksen suggests, "If you could imagine something better, what would it look like?"

Checking in with the Process
The richness of process check-ins is in both coach and coaching client answering questions like, "What did you particularly value about our time together today? What wishes do you have for our next time together?"

Using Metaphors
Bringing metaphors into coaching work is invaluable. Rob Voyle spoke of a client whose metaphor for her work was the Hubble Telescope. She pictured herself "as a telescope that concentrates light in ways so other people can see things and make sense of what they see.

She takes random, scattered matter and brings the light into focus, helping to create a blessing in a sense that wherever she goes there is more light than darkness."

Appreciative Sales
Rather than force-feeding PowerPoint proposals of coaching prowess or trying to sell "AI in a box" to prospective clients, I achieve fruitful results using AI in the sales call asking a few carefully crafted, generative questions and trusting in the dialogue process. In a recent call with an executive I started with, "What could happen in this conversation during the next hour that would positively influence your decision on hiring a coach?" It led to a dialogue about what she wanted more of and I was hired!

I occasionally hear concern that AI might be a "soft, touchy-feely approach" that doesn't address "the tough stuff." I find AI doesn't avoid or minimize problems, but takes them "head-on" when they emerge, and uses them to co-construct new possibilities or behaviors. AI leverages and builds upon strengths to expand possibilities for moving forward constructively. I ask questions to reveal the value in any topic of inquiry; when a client needs to speak of what is "wrong" with him/it/this I address it directly with, "and how does that serve you? How has that served you in the past?" I initiate dialogue about the learning or the good that can come from the "alleged wrong" and help the client find ways to satisfy the need it served in a more fulfilling and productive way. Mike Sands might ask, "When you got angry, what does the anger want for you?" and shift the conversation to, "What does it say that is wonderful about you – to have that anger perhaps means that you care, you are ambitious?"

"What wishes do you have for yourself or the coaching community as it relates to AI in coaching?"

The most prevalent wish is for assembling a community of "AI Coaches" to learn from one another, build on each other's ideas and share best practices. As coaches, we wish to continue to be intentional about integrating AI in our coaching and our way of being, our world-view, how we bring ourselves to life. We recognize the value of the AI process and the power of full and fuller use of AI principles and practices in coaching.

A widely shared view expressed by the coaches I interviewed is that they do not need to follow the AI 4Ds or 5Ds in a strictly linear fashion. Rather, they weave AI concepts and phases into their coaching as they dance with their clients. Coaches spoke universally of how AI expands and enhances their practice no matter which school of coaching had initially provided the framework for their work. We are all pushing the boundaries to grow our coaching talent and our ability to extemporize skillfully. Accordingly, our field is advancing – to quote a favorite Quaker saying, "the light in me sees the light in you and together we find a greater light."

Five-Principle Coaching

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In this article, Bob Tschannen-Moran explores the meaning of the five principles of Appreciative Inquiry and their usefulness in coaching. Along with the popular "how-to" approach of the 5-D cycle, conscious and specific application of how the five AI principles relate to and work with each other promotes the dynamic shifts and new possibilities sought for by coaches and clients alike. By appreciating the syntax of the five AI principles, coaches know what to listen for and how to coach people for transformational change.

The five principles of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Positive, Constructionist, Simultaneity, Anticipatory and Poetic) are often described in rather esoteric terms as the philosophical foundation for strengths-based change strategies. In contrast, the 5-D cycle (Define, Discover, Dream, Design and Destiny) represents a popular how-to application of these principles for both organizational and personal development. Without seeking to diminish the value and impact of the 5-D cycle, this article describes and lifts up the five principles as practical guides for transformational coaching.

To use the five principles in this way, they need to be understood developmentally. The principles don't coexist in random order; they have an internal logic and a progressive unfolding that coaches can use as both listening tools and coaching frameworks.

Five-Principle Syntax

As a tool for stimulating and supporting transformational change, the image of a pyramid can be used to illustrate how the five principles of AI are related to each other and work together. "How do we get that?" is the operative question as we move from the top to the bottom of the pyramid. This syntax can be understood as follows:

1. The Positive Principle. Most people want to take positive actions and to enjoy positive outcomes in life and work. How do we get that? The Positive Principle asserts that positive actions and outcomes stem from the unbalanced force generated by positive energy and emotion. Newton's first law of motion states that objects at rest tend to stay at rest while objects in motion tend to stay in motion unless acted upon by an unbalanced force. Applying

this law to human systems, the Positive Principle holds that the negative energy and emotion associated with identifying, analyzing and correcting weaknesses lacks sufficient force to transform systems and to get them moving in new directions. At best, such root-cause analyses will correct the problems. At worst, they will cause the problems to spiral downward.

Positive energy and emotion, on the other hand, disrupt downward spirals and build the inherent aspirations of people into a dynamic force for transformational change. By identifying, appreciating and amplifying strengths, people go beyond problem solving to bold shifts forward. Demonstrating "why it's good to feel good," their actions and outcomes become positively charged and profoundly evocative (Frederickson, 2003). Positive energy and emotion broaden thinking, expand awareness, increase abilities, build resiliency, offset negatives and create an upward spiral of learning and growth. They generate new possibilities and identities for both individuals and organizations alike.

2. The Constructionist Principle. If positive energy and emotion hold so much potential for good, how do we get that? The Constructionist Principle asserts that positive energy and emotion are constructed through positive conversations and interactions with other people. Inner work and self-talk alone are not sufficient. The Constructionist Principle takes a holistic view of how people elevate both energy and emotion. This is no "bootstrap," self-help philosophy. This is a socially constructed view of all things human, including energy and emotion. Through our conversations and interactions with other people we don't just interpret and understand the world of experience, we create the reality in which we live. "Words create worlds" is the motto of AI in general and the Constructionist Principle in particular. It explains why positive conversations and interactions generate the positive energy and emotion that lead to positive actions and outcomes.

More than any of the other five principles, the Constructionist Principle makes clear the importance of the social context and other environments in creating the present moment and in changing future moments. Different environments generate different truths and different possibilities. They even generate different dimensions of individual experience, because individuality exists only in relationship to others. Words do not create worlds unless they are shared with others. As Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander (2000) summarize the Constructionist Principle: "It's all invented! So we might as well invent a story or framework of meaning that enhances our quality of life and the life of those around us." We invent those stories and frameworks together, in conversation with others.

3. The Simultaneity Principle. If positive conversations and interactions are able to create positive worlds, how do we get that? The Simultaneity Principle makes the following astonishing claim: conversations and interactions become positive the instant we ask a positive question, tell a positive story or share a positive reflection. Positive questions and reflections change everything. They are themselves the change we seek to make. They don't just begin a process that leads to a positive future; they simultaneously create a positive present by shifting our conversations and interactions in a positive direction. They are not just a prelude to change; they are change. They create the conversations that create the worlds in which we live and work.

Our questions and reflections are fateful. "There are no 'neutral' questions," writes Jacqueline Bascobert Kelm (2005, p. 54). "Every inquiry takes us somewhere, even if it is back

to what we originally believed. Inhabiting this spirit of wonder can transform our lives, and the unconditional positive question is one of the greatest tools we have to this end." Such questions blend continuity and novelty in order to evoke transformational change at the speed of imagination.

4. The Anticipatory Principle. If positive questions and reflections are of such critical importance to the tenor and substance of our conversations, how do we get that? The Anticipatory Principle asserts that our questions and reflections flow from the outlook we hold. In the absence of hope, it's hard to seek out, much less to celebrate the positive. When we anticipate a positive future, however, everything tilts in that direction. Equipped with a glimpse of what things look like at their very best, we become more creative, resourceful and resilient in looking for ways to make it so. Positive anticipation of the future is a proleptic force that perfects the present.

The word prolepsis literally means a forward look, and that's how the Anticipatory Principle works. It takes more than just a vague confidence that everything will be alright; it takes a specific, positive image of the future in order to impact the dynamics of the present. The more concrete and real the image, the more yearning and movement it creates. "Vision," to quote Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, "is a target that beckons" (1985, p. 89). Margaret Wheatley describes vision as a field (1999, pp. 53ff). As such, it is "a power, not a place, an influence, not a destination." It is best served, then, by imbuing the present with "visionary messages matched by visionary behaviors." Anticipation becomes the hallmark and herald of change.

5. The Poetic Principle. If positive anticipation of the future sets the stage for positive questions and reflections, how do we get that? Forming the base of the pyramid, upon which all the other principles are built, the Poetic Principle connects hope with mindfulness, intention with attention. The more we attend to the positive dimensions of the present moment, the more positive will be our intentions for future moments. Becoming mindful of what adds richness, texture, depth, beauty, significance and energy to life awakens us to life's magnificent potential. It's as though life becomes a work of great poetry, filled with hopeful meter, movement and meaning.

By seeing and attending to life's poetry, we become inspired. It's not that problems disappear, but other things become more important. That's because we get more of what we focus on. When we focus on problems, we get more problems. When we focus on possibilities, we get more possibilities. Life's poetry resolves into a spiral of positive imagination. David Whyte captures the heart of this Principle, and of all the AI Principles, in his poem, "Loaves and Fishes" (1997, p. 88):

This is not the age of information.
This is *not* the age of information.
Forget the news and the radio and the blurred screen.
This is the time of loaves and fishes.
People are hungry, and one good word is bread for a thousand.

