

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY: PRACTICUM REPORT

by Belinda Hayes

Appreciating and Inquiring using the five generic processes:

1. Choose the positive as the focus of inquiry
2. Inquire into exceptionally positive moments
3. Share the stories and identify life-giving forces
4. Create shared images of a preferred future
5. Innovate and improvise ways to create that future.

1. **Brief description of the organization, group, or community you worked with.**

This Appreciative Inquiry session took place at a Polytechnic in Gisborne, New Zealand. Gisborne is a small town on the East Coast of New Zealand with a population of around 35,000.

The participants were students studying a Certificate in Health and Sport Massage (Level 4) and their tutor, Nancy. The programme is a 17 week, full-time course which provides a practical base of entry level knowledge and skills in sport, relaxation and health massage. The Inquiry took place on 20/2/2012 in the second week of the semester during a time slot which had been allocated to 'Professional Studies' - a section of the curriculum which contained various general and academic input sessions.

On the day of the Inquiry, 11 of the registered 15 students, and the tutor were present.

2. **List the names and/or category of stakeholders you included in the Core Group, the cross-section of people that helped you identify the topic and modify the Interview Guide.**

The tutor Nancy and I constituted the Core Group. The topic was reached after several meetings. As this was a new class, the topic of Team Building was agreed as a good starting point.

The basic Interview Guide was adapted from work by Leslie Pratt: '*Delta College Appreciative Inquiry in the Classroom*' and refined with advice from Rolene Pryor (CNA-Q).

3. **What was the positive topic that the Core Group identified for inquiry? What method did you use to help them identify the topic?**

The positive topic was: Team Building. This group had only been together for one week prior to the session. This is a short course so it is important that the students bond together as soon as possible. The learners come from a range of different backgrounds and many are second chance learners. With previous cohorts, course completion had not been consistent. The tutor was open to trying a new approach to developing a highly functioning team.

Attach or include the modified Interview Guide they used, i.e., the Generic Interview Guide slightly modified for the positive topic of the inquiry.

As there were only two hours available to complete the inquiry, the tutor agreed to post the following message to the students for review on the weekend prior:

BEST EXPERIENCE – Reflective task prior to session: Think about times in your life when you have been part of a really awesome group, team or class of some kind. You might want to start by making a list of these times, for example, when you were part of a kapa haka (traditional Maori performance art) group, a school netball team or a whānau (family) or school group and then choosing the best one.

Now, looking at your whole experience within that group, think about a time when you felt the happiest, the most alive and involved, or most excited about your involvement in that team. What made it such a great experience? Who was involved? Think about the event/s in detail.

On Monday, my colleague Belinda will be coming to class and we will have a chance to share these experiences as we think about making sure the next 16 weeks of our course an awesome experience for us all!

The modified Interview Guide is attached to this report.

4. What method of interviews did people use to inquire into exceptionally positive moments, face to face paired interviews, or some other way?

Participants were paired for face-to-face interviews which took 15 minutes each.

5. Attach or include a list of the Life-Giving Forces (what they MOST wanted to create MORE of) that the group identified in the stories they shared.

The group identified the following key High Energy Elements:

- i. Challenges
- ii. Mutual Respect
- iii. Helping Others
- iv. Sense of Humor
- v. Trust
- vi. Positivity
- vii. Willingness to learn

6. Attach or include the Provocative Proposition(s) the group or organization created from the LGFs.

- Draft 20/2/2012

This is who we are:

Our passion is for massage

We love helping others and we have fun doing it.

We work together to help people and smooth away their aches and pains. We believe everyone deserves the upmost respect, no matter what their differences are.

We love learning, including the challenges. We trust one another for mutual support.

...and we achieve all this whilst maintaining a great sense of humor.

- Draft 24/2/2012

This is who we are:

We are passionate about massage!

We are dedicated to helping people relieve their aches and pains, and rejuvenating their bodies through the healing power of massage.

We are committed to learning and delivering massage in a safe, fun loving, and challenging environment.

We trust, support, and respect the health and well-being of others no matter who they are.

7. Attach or include the organization, group or community's Strategic Intentions and the individual Commitments, Offers, and Requests that were created to realize the Provocative Proposition(s).

The following are the offers, commitments and requests made by the group:

- I promise to come every day!!
- If you need help, I'm here... I will do what I need to do for the team. I will help each other to complete the job and get it done.
- I promise to be focused during lectures.

