

Appreciative Coaching Questions

Appreciative Coaching is based on appreciative inquiry (AI), in which 4 propositions underlie its practice:

- 1) Inquiry should begin with appreciation.
- 2) Inquiry into what's possible should yield information that can be used, applied, and validated in action.
- 3) Knowledge that appreciates "what is" becomes provocative and can stir organization members to action.
- 4) Inquiry into human potential should be collaborative, assuming an immutable relationship between the process of inquiry and its content.

Shifting to an Approach Rooted in Appreciative Inquiry

To illustrate the shift from a problem-focused frame of reference to one rooted in appreciative inquiry, the authors Orem, S.L., Binkert, J., & Clancy, A.L. (2007) show how to rephrase problem-focused questions to appreciative questions.

Problem Solving Questions	Appreciative Questions
Tell me what the problem is.	What gives you energy?
Tell me what's wrong.	What do you value most about yourself?
What are you worried about?	What do you want more of?
What do you need help with?	What worked well for you before?
What's bothering you?	What's working well now?
What's working? What isn't working?	What first attracted you to...?
What are you going to do about...?	What did you do to contribute?
How are you going to fix this?	What does it look like when you...?
Tell me what you want to do next.	How will you know?
What do you think caused this to happen?	What's been your experience with that?
What's your solution?	How do you want to keep moving forward for yourself?
What's your plan?	What are you doing each day that's living your dream?

Phase Specific Questions

Each set of questions below corresponds to different phases of the Appreciative Coaching model.

1st Phase (Define/Disarm/Set an Agenda)

- What topic would you like to talk about today?
- By the end of our appointment, what would you like to walk away with?
- What has been the high point of your day/week so far?
- How could we best use our time together today?
- What is on your priority list for today?

2nd Phase (Discovery/Discover/Gather Data)

- What gives life to you now?
- Describe a high point or peak experience in your life or work up to now.
- What do you most value about...?
- What one or two things do you want more of?
- What has been working?
- What is the opportunity here?
- What are your three most important values?
- When you find yourself making a difficult decision, which beliefs are in opposition (for example, beliefs about "right" choice versus "wrong" choice)?

3rd Phase (Dream/Brainstorm)

- Let's say that overnight a miracle occurred and (you achieved your goal, solved your problem, etc.). How will you know the miracle has happened? What would be the first difference you would notice in your life?
- If you could have 3 wishes, what would they be?
- Thinking about the times you were most happy, what about these times would you want to carry into the future?
- Looking into the future, who are you called to be? What work are you called to do?
- What do you notice about yourself when you dream of your future?
- If you could communicate with yourself in the future, what questions would you want to ask yourself?
- What if there were no limits?
- What has worked in the past?
- Imagine you have unlimited resources - what options exist?

4th Phase (Design/Evaluate Alternatives/Make Decisions)

- Thinking about your dream, what would make it come alive for you?
- What 3 big accomplishments would make you feel as though you have come close to your dream?
- What have you done before that you could do again to move toward your future?
- Who are your fellow travelers? Who are people you trust and value who have supported you in the past and will again?
- What have you already started putting in place? Where is your attention going now as you think about the things you want to do?
- What are small actions that you can take towards your goal?
- What smaller aspects of your dream could you experiment with now? What kinds of things can you see yourself trying?
- If you were to act as if your dream were reality now, what would be different?
- What makes you feel proud and capable today?

5th Phase (Destiny/Deliver/Don't Settle/Take Action)

- How are you already living your dream?
- Reflect on where we began and where you are today. What's the same or different?
- What makes you proud?
- What do you want to see or do more of to get closer to your dream?
- What commitments do you make to yourself?
- What has been the most important thing you have learned about yourself?
- How will you continue to care for yourself and receive support for your continued efforts?
- How will you continue to foster your own development?
- What compels you now?
- How will you know when you've reached your goal?

Sources:

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- Co-Active Training Institute. (n.d.). *Co-Active Coaching Toolkit*. Coactive. <https://coactive.com/resources/coaching-toolkit>
- Orem, S.L., Binkert, J., & Clancy, A.L. (2007). *Appreciative Coaching: A Positive Process for Change*. Jossey-Bass.
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