The following illustration depicts how the five principles of AI build on each other to generate positive actions and outcomes:
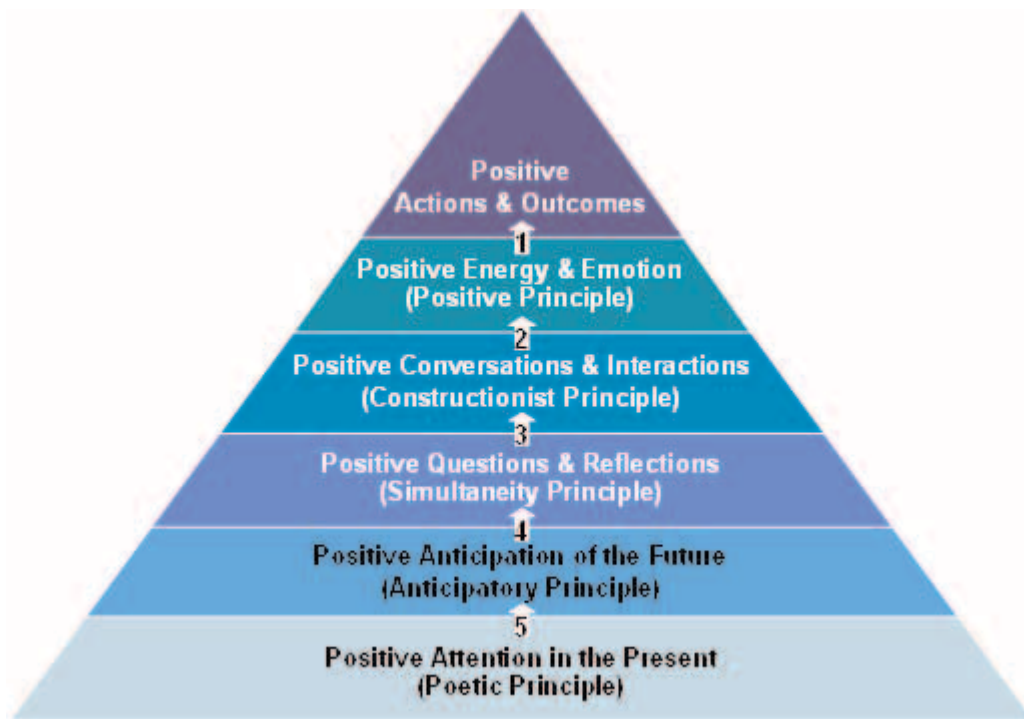
Five-Principle Coaching

By appreciating the syntax of the five AI principles, Five-Principle Coaching (5-PC) knows what to listen for and how to coach people for transformational change. How do clients show up for coaching? If they show up concerned about their actions and outcomes, 5-PC knows to work with their energy and emotion. If they show up with little or no positive energy and emotion, 5-PC knows to animate the conversation with new possibilities. If the conversation drags or goes nowhere, 5-PC knows to ask different questions and to make different reflections. If the questions run aground on the shoals of discouragement and despair, 5-PC knows to bolster clients' self-efficacy and courage. If clients' intentions are weak or distracted, 5-PC knows to redirect their attentions in the present moment.

Working with energy and emotion is not the sole purview of therapists and counselors. Coaches work with these vital human dynamics as well, primarily as they relate to future actions and outcomes. Moving into new territory creates anxiety and uncertainty, even when the territory is both desired and desirable. 5-PC understands this and works with it through a combination of empathy and certainty. By sharing the feelings and needs of clients as they face the prospect of change and by trusting the ability of clients to successfully move through the process of change, coaches enable clients to take better actions and achieve better outcomes. That is, after all, why people retain coaches in the first place. 5-PC assists coaches to make it so.

When empathy and certainty do not generate the requisite forward momentum, 5-PC knows that it's time to change the conversation. There may be skills clients need to learn, frameworks clients need to get, or environments clients need to engineer (to mention only three possibilities). By changing the conversation, 5-PC changes the way clients perceive and relate to the world. They hopefully catch wind of wholly new possibilities that build the positive energy and emotion for change.

That's the spiral dynamic of great coaching conversations: they crescendo into ever more provocative propositions. Clients agree to take on ever greater challenges, en route to the realization of their dreams, as their skills, capacities and efficacy increase. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes this evolutionary dynamic as "flow" (1990, 1997, 2003). 5-PC increases both the likelihood and the intensity of flow by asking positive questions and making positive reflections. It's an intuitive dance, as coaches and clients work together to jumpstart the process of meaningful change.

It's hard not to notice when questions and reflections run aground on the shoals of discouragement and despair. They drop, like lead balloons, without triggering much of anything. Instead of encouragement and hope, clients have an experience of dread. When this happens, 5-PC shifts to conversations that bolster self-efficacy. Following social cognitive theory, such conversations include verbal persuasion, the cultivation of positive physiological and affective states, as well as the consideration of experiences that gives clients a vicarious sense of their capacity for change (Bandura, 1997). By supporting clients' positive anticipation of the future, in both individual and collective terms, 5-PC enables clients to achieve progressively more complex and satisfying mastery experiences.

When clients find it hard to stay focused on or to be inspired by their future intentions, 5-PC shifts the conversation to their present attentions. By noticing critical variables in the present moment, those facets of everyday experience that make the difference between success and failure, clients often unwittingly shift their way of being in the world (Gallwey, 2000). "The astonishing thing," writes Jon Kabat-Zinn, "is that nothing else needs to happen. We can give up trying to make something special occur. In letting go of wanting something special to occur, maybe we can realize that something very special is already occurring, and is always occurring, namely life emerging in each moment as awareness itself" (2005, p. 63). Such is the poetic power of positive attention in the present moment.

Conclusion

5-PC enhances the practice of both AI and coaching by exploiting the connections and developmental applications of the five principles of AI. In so doing, 5-PC makes transformational change both more likely and more substantive. "How do we get that?" is a question that assists coaches and clients alike to realize the fullness of their potential.

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Personalizing the Power of the Positive: AI and Ontological Coaching

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Although Appreciative Inquiry (AI) typically refers to the 4-stage (Discover, Dream, Design, Destiny) methodology originally designed to facilitate whole-system change, one of the strengths of the appreciative approach, broadly considered, is its applicability in a variety of developmental situations including coaching in general and ontological coaching in particular. This essay explores the complementarity between AI and ontological coaching and offers some examples of how elements of AI can be incorporated in an ontological coaching conversation and, conversely, how ontological distinctions can inform the AI process.

Shared Features of AI and Ontological Coaching

Ontological coaching or, what Alan Seiler refers to as "coaching to the human soul,"[i] starts with the premise that each of us is constituted in terms of a dynamic interplay of body, language and emotions otherwise known as our way of being or "observer." The coherence that develops over time in any observer manifests as a particular perspective, a "default" way of engaging the world that predisposes the individual to certain actions and corresponding results. (A case of "Sylvie doing Sylvie" or "Juan doing Juan.") Core to the ontological coaching model is the belief that what is most powerful in working with coachees involves not so much focusing on accomplishing shifts in behavior but, rather, on helping coachees become more astute observers of their *way of being*.

Herein we can begin to see the many features AI and ontological coaching share. At the most fundamental level, both are dedicated to transformational change based on the assumption of pre-existing strengths. AI refers to these as the "positive core" of the system; similarly, ontological coaching views the coachee, regardless of how stuck he might feel, as essentially whole, worthy and capable. Both AI and ontological coaching facilitate self-discovery, confident that the answers lie *within* the system or individual. Both approaches use stories as a compelling source of learning – in AI about what enables peak moments; in ontological coaching about how an individual translates his/her experience linguistically. Additionally, ontological coaching attends to the multiple discourses such as historical, ethnic, familial and generational that we live in as a way of understanding how our observer is formed.

Both AI and ontological coaching subscribe to the social constructionist tenet that what we take to be reality is *what we perceive* from the observer that we are, not what *is* in some objective sense. Both feature language as pre-eminent and generative in shaping our reality. In the *appreciative* approach, affirmative questions are posed to elicit the discovery of existing strengths as potential for moving into bold possibilities; in ontological coaching, *assessments*

(linguistic interpretations) are distinguished from *assertions* (facts) as a means of revealing to the coachee the implications of his/her linguistic choices to the extent that they limit or expand possibilities. So, in the same way that AI recognizes that "our words create our worlds," ontological coaching maintains that our assessments are not "innocent" – the words we use to describe our experience generate our present reality and influence the direction of our future reality.[ii]

Another element common to AI and ontological coaching has to do with the principle of simultaneity which claims that change occurs *in the moment*. With respect to AI, the nature of the questions asked sets in motion a path or direction for the system. In the case of ontological coaching, the coachee becomes a more powerful observer of her observer which can instantly open up new moves. To sustain progress toward the desired end, both AI and ontological coaching incorporate a process whereby supportive structures and practices are co-created.

Sample Coaching Applications

The power of such rich complementariness is the potential AI represents to extend the range and power of ontological coaching conversations. This can occur as simply as inviting a coachee who presents a negative or limiting assessment (e.g., "My staff let me down when they challenged my proposal") to try out an alternative assessment from an affirmative place (e.g., "My staff cares enough about the success of my proposal to give me honest feedback"). Or, in the course of a coaching relationship the coach might engage the coachee in a more full-blown AI process as a means of discovering meaning, learning from defining events, clarifying values relative to a decision or creating a personal vision.

For example, in the case of a professor who was ambivalent about putting himself in the running for a deanship at a prestigious but beleaguered business school, the coach used a mini-Appreciative Inquiry to help the coachee determine what mattered most to him in terms of professional satisfaction. As the result of a discovery process in which the professor recalled the high points of his career and enabling factors, several themes emerged: he cares deeply about mastery, autonomy, creativity, low administrative burden, connectivity with students ... *and* the ability to step out of the norm (which he described as not liking to "follow dance steps"). All of this would suggest that he might be happiest staying in the classroom teaching and pursuing the kind of research and case study development that has brought him considerable success. On the other hand, he found that he likes variety (which shows up in his personal life, as well, as a penchant for sampling new restaurants, new places and new books), loves the pursuit of something novel and craves recognition. (With respect to the last of these, he acknowledged having already won all the awards the school offers to professors so that he has been, in effect, "taken off the list"). He also acknowledged that he holds a strong value of service and leadership to the institution with which he has been affiliated for many years and a nagging restlessness that no amount of analysis could still: "I can't put the deanship issue to rest." So in spite of significant political and organizational risks and the realization that he might be sacrificing some of the things he has most enjoyed as a professor, he decided to proceed with candidacy, was named acting dean for a year, and is now fully installed as dean, navigating the challenging dynamics and competing interests of multiple

AI Practitioner

constituencies in pursuit of a bold vision for his institution.

With another very mature coachee who was seeking to move on from a long professional career and find a new, more open-ended path, the coach inquired into times when the individual had felt most alive, most energized, most nourished in spirit. A third coachee made a breakthrough when she was encouraged to envision how she would like, ideally, to work with her staff in response to her story of her team under siege, struggling to come to terms with escalating pressures and the "unreasonable" demands of a new boss following a companywide reorganization.

A Point of Departure

In spite of the many shared features of AI and ontological coaching, it is perhaps important to note that there is a difference in their respective entry points. Whereas AI starts with stories of exceptional moments – times when we have been at our very best (relative to the topic of inquiry) – the entry point for ontological coaching is the "breakdown" which, though meant to refer to any break in transparency (or obviousness), positive or negative, typically presents as a problem scenario. The relevant consideration, however, is that the problem story does not become a focus for the coaching; rather, the coach uses the assessments the coachee brings about the situation as a means of shining a light on his/her observer and, in so doing, helping the coachee move to more expansive possibilities.

The Prospect of Synergies

Although the thrust of this essay to this point has been about what AI has to offer ontological coaching, it is also worth considering the reverse: what the ontological approach might have to offer AI. One possibility that suggests itself is the incorporation, in AI interview protocols, of questions that address the three domains (body, emotions and language). Exploring the somatic, emotional and linguistic nuances of peak experiences can enrich learning during the discovery process, enliven the dream phase and inform the design effort.

Conclusion

Clearly, there is a high degree of compatibility between AI and ontological coaching. The strong overlap in philosophy and approach affords synergies across the methodological elements particular to each. As coaches and facilitators our interest is to serve our coachees and client systems as well as possible, so the richer the mix of resources we can bring to bear, the greater the potential for our intervention. When we couple the appreciative approach with ontological coaching we deepen and expand our ability to touch the soul of the coachee, to tap into unrealized promise and to bring forward new hopes, new dreams, bold goals, greater capability and more powerful results.

Footnotes

i. Alan Seiler, *Coaching to the Human Soul*, Newfield Australia, 2005.

ii. With regard to the way in which current assessments influence future reality, ontological coaching also reflects the anticipatory principle of AI.

Coaching for Renewal

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Post-modern-leadership, well adapted to today's complex shifting organisations, demands that leaders bring themselves to work with skill to foster organisational renewal. To do so leaders must practice renewal themselves, and the work of the coach becomes to foster renewal and practices of personal renewal in their clients. What is post-modern leadership, and what does it demand of the leader? What is renewal, and how can a coach work to foster it as a practice? And what are the implications for coaches themselves? This article explores the concepts and shows how an appreciative approach underpins coaching for renewal.

The world that our clients lead in is complex and often ambiguous. To be successful they must foster success in intricate organisations, with competing values systems and narratives and alliances with multiple stakeholders. We, and others, describe this characteristic state of complexity and ambiguity as "post-modern".

As our understanding of organisations in this post-modern world has shifted so has the leadership narrative. From expecting leaders to "know" or "find out" the right way to direct an understandable and "engineerable" organisation, we have moved to exploring a leader's role in shaping meaning for a fluid, organic organisation. From investigation of the traits that good leaders show, the competences they need and the behaviours they should adopt we have developed a more integral consideration of how leaders "are" – how they successfully bring their whole and unique selves to others to create insight, inspiration, vision and ultimately change.

This places a greater demand on the leader's development. No longer is it enough to grow expertise, knowledge, skills and behaviours. Now we are demanding that they constantly review and revise how they "are" as well as what they do. We call this process of growing how you "are" *renewal*. In this article I hope to share what we at Jericho Partners have learnt from our experience of working to foster renewal in our clients and how we believe the philosophy and approaches of Appreciative Inquiry inform and support coaching for renewal.

Developing how you "are"

There are many models and vocabularies of growth and development. One that we find particularly useful for talking about renewal is Spiral Dynamics.[i] Spiral Dynamics assumes that both individuals and organisations develop their narratives of the world and their mind-sets over time in response to changing conditions. An individual or system is "healthy" when it is capable of growing as the conditions it faces change, and "well adapted" when its mind-sets and narratives meet the challenges it faces.

AI Practitioner

In the Spiral Dynamics model there are stages of development, broken into two "tiers". A leader showing a first tier mind-set is driven by his individual need to be "right", or to be the "best", or to belong. By contrast leaders showing mind-sets from the second tier are free from those individual needs but driven by their impact in the system, by a need to foster healthy systems and effective solutions for their organisations,[ii] to be of service to the wider community or address issues of global concern. The inset below describes leaders with mind-sets from the two developmental levels that are defined as "second tier" by Beck and Cowan.[iii]

Post-modern organisations need leaders who are healthy and well adapted to post-modern conditions of complexity and ambiguity and who can foster the health and adaptation of the organisation to post-modern conditions. Post-modern organisations need leaders who are capable of renewal, and at least some leaders who have second-tier mind-sets.[iv]

Developmental Phase	Characteristics	Leadership Assumptions
YELLOW driven by creating meaning	Concerned with flexible, effective adaptation to change Openly shares information Drives for effective use of people and resources Seriously enforces ethical codes Seeks to create peer-mentor networks to challenge and enrich their world-view	People are diverse, and work best when they are in a role that stimulates them, where they have fun Managing resources well allows us to do more People are motivated by learning – information should be freely available to those that need it Conflict is inevitable, can be constructive and creative Change is constant, all organisations are transitory
TURQUOISE driven by service	Demonstrates concern for and impact on global issues, and a capability to read and seize historically important moments Shows a desire to contribute to the well-being of humanity, of the world and increasing interest in the spiritual aspects of life and work	There is a meaning, a greater truth that we are part of and exists within Emotion and information enhance the understanding each of the other

Table: Post-modern developmental stages from Spiral Dynamics

We have found that Spiral Dynamics informs our coaching in a number of ways. It helps us to frame questions that investigate where a leader currently is, where their assumptions and drives are coming from, and whether they are in the process of consolidating within a particular level or experiencing transition between levels.[v] Coaching is particularly powerful

for clients experiencing transition, when they are rejecting previous assumptions and finding new ways of being. We have also found that the client's coaching need, and therefore the coaching that is most effective with a client, is shaped by their developmental stage, skills or performance coaching being most appropriate for earlier stages, developmental and transformational coaching becoming more appropriate in the later first-tier and second-tier stages.

Developing through renewal

What is actually happening in renewal? The model in the diagram below illustrates our narrative of "renewal". Like any model this oversimplifies and makes it seem like a linear progression whereas it is a far richer, more complex process.

For renewal there must be insight – clarity about the world, and my or our impact in it. To be responsive to change we must see "what is" and "what is emerging". To respond to change we must understand how we contribute to what is and be able to identify how that might be different.

Insight leads to awareness, but that in itself is not enough to create change. In order for there to be change there must be "readiness" – an ability to identify and free ourselves from the limiting assumptions, habits of mind or practice which hold us in our old patterns of "being". Only then can we truly commit to making change and begin to develop an "authentic vision" of what that new way of being will bring.

This "authentic vision" is compelling, but rooted – a new way of being that we are ready and able to move to. The motivation that gives that vision energises us to take action to make change. As we complete the change we are in a new place, we "are" different; we understand the world differently. This is an important moment for rest and reflection, to allow the satisfaction which change creates to be enjoyed even as we begin to develop insight into the world anew.
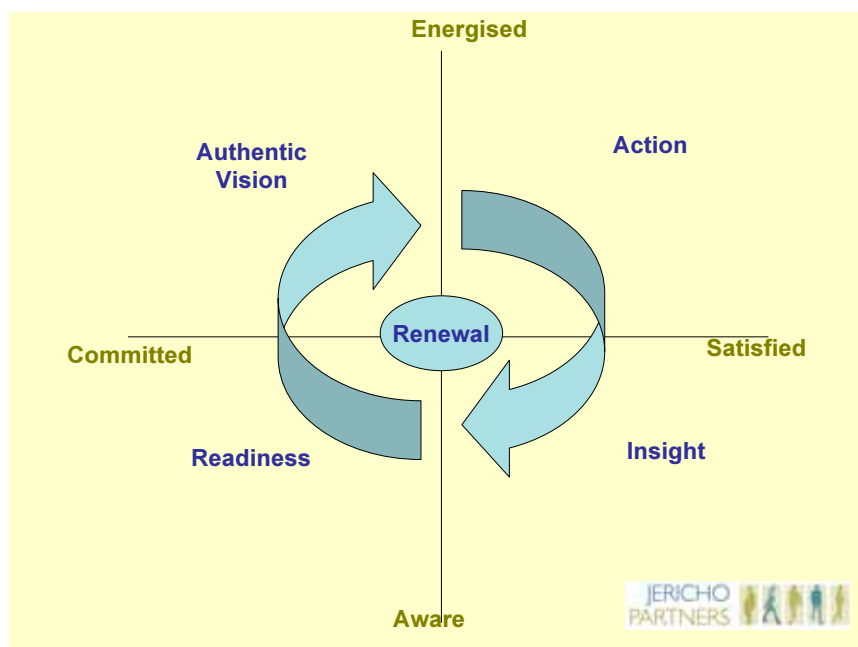

Figure 1 – Model of renewal

AI Practitioner

Appreciative Inquiry in Renewal

What makes the difference between a healthy individual or system and one that is stuck or "arrested" in its development? Why do some organisations and leaders renew themselves and others fail to adapt? The process of renewal can be slowed or stopped by many things but it is most often, in our experience, broken or slowed by lack of commitment or lack of energy. Appreciative Inquiry, adopted as a coaching approach for renewal, is powerful in avoiding those brakes because it leads to the right choice of inquiry, provides positive energy to overcome blocks, a vivid and compelling dream of the future and positive support for action.

Insight – The right choice of inquiry:

The appreciative coach guides the choice of inquiry in a positive way. By asking "When are things great?", "When are you being the leader (or the team) that you want to be for the future?", the coach structures an inquiry which has two features that will foster renewal:

     a. Inquiry into a change which is already experienced, at least sometimes,
        to some extent

     b. Inquiry into a change that the client is motivated to pursue.

So, some part of developing commitment and energy is already there in the choice of inquiry subject, what Jane Watkins and Bernard Mohr call "a fateful choice".[vi] The appreciative coach continues to build awareness by asking questions that help the client to recall vividly, to tell the stories of those occasions, to examine what was happening and feel again how they were being in that situation.

Readiness – A positive look at blocks:

The need to develop readiness and overcome blocks to change is a tricky subject for appreciative practitioners and is sometimes avoided for fear of giving weight to the negative energy that blocks can create. However if there are blocks, such as the client's limiting assumptions or fears, and they are left un-named and un-addressed, it will be difficult for the client to sustain commitment and energy for change in the longer term.

We address this by asking questions that are freeing. Rather than ask negative questions, "What stops you…?", which emphasizes the bonds that hold us to old ways of being, we ask positive questions about the client's experiences of being the leader they want to be such as "What was there about the times when you were like this that made it possible?" and "How were you feeling at that time?" The coach is able then to ask "How could you be/feel like that more often?" For example one client recognised that they were able to be courageous when they felt adequate, confident, recognised. They recognised that they were not hampered by feelings of inadequacy, lack of confidence or need for recognition when dealing with a particular group of peers, but were with others. So how could they get the feelings of adequacy and self-confidence with more of their peers? What could be different? How could they be different? As clients pose and answer these questions they begin to change – by seeing how they could be, they free themselves, become more open, more able to change.[vii] Habits of mind can be hard to break, and the coach may need to help the client to stay with this freeing process, recognising where they use the "new" ways of being, and what the positive outcomes are as the process of renewal continues.

Authentic Vision – Dreaming the future:

David Cooperrider says "Compelling visions of the future create action"; and Peter Senge talks about the power of "mental rehearsal" in overcoming our inbuilt brakes on change.[viii] The energy released by creating dreams or visions of the future is familiar to all Appreciative Inquiry practitioners, and is based on asking "what would it be like if it was like that all the time?" In coaching for renewal the appreciative practitioner is able to build on the questions that have been developed in inquiring into readiness. Following the example above we asked "What would it be like if you were a confident and courageous leader all the time?", "What would it mean for you? For your team? For your organisation?" The energy and power of that positive vision fuels the client in acting to make and sustain the changes needed to bring it into being. The work that has been done in creating awareness and commitment means that the vision is authentic. By "authentic" we mean that the client is free to make the change envisioned and that making it will have value for the individual client or team, for the organisation or its stakeholders.

Action – Supporting action:

The coach's work doesn't end with commitment and energy. Sustaining change goes deeper than envisaging it and many things can impinge on clients' efforts to be different. The appreciative coach works with their client to recognise what works, why it works and how they can get more of it, as well as addressing new challenges and obstacles that might come up through the process. It is vital that clients get to experience the positive satisfaction that comes from making change, rather than constantly seeing what hasn't been done, or moving on to the next challenge, otherwise they may not be able to sustain the energy needed to complete the change. Our often highly action-oriented clients can see this as unnecessary or self-indulgent. We see making space for this reflection on what has worked, and helping clients see the power of satisfaction in sustaining energy, as a key part of our role as appreciative coaches.

Coaching to sustain renewal

Not every leader we work with shows, or needs to show, second-tier mind-sets. In many circumstances, in many organisations, leaders driven by competition, but capable of adaptation within that mind-set, are very successful. However, as organisations face more post-modern conditions we believe operating from second-tier mind-sets will be demanded from more leaders. This means that an ongoing process of renewal, of freeing themselves from bonds that hold them and of addressing their individual needs until they are free to attend to the needs of the system, will be key to the success of leaders and their organisations.

As well as coaching clients through a process of renewal as described above, the appreciative coach can assist clients to develop a practice of renewal that will sustain their development into the future. In every part of the renewal process there is the opportunity to inquire positively into the source of the renewal energy that is released, to help the client to see what practices they have, or could adopt, to get more of that energy and to give more of it to others. For example in Insight we are able to enquire into the sources of awareness with

questions like: "How did you know you were making that positive impact?", "How did you see that opportunity?", "What other areas might you get insight into from that source?", "When do you give similar feedback to your team?", "What was the impact?", "How might you make that part of your leadership practice?", "What would it be like if you did?", "What will you do differently?"

As a result we develop commitment to change in practice that keeps the leader renewing.

Coaches need renewal too

The practices of renewal are as important for us as they are for our clients. Not just because we should "walk the talk" to be role models for our clients, but because we too need renewal to foster renewal in others. We need insight into our impact on the world, to free ourselves from bonds that hold us to old ways of being and to develop powerful and authentic visions of how we will be different. And we need to pay attention to implementing change in ourselves and in our practice. Coaches give a lot of energy out into the world and it is too easy to become part of a whirl of client-focused activity – loving it, learning from it, feeling vibrant – and then suddenly to discover that you are exhausted, "flat" and stressed. What's happening? Why is everything OK for a while and then not?

We believe that the same thing happens to us as happens to leaders and organisations when they don't pay attention to their renewal. Over time, as the world changes, what was well adapted becomes less so, but we don't notice, or we deny it, or we avoid doing anything about it until suddenly we find ourselves out of sync, badly attuned and in need of urgent change. This "urgent change" requires much more energy, and often at much more cost than an ongoing process of renewal would have taken. In the extreme this creates a barrier to renewal that can lead us to give up, to "throw the baby out with the bathwater" as we abandon what is positive in order to get away from what holds us back.

At Jericho Partners we are learning about renewal and learning about renewal practices for ourselves and for our clients every day. We hope that this article gives you some insight into your own renewal practices, and how you bring renewal to your world. We look forward to continuing the conversation.

Footnotes

i. Spiral Dynamics is based on the work of Prof. Claire W. Graves, and was developed by Don Beck and Chris Gowan. *Spiral Dynamics – Mastering Values, Leadership and Change* is a complete reference for those interested in pursuing this further.

ii. Spiral Dynamics stresses that each stage of development flows from all previous stages. We do not leave our previous selves behind and we cannot speak of people, or organisations, as being "in" a particular phase. We can only speak of mind-sets as coming from a level of development. I might show a post-modern mind-set in my work as a leader, but a modern "expert" one in my role as a parent.

iii. Spiral Dynamics names different developmental levels as colours, such as Yellow and Turquoise, in an effort to reflect that each is equally valid and appropriate to particular life stages and circumstances. The assumption to be avoided is that later levels are "better" than earlier levels, or that everyone "ought" to aspire to turquoise. What matters is healthiness, ability to adapt and grow, and being well adapted to life conditions.

iv. I recommend reading the description of Spiral Wizardry in the Beck and Cowan's book.

v. We also use a web-based questionnaire with some clients that gives greater detail about their developmental stage and driving values.

vi. *Appreciative Inquiry – Change at the Speed of Imagination* by Jane Magruder Watkins & Bernard J. Mohr, published by Jossey-Bass Pfeiffer.

vii. David Cooperrider describes this as the principle of Simultaneity – Change happens the minute you ask the question.

viii. *The Fifth Discipline – The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation,* by Peter M. Senge, published by Century Business.

Building Capacity for Change: The Power of the Body

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This article explores the integration of Somatic Coaching, a coaching process working on, with and through the body, with Appreciative Inquiry as a means to engage the body more deeply in the process of Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny. This blend of AI and Somatics contributes to cognitive and physiological shifts leading clients to recall what they care deeply about, gain clarity of purpose and connect to their values, while engaging mind, body and spirit in a commitment to action. Clients create generative, life-affirming interpretations with depth, velocity and acceleration as they move forward in their world.

What is Somatic Coaching?

Somatics comes from the Greek word "soma" meaning "the living body in its wholeness." Somatic Coaching as defined by Richard Strozzi-Heckler[i], thought and practice leader, and as learned through the Strozzi Institute's Somatic Coaching program, has the coach work with the "historical, biological, social, spiritual, linguistic and emotional aspects unique to individuals." The body is held as an integral informer in initiating, enacting, and sustaining change. The process brings about change by working "through the body" to awaken senses and feeling, bringing us more alive, present and open to possibility.

> *The body, in the somatic sense, expresses our history, commitments, dignity, authenticity, identity, roles, moral strength, moods and aspirations as a unique quality of aliveness we call the 'self'. In this interpretation the body and the self are indistinguishable.* Richard Strozzi-Heckler

Most of us are trained to function in our daily lives from the neck up. We learn to trust our mind more than our body as we take action in the world. Without the integration of mind and body, we lose valuable information gained through self-awareness that allows us to be an integral player in the experience of life. We may fail to express our full presence or aliveness. Early in life we gain experience of the world through sensations. Before language, our sensations produce energetic reactions – cries calling others to attend to our hunger, diaper, pain or fear. We are conditioned by these early experiences – how we take action and how others respond to us. These and other life experiences shape us and later influence our choices and actions. With the introduction of language we can access words to express what we need or want and no longer rely solely on body sensations to inform others to respond. As we shift to more cognitive explanations of our experience, the body becomes an often ignored or undervalued part of the self.

By attending to our body, we develop a higher level of self-awareness. Our physical sensations and prior conditioning influence our behavior and experience of the world. Through body-centered activities, including deep breathing, meditation and new movements, we awaken our self to discover new choices, to engage with our self and others in a new way and to exercise volition. We move more effectively toward what we care about

– we are clear on our organizing principle and how our actions will serve us. With commitment to recurring practices, we begin to embody a graceful and powerful presence.

Appreciative Inquiry and Somatic Coaching: Pathway to Change
In AI coaching, the client identifies her positive core-strengths and values needed to flourish, to be fully alive. As she experiences the process of *Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny*, she reconnects with the "best of what is." She imagines a powerful, compelling future and through coaching she develops capacity to reframe challenges into opportunities, thereby generating a wider variety of positive options for action.

Somatic Coaching introduces an emphasis on the body by inviting the client to *attend to* the body, to bring *awareness* to its sensations, conditioned tendencies and structure. The client is invited to engage the "whole person," including the typically undervalued somatic aspect of self, in the *discovery* and *dreaming* process. Through in self-observation of the body, she increases her capacity to reshape and reframe stories allowing her to discover a broader array of *choices*. With somatic practices – body centered activities – she gains discipline in mind and body to exercise her will, or *volition* toward the *dream* and moves with focused attention into sustained *action*. By *attending* to mind and body the client creates a higher level of *awareness* which leads to greater *choice*, *volition*, sustained *action* and a profound sense of *accountability*. She develops the capacity to take a stand for what she cares deeply about.

With both AI and the Somatic Coaching approach, clients feel and experience the connection of mind and body. Blending AI and Somatic Coaching provides the pathway to overcome fear, elevate mood and connect physiology and affect, thus tapping wisdom and energy to effect positive change at the core. The approach opens the client to the relevance of the body, thereby raising self-awareness, awareness of others and widening options for action.

Discovery/Attending to and Awareness:
- **Preparing for the interview by attending to the body**: Before initiating the Appreciative Inquiry, the client learns the fundamental practice of *centering:* to be present, open and connected. This involves aligning the body in three dimensions: along the vertical axis of length representing dignity; the horizontal line of width representing the social domain, relationships; and front-to-back representing depth, where we hold our core principles. She is encouraged to breathe more deeply to broaden her capacity to hold more possibilities. The coach inquires into the client's mood, a bodily phenomena influencing her behavior and revealing her orientation to the world. The client notices the stance of her body, her thoughts and her energy to reveal the quality of her being in that moment.

When listening to another person, don't just listen with your mind, listen with your whole body. Eckhart Tolle

- **Inquiry:** With a centered presence, a deeper connection opens the listening and strengthens the coach/client relationship. She is able to pay attention to what is unfolding in the moment, observing the self, taking note of the strengths discovered through inquiry and the physiological effect of the experience. With greater awareness of her physical sensations, she elevates her capacity to reshape her being, reframe stories and reproduce energy when needed to sustain momentum. She gains a somatic sense of what she truly desires. In addition, she learns the value of attending to her body as a means of increasing self-awareness.

Dream/Awareness and Choice:

- **Declaring a positive future**: The client reflects on her description of her powerful future and shapes a declaration for the future, similar to a provocative proposition, rooted in what she passionately cares about. She creates an image of the future that is clear and compelling. The somatic declaration is grounded and centered and felt in the body. The commitment underlying the declaration is observable in the body; she speaks powerfully; she is clear and grounded; her voice comes from deep within her body.
- **The collision of the dream and fear**: The declaration or dream, when powerfully reflected in the body, can bring her to where "fear and dream collide." This is the moment when she recognizes that to enact the future changes in familiar structures of mind and body are required. Structures of mind include habits of thought, stories we tell, and interpretations we make that we slip into believing are true. Structures of body include our presence: how we hold ourselves, mood, patterns of tension, muscular contractions and/or energy blockages. She knows now that success requires an alignment of strengths – mind and body – to engage wholly in creating the future.

Design/Choice and Volition:

- **Choice**: The client makes powerful design choices aligned with the dream and supporting her declaration. Adding standing somatic practices offer her the opportunity to build awareness and strength in the body to hold commitment and to extend her will to achieve the envisioned future.   Standing somatic practices are physical moves designed to help the client build the muscle she needs to focus, extend, ask for what she needs and to decline requests that keep her from achieving her goals.
- **Volition**: The client defines her Conditions of Satisfaction as metrics for success in moving forward. Volition, the act of exercising the will, is essential to taking new actions and fulfilling commitments. Building the client's capacity to express volition in body and mind allows her to make real progress toward the dream/declaration.
- **Standing in the declaration**: The client receives somatic assessments from the coach – feedback on how she is holding the declaration or commitment, which helps the client center herself "for the sake of what" she is making the declaration. Here if a breakdown occurs it is evident in the collapse in the body as she reverts to conditioned tendencies.
- **Designing the body for action**: When the client is challenged to uphold her

commitment she is faced with old embodied habits that no longer serve her. The body doesn't lie; muscle memory delivers an automatic response. Despite her intention to behave differently, she finds herself repeating old patterns and ways of being. She wonders why people fail to hear her requests or acknowledge her declines. She wonders why she is stressed and overwhelmed.

With conscious attention, the client feels the impact of the old patterns and is invited to design novel practices of movement, meditation and expression to literally reshape the body into a more powerful presence. Through practice she builds strength, backbone and courage in the body. The energy released creates new opportunities and new actions. With recurring generative practices, her structure shifts. New behaviors are reinforced and there is increased momentum. She develops emotional resilience, endurance, flexibility and the balance needed for breakthrough results as she holds a leadership presence that engages others in helping her fulfill on her declaration.

> *Why is it that our body knows the truth? The body has its own wisdom. The body is built for integrity. The body's intelligence is wired for and moves toward wholeness. When we awaken all the systems, we create alignment. The key to high performance is being truly aligned.* Ronald Jue

Destiny/Action and Accountability:

- **Action:** Acting on commitments builds muscle for sustainability. The client takes action in generative physical practices, which help her reshape the body, alter her mindset, develop strength and broaden capacity to sustain change. The coach supports her with dynamic questions as she works through and experiences herself in action.

- **Accountability:** During coaching, if there is a breakdown in practices, promises or commitments, the client is accountable for discovering what happens in the body that keeps her from "going for" what she wants. Reviewing internal conversations (the stories she tells herself about herself) and her physical sensations leads her to reframe her narratives and elevate her awareness of physical energy blocks. She readjusts by revising actions and developing new practices to make conscious choices in alignment with her declared future.

Bringing the body into full awareness through the AI process and Somatic Coaching is a journey along a path of discovery that challenges, disorganizes, excites, reorganizes and energizes with every step taken. With a strong declaration of a positive future aligned with what we care about and a body designed to support our success, we are readily able to have choice, volition, action and accountability; in short, to realize our highest potential.

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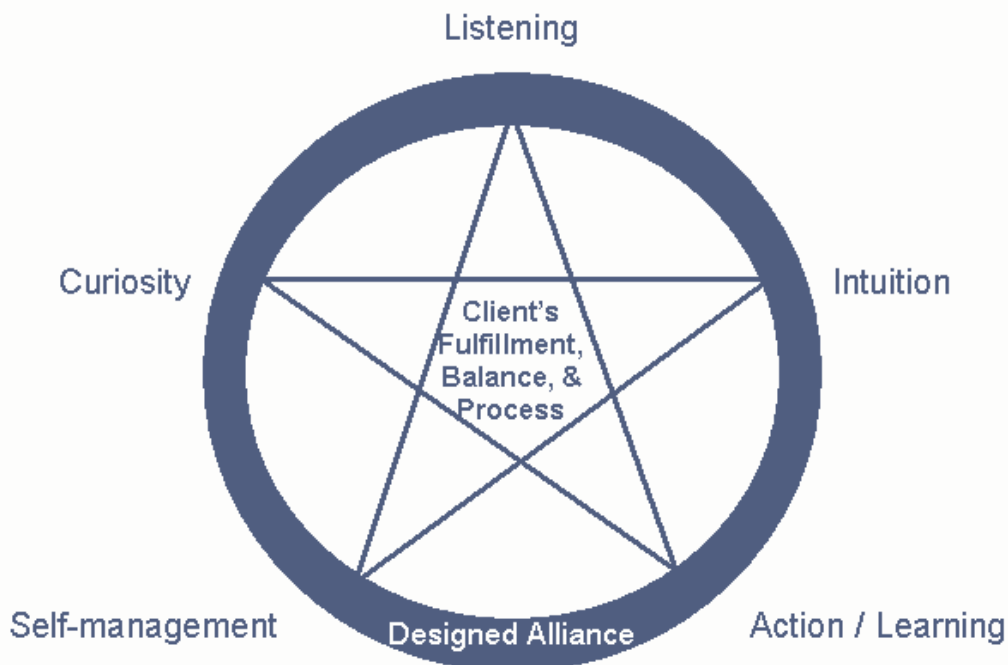
Appreciative Inquiry and Co-Active Coaching

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This article explores the Co-Active Coaching Model through the lens of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). From a process perspective, we compare Co-Active coaching with the Five-D cycle of AI. From a philosophical perspective, we compare Co-Active coaching with the Five Core Principles of AI. Finally, how AI and Co-Active Coaching enhance each other is briefly discussed.

The Co-Active Coaching Model

Listening

Curiosity

Intuition

Client's Fulfillment, Balance, & Process

Self-management

Designed Alliance

Action / Learning

The Five-D Cycle of AI and the Co-Active Model

- **The Define Phase**: The Co-Active Model begins with the designed alliance where the coach clarifies the coaching agenda and co-designs the way of working with the client. Two cornerstones of the Co-Active Model are "coaching is about the client's whole life" and "the agenda comes from the client". The Big "A" agenda is who the client is becoming and the small "a" agendas are the specific circumstances and objectives that the client comes to coaching for. The coach or the client can redesign the alliance at any time.

- **The Discovery Phase**: After designing the alliance, the coach inquires into the client's peak experience to discover her values and passions. A future-self visualization can be used to tap into the client's highest ideals and aspirations for herself. The coach references the client's positive core throughout the coaching process.

- *The Dream Phase*: In Co-Active coaching, we believe that the client is always moving toward greater fulfillment, balance and aliveness. The simple act of choosing to honor one's values and going for what one truly wants is in itself fulfilling. Like the use of visual image of the desired future and provocative proposition in AI, the use of the whole person, metaphors and emotions are emphasized. The coach uses her curiosity and intuition to dance in the moment with the client.

- *The Design Phase*: When the client is committed to a desired change, then an action plan is developed by asking her questions like: "What will you do?"; "What do you say YES to?"; and "What do say NO to?" Each coaching session ends with a request for actions and/or an inquiry for further reflection. The coach supports the client by holding her accountable for the agreed-upon actions or inquiry.

- *The Destiny Phase*: "Deepening the learning" and "forwarding the action" are two sides of the same coin. There can be no learning without actions and vice versa. A client who is stuck usually requires some learning about her assumptions, attitudes or beliefs that are preventing her from getting the results she wants. In deepening the learning, the work is more in the inner world of the client. Armed with new insights, the client then needs to take actions in order to test her new assumptions, attitudes and beliefs; to get a reality check; and to get feedback from her environment. In forwarding the action, the work is more in the outer world of the client. Based on this feedback, the client can then gain new insights and can redesign new actions. Hence, the cycle of deepening the learning and of forwarding the actions continues.

The Five Core Principles of AI and the Co-Active Model

- *The Constructionist Principle:* The principle of Balance in the Co-Active Model is used when a client is trapped in a disempowering perspective ("the way it is" or "this is how it must be"). Using the perspective wheel, the coach helps the client imagine, discover and explore different perspectives. The client is then empowered to choose compellingly from a stance of possibility and abundance.

- *The Poetic Principle*: In Co-Active Coaching the coach encourages the client to be brief. The coach gets to the heart of the matter by listening with all her senses, using her intuition and articulating what is going on. She is listening for both resonance and dissonance in the client: what is said, what is left unsaid, and the expressed and unexpressed emotions. The use of metaphors and of all the senses of the client to explore emotions, to deepen the personal experience, to visualize possibilities and to plan future actions is indeed poetic.

- *The Positive Principle:* Another cornerstone of the Co-Active Model is that the client is naturally creative, resourceful and whole. The coach holds the client in an unconditionally positive regard. The client has the answers and can find the answers. The client has no dysfunctions and does not need to be fixed in any way.

- *The Simultaneity Principle*: In Co-Active coaching, powerful questions are open, exploratory and from a place of curiosity. They challenge the client's thinking, enabling her to discover new answers, new perspectives and new insights.

- *The Anticipatory Principle*: When a client is paralyzed by fear and self-doubt, the

challenge is to turn down the voice of her saboteurs as well as to reconnect the client with her positive core and her vision of the desired future. To call forth a client is to let her feel known and seen; to invite her to own and live her magnificence; and to encourage her to feel the fear and take action anyway. The three Co-Active coaching skills used to call forth the client are: (1) acknowledging who the client is being or becoming; (2) challenging the client with an unreasonable request to breakthrough limiting beliefs; and (3) championing by the coach's absolute belief in the client.

Experience from the field
Both AI and Co-Active coaching emphasize the "being" part of the coach. They are both philosophies to live by as well as processes and skills that blend well together. They both provide the framework for coaching and leave space for improvisation.

The Dream Phase and the Constructionist Principle of AI strengthen the Co-Active model. The Co-Active Coaching principles and skills make space for the inclusion of the messy and unpleasant parts of the client's life as well the easy and pleasant parts. They offer effective tools for breaking through difficulties and negative emotions. AI and Co-Active coaching, when used together, create a formidable strategy for enhancing coaching efficacy.

For example, a client came to coaching because he was in a job that gave him tremendous traditional success on the outside but left him deeply empty and unhappy on the inside. We began our coaching by discovering his strengths and values, and by dreaming about a brand-new career completely unrelated to his current profession. When it became apparent that the client was unable to take actions to create the desired change, we began to explore his revenge fantasies, his inner saboteurs, his need for a compelling end to his story and the fact that he was the author of his own stories. It was not sufficient for the client to be dissatisfied with the status quo, have a clear vision of the future and a plan to get there. He also had to take the time to grieve his losses or disappointments and to heal from any negative emotions.

Learning AI and Co-Active coaching has been a transformative experience on my continuing journey of self-as-instrument. The corollary of holding my clients naturally creative, resourceful and whole is to hold myself the same as a coach. The corollary of living appreciatively out there is to live appreciatively in here. My vision is to continue to integrate AI and Co-Activity into my work and my life.

SECTION 3: APPLICATIONS AND CASE STORIES

Coaching For Effective Working Relationships

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This article outlines the AI coaching process an internal consultant uses to enhance working relationships at NPR. It is interlaced with a case study and reflections by the Senior Vice President for Programming on his use of this approach on a daily basis. Details are given for prepping participants for a joint coaching meeting, as well as follow up.

As I write this article my mind goes to a time I had with five preschoolers on a very cold winter day many years ago. We all had cabin fever and were tired of bundling up to go outside to play. We'd been snow-bound for weeks and decided to do something different. The kids arrived with swimsuits, sunglasses, buckets, shovels and beach towels. We played with sand in the form of packing peanuts, sang "Down by the Beach," watched "The Little Mermaid" and lay on towels basking in the warmth of the winter sun through the windows.

The children told stories of being at the beach and shared their dreams about next summer. We lost ourselves in that out-of-season play so much that by the end of the day when the kids were leaving, we felt surprised to still see snow on the ground. Coaching to enhance working relationships using Appreciative Inquiry is based on some of the notions we used to create a day at the beach in the middle of winter. An image created from the best of the past and hopes for the future becomes so vivid that it seems all we have to do is step into that next summer.

During my time at NPR, I have coached staff using an AI approach to improve their working relationships. By working relationship I mean any connection between staff members where a strong interdependence is necessary to bring about a deliverable. The relationships may be peer-to-peer, supervisor to direct report or virtually any working relationship across divisions and multiple layers of the organization.

My work with one pair, we will call them Gordon, a supervisor on a news desk and Phyllis, a reporter, illustrates the process described below. Additionally, Senior Vice President for Programming at NPR, Jay Kernis, and I have partnered on several projects that included coaching to enhance working relationships. His insights, included here, convey how a leader applies AI coaching on a daily basis. As external consultant Barbara Sloan and I have collaborated on coaching many working relationships and our joint learnings are interwoven in this article.

Outcomes for AI Coaching For Working Relationships

The outcomes for using AI for enhancing working relationships have astonished me. Although not a panacea of perfect dialogs and results, these practices have created enough of an opening to fruitfully engage in conversations that were long overdue. When Jay took the role of Senior Vice President, staff began coming to him with their concerns about working with others, thinking he could "make it better." Through learning AI coaching techniques he came to realize what all coaches must learn: we cannot guarantee that all will turn out "well in the end", that all concerned will be forthright in our work together, nor that the leader will be in the right from the beginning to the end. But we can create the highest likelihood that all be heard, that the hopes and talents of all come to light, and that the best conversation possible will occur.

Most significantly, when the conversation shifts to hopes and dreams, to life-giving forces and to competencies, it creates a respectful environment that encourages participants. What most amazed me about this approach when I first used it was that what was once impossible to discuss became safe or at least could be thoughtfully broached. In the end, the best and most realistic plans can be set in motion even with various challenges and limitations by participants.

How Coachees Get To My Door

Coachees arrive at my door in a variety of ways. An employee may approach me after I have facilitated a meeting, pull me into their office for a conversation, be referred by another member of Human Resource or be referred by a former coachee.

The work with Gordon and Phyllis began with an urgent call from Gordon, the supervisor. He had been approached by Phyllis regarding a voicemail message he had left her. Phyllis told him of her displeasure at his condescending tone, his erroneous accusations and his disrespect for her contributions. Gordon immediately apologized. At the same time, he said he had concerns about her decisions and resulting actions. Phyllis told Gordon that, while he may have concerns, the manner in which he delivered the message was "over the top." Because Gordon and I had previously worked together on coaching regarding leadership, he decided to give me a call.

Who to Coach?

When coaching, I work with the first person who contacts me, the primary coachee (PC). From Michele Werner-Davis's practices in Brief Therapy, I borrow the wisdom that when one person's behavior changes, the relationship changes. Very often, I work with pairs or triads in a working relationship. With Gordon and Phyllis, I met first with Gordon.

The First Meeting With The Primary Coachee

My first goal when meeting with the PC is to elicit hopes and desires for a preferred future. Like Gordon, the PC usually starts from their concerns. Almost immediately, I ask the PC what it is like when this relationship is at its best and what will it be like when it is in an even better place. At times, I directly ask the PC to shift from the problem to building on strengths and defining a preferred future. The degree to which I make a nuanced shift as opposed to

an overt shift from a problem focus to an appreciative perspective depends on several factors. Basically, I test the waters, asking about the best of the past and hopes for the future to see if the client is willing to shift.

If the client is anchored in the present concern, I make another probe. I say something like, "I have a bias in working with individuals on working relationships. The best outcomes emerge from being solution focused. This requires both taking the best from the past and being future focused. If you have a concern, that means you have an ideal in mind that is not being met. We will clearly define that ideal and map out how to get there."

Once we have done a general exploration of the preferred future, the PC needs to decide if he/she would like to involve others in coaching. If yes, I ask the PC whether he/she would like to approach the other person(s) or whether they prefer that I approach them. If the PC is going to meet with the other person, we work together to prepare him/her for that conversation. The PC will ask the other participant(s) to meet with me. If I am the one to make the initial contact with the other person(s), I first make a call to the other(s). I let them know that the PC has asked me to contact them regarding building their working relationship. I meet with the other participants, having a conversation like the one outlined above with the PC. At the end of the meeting with the PC, I give I give him/her a Reflective Exercise (Figure 1). I also give the Reflective Exercise to the other participant(s).

Many PCs choose to do the Exercise before deciding whether to involve others. The Reflective Exercise may be done as an interview or as a solitary experience, depending upon the participant's preference.

Gordon started our initial meeting by saying that he had lost his temper in the voicemail message to Phyllis. He was aware that, at times, his manner was abrupt. But he very much valued and respected Phyllis' work and was concerned that he had done irreparable harm. I began probing the strengths of this working relationship by asking when the two of them had faced a challenging situation that they had negotiated successfully, what did each do to make that happen and what about that occurrence could be borrowed to bring about the best future. Additionally, Gordon and I revisited our prior work on keeping cool when the situation was hot.

I gave Gordon a customized Reflective Exercise and we discussed how he would approach Phyllis to ask her to participate in a process that would culminate in a facilitated joint conversation with Gordon and me. Phyllis agreed to participate.

What is a Success?

As part of the initial conversation with participants, we discuss what success will look like at the end of this coaching process. This is laid out on two levels, one being the preferred future for the client, which comprises the major part of of this article. The other level is what is a realistic outcome of coaching a working relationship. Many PCs ask for a guaranteed success: "If I follow the AI process, things will be better." Others want to impose their will on others: "If I can get this other person to just do what I want them to do, things will be better." The most realistic outcome is that if we all center on what we are good at and also work to reach the best outcome for us all, we will figure out the best path for us as individuals and for us in our working relationship. There is no guarantee that you will end up where you thought you

would at the beginning. As Jay put it to me, "You kept me honest…It was not as simple as saying 'if you ask these questions, there will be a happy ending or the ending that you want'. But, along the way, at least there will be honesty and people will see the image of the best outcome. "

Gordon was most interested in remaking the working relationship with Phyllis. Phyllis wanted to be treated with respect and to be valued as a contributor. Their goals were congruent and both were willing to complete the Reflective Exercise that would lay the groundwork for a joint conversation.

Figure 1: The Reflective Exercise

    A. Consider an occasion when you were most proud of your contribution to your joint work. What did you value about yourself? What else do you bring to your work that you value?

    B. Consider a specific time when the other person contributed to your joint work in a way that you valued? What did you value? What else do you value in the other person?

        a. What is the purpose of your joint work?

        b. When this working relationship is at its best, what qualities does it have? What qualities will it have? Describe behaviors and outcomes.

        c. What do you offer to do to create this preferred future?

        d. What do you request the other person does in the working relationship? What do you ask of peers, supervisors and the organization?

        e. Summarize your responses. Be specific for c & d.

The Debrief

After participants complete the Reflective Exercise, I meet with them individually to a debrief which prepares the participants and me for a joint meeting: I ask the participant:

- What surprised you as you did this Exercise?
- How excited are you that your responses to c & d in the exercise will result in the preferred future?
- Do you want to involve others in this coaching process? If no, I work with the PC on an individual action plan. If yes, I meet with the other participants, giving them the Reflective Exercise.

In the individual debrief, Gordon said that Phyllis' talents and knowledge were critical to the vitality of the news desk. In response to item "c" in the Reflective Exercise, he had mapped out a very specific process he would use to check in with Phyllis when he had questions or concerns. In the individual debrief with Phyllis, I learned that what she valued about her contributions and the requests she planned to make of Gordon mirrored Gordon's offers.

The Joint Meeting

    a. In advance, note convergences and divergences that emerged in the individual debriefs.

    b. In the meeting, reiterate that the focus will be on creating the preferred future.

    c. Let the participants know you will note action items.

    d. Ask the participants to notice how they find themselves reacting to what is said.

Encourage them to remain curious, to question assumptions underlying their reactions and to ask open ended questions of the other(s).

e. Rotating through the participants, each says:

1. What they value about the other(s) and themselves.

2. What they see as the purpose of their joint work, listing qualities, behaviors and outcomes that will be present when the working relationship is at its best.

3. Their offers and requests.

f. Participants question each other for clarity and understanding.

g. All of the participants review and confirm the action plan, including who, what, when and the status for each activity.

h. I tell them that follow-up meetings are crucial to sustaining enthusiasm and progress.

After I outlined the flow of the joint meeting when Gordon, Phyllis and I sat down, the two of them alternately read statements about value, purpose, qualities, behaviors, outcome, offers and requests. They quickly realized that they were in synch on most points. We clarified understandings and mapped out what they would do to live into this preferred future.

The Follow-up

Meet with participants to review progress on the action plan. Focus on affirming successes and refining the action plan.

In follow up calls to and a joint meeting with Gordon and Phyllis, they found that their plan worked. They followed outlined steps when dealing with hot spots. Plus, they found that the skills they learned in coaching applied to collaborating in other areas of their work together.

Jay's Thoughts and Adaptations

Jay Kernis and I met to discuss his ideas on what makes using AI coaching work for him. On whether to educate participants about AI during the coaching experience he says, "For those who are curious, fill them in later." As Jay was a hungry participant during his first encounter with AI coaching, I briefed him on theory and he read on the subject, too. In retrospect he says that, "It was like reading a map and trying to look at the scenery at the same time." For Jay, a smoother process would have been to experience being a participant in AI coaching and then to have learned the AI theory as he prepared to coach others.

As far as how to speed up the process, Jay shares an executive version of the working relationship coaching process:

When someone shows up in my office, I ask, "How can I help?" I listen to concerns. This is what is in their pocket. They need to get it out. As soon as possible, I pose the question, "Would you mind if I shift the conversation?" Then, I inquire, "When did the relationship work? When was it at its best?" If the response is that it was never good, I ask, "If you could imagine it was really wonderful, what would be happening?" Next, I suggest that the employee goes to the other person and lets them know when things were really working and to

discuss what it would take to get them both back to that space."

When an employee isn't comfortable having such a conversation, Jay will go and have an open conversation on behalf of the PC with the other person.

Questions Create a Firm Image

Jay's experience using AI for coaching to improve effective working relationships confirms what we know about its application to changing systems, "The most powerful thing you can do is give those who want help the best of the past and have them define what it would take to get them there in the future." He relies heavily on the knowledge that, "The questions create a firm image of what it was like and what it can become." This vivid image paired with an action plan prepares participants to step with hope into their next summer.

AI In Coaching: The Crucial Success Element of a Large Systems Change Initiative

Tom Osborn
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This article describes how AI coaching was the crucial element of success in a large hospital turnaround project. Weaving one-on-one coaching with the Director of Women's Services and system-wide appreciative interventions, we see how a department that was not achieving its target business results moved from "near death" to a new beginning and "rebirth".

The Presenting Situation

Sitting in an office of a major metropolitan hospital, I was being interviewed by the VP of HR along with the Director of Women's Services and the Director of Learning and Organization Development. It didn't feel like an interview at all. Each of the three was taking turns telling me stories about how bad the Women's Services department was and how nasty the nurses could be with one another, the physicians, management, and occasionally patients and families. Although I attempted to ask appreciative questions, I was told story after story, with specific details, about the negativity of the staff, low morale, continual turnover and generally intolerable working conditions. It appeared as if there was competition between these three leaders to "out do" one another's negative stories about the department.

I interjected several questions about previous efforts to turn things around and inquired about their familiarity with Appreciative Inquiry. I was summarily told they knew all about AI and that AI would not work here. The negative stories from these leaders continued. The department was seen as "near death". Patient loads had dropped substantially; efforts to build business back to profitable levels had failed. They saw their only hope as recruiting a new group of Obstetrical physicians who would bring their pregnant patients to the hospital for delivery. The potential new physician group had heard all the negative stories and rightfully wanted to know what was being done to turn things around. After the "dumping" from the three leaders slowed, I was asked if I really understood how bad things were in this department and if I had the skill sets to help turn results around. I took a deep breath and I answered "Yes".

I explained that often I get called into situations when organizations are seen as being in deep trouble and nearly broken. I shared several stories of success using strength-based approaches. My positive turnaround stories seemed to satisfy them. I explained that rebuilding this department would take a multi-faceted approach and their unqualified support. I left that first meeting wondering if things were really as bad in Women's Services as they portrayed.

Redefining the Situation: A Clear Picture of Current Reality

In my proposal, I began with a summary of their need:

The hospital has an opportunity to grow their Obstetrics (OB) business and attract a new group of Obstetrics-Gynecologist (OB-GYN) physicians. Current service levels do not support this growth opportunity. Patient satisfaction measurements have declined significantly, the nursing staff is not seen as committed to service excellence by physicians and management, and improvement efforts have been unsuccessful. There are relationship issues between the nursing staff and physicians as well as historical turnover and instability in their management. There have been recent gains in one-on-one relationships with the current management, but the group as a whole is not performing at expected levels. Central management expects a strong, unit-wide commitment to service excellence, significantly improved teamwork and high quality inter-group working relationships.

Balancing My Preferred Approach of Appreciation with "Where the Client Was At": The Recommendation

As I thought about my approach to this work, I found myself in a dilemma. As an AI practitioner and teacher, I approach my work in ways that lift up the positive, strength-based assets of an organization, focusing on what works rather than trying to fix what doesn't. In my current situation, however, I was faced with negativity and cynicism at extreme levels. I was working with an organization deeply steeped in the medical model of assessment, diagnosis and treatment. My dilemma was in how to proceed. I decided to position myself as meeting the client "where they were at" and recommended we proceed in two phases (knowing fully well that I would be beginning an engagement of "stealth AI"):

Phase 1

Phase 1 of the project would begin with an assessment of the current situation in the Labor and Delivery, Post Partum and Neo-Natal Intensive Care units of the hospital, using an action research model. The data gathering was to be seen as an important initial step in the improvement process and designed for maximum stakeholder engagement. I asked for a planning session with the champions of the project to clarify specific objectives and project outcomes, define roles, agree on specific action steps, identify key stakeholders and address concerns. I asked to conduct one-on-one interviews and focus groups. I agreed to summarize the data from interviews; complete an in-depth review and co-formulate a turnaround plan with the project champions.

Phase 2

Depending on the results of the assessment phase and client agreement, Phase 2 could include, but would not be limited to:

- Ongoing consulting to the central management team
- Building leadership capacity to lead the change
- One-on-one coaching with the leader(s)
- Designing a comprehensive communications plan
- Team development
- Inter-group development (between units/physicians, etc.)
- Organizational analysis and design
- Design and training of identified skill development areas
- Agreement and design of evaluation to assess the success of the consulting interventions

After several clarification meetings, my proposal was accepted and work began. The Director of Learning and Development later shared that had I made any other proposal, it would not have been accepted. To do the work, I needed to meet the client "where they were at", acknowledge their brokenness and recommend a diagnostic model. They did not want to see Appreciative Inquiry in the recommendation – although that is exactly the work that I proceeded to do successfully.

Getting the Data and Feeding It Back

In one-on-one and focus group data-gathering sessions, I asked appreciative, strength-based questions yet negative stories continued to flow. People seemed determined to talk about brokenness. I listened, took notes and at the end of each session, asked for their hopes and wishes for the future. Everyone was concerned about the decline in business and wanted to grow revenue. Many were concerned about the possibility of management making the decision to close the unit. All wanted to build an organization where the staff work well together as a team to provide excellent patient care and customer service. We had a starting point! And of course, it involved telling stories of when they had experienced themselves working together as a team to provide excellent patient care and customer service.

I reported the results of my interviews to the Senior Leadership Team with specific recommendations for moving forward that were accepted:

- One-on-one coaching with the Director of Women's Services
- A feedback session for all employees led by Senior Management, to show my findings, present the case for change and lay out the plan of action going forward
- An off-site training of a core group of staff representing all departments and levels in the organization to conduct an Appreciative Inquiry with that group…and potentially develop an organization-wide intervention to interview all department employees
- Continued work to develop leadership to lead the change

AI Coaching: The Crucial Element of Success

I entered my coaching work with the Director of Women's Services from a system perspective. My objective was to establish a partnership between her, the department and myself to facilitate learnings for her and the department as a whole, and to achieve identified business results. As the leader, she was charged with a major turnaround of Women's Services. As the consultant, I was charged with coaching, teaching and helping to facilitate that process. That involved coaching her to an understanding of the impact of her leadership style, developing more effective leadership behaviors, her becoming a better coach to others and improving team development. Together, we had a major challenge with the turnaround. My plan was to introduce strength-based, AI approaches, starting with coaching her.

From the beginning, I had an excellent relationship with the Director. We were open to one another, respected each other and held a high degree of trust. She was open to my coaching and eager to listen to my insights. We voiced our concerns about the project and working together, shared our work styles, discussed our goals and opened up to one another about our values and views about the positive nature of people. When I challenged her with probing, complex questions, she explored her thoughts and feelings, answered with candor

and honesty, reflected on her responses and learned. She was willing to listen to my feedback and grow and change.

Moving into her role as the Director of Women's Services some eight months earlier, she inherited a department that thrived on telling negative stories. One of their favorite stories was how they had "run off" the five Directors ahead of her. Unfortunately and unintentionally, as she stepped into this unhealthy culture, she began repeating the stories and became the chief negative story teller extraordinaire. This otherwise positive person was getting payoffs from the system for telling everyone, including senior management, how bad the department was. In almost every coaching conversation, she would begin by telling me the worst story she could about her department and its dysfunction. "You can't believe…" were often her opening words. I challenged her pattern and asked why she was telling the stories – and what impact she thought they had. She struggled with her answers and that struggle took a period of time for her to come to terms with learnings that were significant enough to turn those negative story telling patterns around. She was the lynchpin to the turnaround of the larger department and the use of AI in my coaching was the crucial element of success.

Weaving One-on-One Coaching and Systems Work Together

Over the course of eighteen months, I continued coaching and teaching throughout Women's Services. At our first off-site session with staff representatives, I introduced Appreciative Inquiry, including the power of social construction. I designed and facilitated an inquiry into what first attracted these nurses into healthcare, their values, their best experiences as nurses and their hopes and wishes for the future of the department. As I listened to the nurses' stories, time after time I was overwhelmed with emotion as I heard about these (s)heroes (they were all women) and their extraordinary care for their patients. The nurses cried with one another as they told their stories, reclaimed why they had been attracted to nursing and how, time after time, they met the challenges of life and death in the delivery room with compassion, sensitivity, teamwork and a genuine concern for their patients and families. Where had these positive, uplifting, heroic stories been? Why had the system developed a culture where everyone wanted to tell stories of brokenness and failure?

The Director of Women's Services, who I was coaching one-on-one, was involved in the larger group interventions. Weaving from our one-on-ones to larger group work, she reclaimed her own passions for nursing; her own values; her own stories of extraordinary patient care and her own image of dreams and visions for the Women's Services. She was also getting in touch with the power of positive stories and the life-giving dynamics they generate.

The System Wide Intervention

We launched a campaign to conduct an appreciative interview with over 80 department employees – the interviews were conducted in thirty days Positive stories of excellence in customer care were being told, replacing the stories of brokenness and negativity. Nurses were sharing truly inspirational reasons for being called to their profession. They were sharing positive personal and organizational values with one another. Most of all, they were

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aligning their hopes, wishes and dreams into a vision of the department they wanted to become.

I was delighted to see the leader and her staff experience, understand and integrate into their ways of being with one another, the power of generative, life-giving, appreciative approaches. The combination of one-on-one coaching with the Director and the organization-wide appreciative inquiry integrated new learnings about the power of the stories we tell in experiential ways that were transformational. They "saw the light" and understood that negative stories fueled a negative culture - and the key to turning the culture around was to tell stories that supported the culture they wanted to build. They had been living, for years, in a default culture of negativity. They understood that together, they could build a positive culture of choice.

Project Outcomes

This project is one of the highlights of my consulting career. I was able to coach, to teach, to do interventions and to see results. I witnessed first hand behavioral change on the part of the leader. She developed an increased awareness and understanding of herself and the impact of her role on the organization. She understood the concepts of social construction and the power of story-telling. She saw and appreciated the power of positive image. She witnessed positive action on the part of her employees to work toward a shared vision. Most importantly, she was able to solidify her role as a highly effective and successful leader of Women's Services.

In a lead article of the hospital's newsletter, the headline reads "Patient Satisfaction, Associate Engagement Up in Women's Services". The Director is quoted as saying "This process really has provided a jump start for us to improve our results. Including staff in their own improvement processes is definitely worthwhile". The Gallup Survey results reflected an increase in associate engagement of 15%. Survey participation, an important indicator for Gallup results, increased 25% and overall satisfaction on the job increased a dramatic 83%. Most importantly, we find the generative, joyful and life-giving energy of a socially re-constructed new beginning – a "rebirth" if you will – of Women's Services in our closing story.

Toward the end of our work together, we arranged for a meeting with the President of the hospital to share our work results. He was leery. In previous employee interactions, he had felt attacked and unsupported. We wanted to share a brief overview of the process and a few stories of extraordinary customer service. He listened attentively as several nurses shared their personal stories. They ranged from an OB nurse tenderly meeting the needs of a woman who had just experienced a fetal-demise delivery, holding and nurturing the lifeless baby for hours until the mother was emotionally able to let the child go, to neo-natal nurses nurturing a premature baby for weeks on end and establishing such close relationships with the parents that one of the nurses was asked to be the child's godparent. The president left that meeting, after two hours of heroic stories, with tears in his eyes. At his staff meeting the next morning, he boasted of his outstanding Women's Services department…and the great customer care they provide!

About the August 2007 Issue:

SOARing to High and Engaging Performance: An Appreciative Approach to Strategy

Guest editors Jackie Stavros and Gina Hinrichs

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Why are some organizations successful at creating and sustaining positive momentum in leading strategic change while others make a great start but fail to execute? Hint: It starts with a highly engaged and engaging leadership team. Learn how to accelerate your strategic planning sessions and processes by using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as a guiding approach to best inquire into strengths opportunities, aspirations and measurable results, imagine the most preferred future, create innovative strategies, plans, systems, designs, and structures, build a sustainable culture and inspire organizational stakeholders to SOAR!

Since the 2003 AI Practitioner issue on AI and Strategy, SOAR has emerged as an effective and flexible strategic framework that releases an organization's energy, creativity and engagement. This is what is needed to respond to and anticipate today's global environment in which organizations operate.

This issue is designed for those who want to get a solid grounding in the key concepts and practice of strength-based strategic thinking, planning and implementation. The SOAR framework and approach will be provided along with several case studies from organizations demonstrating its application and positive impact providing measurable results both financial and performance improvement. The issue will conclude with the positive results of SOAR, where it is being used around the world, and how you can incorporate SOAR into corporate, business unit or functional strategy.

We are inviting case studies (1000 words limit excluding references, graphs, tables, and/or figures) that highlight

- How you have used SOAR and its impact in different environments
- What led your client or organization to this approach
- How you have integrated SOAR with existing strategic planning methods or models and/or other "classic methodologies" such as project management, lean principles, scenario planning, etc …
- How stakeholders have felt when applying the SOAR framework
- The results and surprises people experience while using the SOAR framework

Case Study Format:

The Story: background of the case study what led up to the need for this "strategic initiative"

The Strategic Initiative: the who, what, when, where, why; how many people involved and key objective(s)

SOAR and AI Application: application of SOAR and any other methods or concepts

Milestones and Results: key milestones; success moments and what was created; key results – measurable (if possible); and areas of performance improvement

Summary of Learnings: observations; insights into what would enhance the situation; the value added of the SOAR framework and its 4-I approach (inquiry, innovation, imagine and inspiration)

We will send any case contributors the original article on SOAR plus a sample case written for the AI Handbook.

Timetable:

Outline of proposed case study to Guest editors: 16th May 2007
Response from Guest editors: 26th May 2007
Final case study to Guest editors: 18th June 2007
Abstract (100 words max), bio (50 word max) and bio photo to Guest editors: 18th June 2007

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY COACHING

Lincoln, England 24-28th September 2007
with
Barbara Sloan

This workshop is designed for coaches who are familiar with AI principles and practices, experienced AI practitioners who want to expand their work to include coaching, and managers who want to learn how to use AI as they coach their staff members.

There is a one-day course on 23rd September for those people who have not taken one of the prerequisite courses.

There is an early bird rate until 1 July 2007. For the workshop brochure or to register for the workshop(s), contact Mette Jacobsgaard 101572.622@compuserve

For questions about the content and design of the workshop, contact: Barbara Sloan
Phone: 001 540-338-3811 Fax: 540-338-4480 E-Mail: Barbara@sloandialogs.com

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Anne Radford
CONSULTANT IN STRENGTH-BASED CHANGE

Strength-based Leadership:
Applying Appreciative Inquiry Principles and Process

| AI WORKSHOP | November 15-16, 2007 | | INFORMATION |

Purpose of the Workshop

The workshop will address the significant paradigm shift in leadership, by

§   Looking at the changes taking place in leadership
§   Reviewing the contribution of "classical" leadership models
§   Accepting the challenge to think systemically and lead through language and dialogue

Workshop leaders:
Julian Rizzello and Anne Radford

Date and Venue:
15 - 16 November 2007, London

For more info, visit www.aradford.co.uk
To register for the workshop, visit http://www.aipractitioner.com/NewShop/courses.htm

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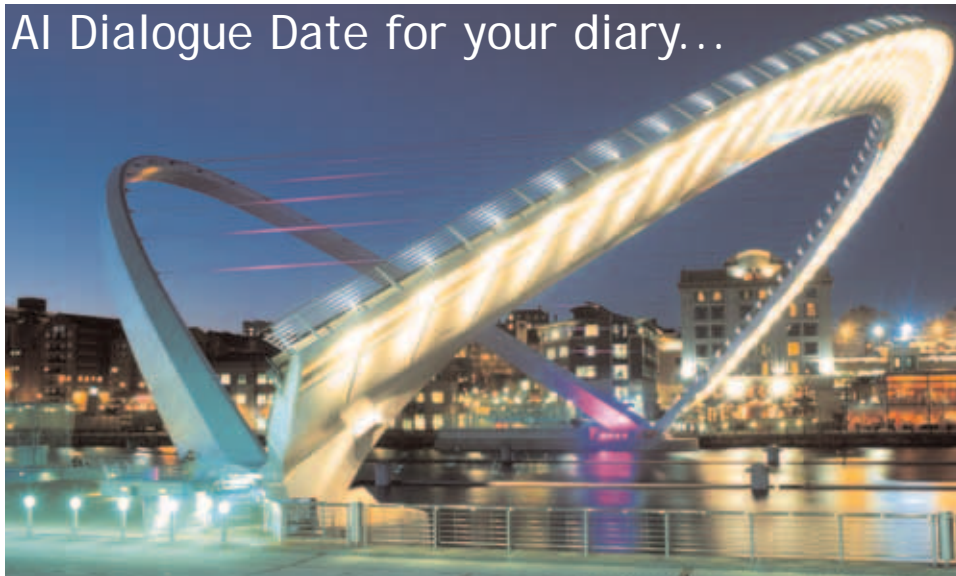
Impact of AI on Research

with
Professor Jan Reed
and
Dr. Lena Holmberg

9 November 2007 at the Springfield Hotel, Gateshead, England. Event fee: £99.

To register your interest, please email editor@aipractitioner.com or book online at http://www.aipractitioner.com/newshop/courses.htm

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August 2007: Strategic Planning inc. an update on SOAR
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