- Please give positive feedback to aid in making the massage better.
- I promise to keep an open dialogue with the team. I offer laughs and smiles. I request reciprocation.
- Not to tell any secrets – I promise.
- I promise to always be ready to learn & listen.
- I promise to treat everyone with respect and be always available for a conversation.
- I promise to treat everyone fairly and give my best every day.
- I offer a complimentary free massage when I establish my clinic.
- I promise to support and help everyone in the class in any way I can.
- I promise I will try to do anything for this team!!
- I ask the group to fill me in on any information they feel can help me on the days I'm not here.
- I offer to be involved as a team to listen and have input.
- I will attend all classes and help others when I can.

The following strategies were agreed:

- To remember our charter/mission statement/motto/contract/team principles
- To keep ourselves and each other accountable to uphold our class principles.

8. Impact or Results: What organizational, group or community attitude, process or structure changes have people already made as they move toward realizing the Provocative Proposition(s)? What progress have people made toward their Strategic Intentions or Initiatives or Pilot Projects? What stories of success can you share?

The tutor Nancy reflected on the session:

"The class had lots of fun creatively brainstorming and bonding with one another, which has strengthened the friendships already. It was a positive experience, and left them buzzing, laughing, and helping one another in its aftermath! Thanks again, Nancy"

Nancy shared the outcomes of the session with her Group Manager, and as a result I have been asked to speak at the next Departmental Meeting. At the meeting I will offer to facilitate sessions for the rest of the team should they wish. I am optimistic that this offer will be taken up. Who knows where it might lead?

9. What will you do to ensure that people continue to move toward realizing the Provocative Proposition(s)? How will you help them gather stories of success? How will you help them celebrate? How will you, as the AI Facilitator, support their ongoing success?

In order to maintain contact with the class and to keep the session outcomes alive, I have:

- hung the amazingly creative 'craft outputs' on notice-boards around the massage classroom
- typed up the offers, promises and requests and posted them in a prominent place in the massage classroom
- typed up and posted the students statements of what they most value about themselves (I entitled this poster 'Our Strengths' to focus on the diversity within the group)
- written up the draft 'provocative proposition' and returned it to the class for their reflection and revision (the final current version is attached)
- provided the tutor with a copy of the final version of the proposition: "This is who we are:.."
- given the tutor a copy of the students' goals and 'wishes' for the course for her to use with the class as an opportunity to reflect as the course progresses
- given the tutor a summary of the comments from feedback form which I asked the participants to complete at the end of the session
- offered to come back and facilitate any group or individual projects the students may wish my assistance with

10. What did you wish for in the inquiry? What did you learn from the inquiry about yourself and your facilitation? What was your "personal best" experience related to facilitating the Inquiry?

My wish for the session was that at the end of the two hours the group would feel optimistic and positive about themselves and their classmates and enthusiastic and positive about their course. I hoped that having this positive group

experience at the beginning of the course would provide support for the development of an appreciative classroom environment.

Initiating this session provided me with an opportunity to further explore the concepts of appreciative inquiry both on a professional and personal level. It allowed me to engage with others in a positive way. I enjoyed being back in the classroom, working with people, seeing them engaged with each other and having fun.

My 'personal best' experiences have been the conversations I have engaged in and observed leading up to, during and following on from this session.

11. Have you received permission from the "client" or "clients" to tell us their story? In other words, does Company of Experts.net have permission to share this story with others? If not, who would COE.net need to contact to receive permission?

Permission has been given by the participants in the session for Company of Experts.net to share the information and images in this report.

I would like to express my gratitude to the facilitators of my AI Facilitation Training course Dr Jeannie Cockell, Kelly Saretsky and Rolene Pryor for their incredible inspiration and support. I am also indebted to Nancy and her class for trusting me to try something new.





Name: Belinda Hayes (PhD)

INTERVIEW GUIDE: TEAM BUILDING

1. **BEST EXPERIENCE:** Tell a story about the best time you have had working or studying with a really awesome group, team or class. Looking at your whole experience within that group, tell me about a time when you felt the happiest, the most alive and involved, or most excited about your involvement. What made it such a great experience? Who was involved? Describe the event/s in detail.

2. **VALUES:** What are the things you value deeply; about yourself as a learner, your classmates, your course:
 - A. **YOURSELF:** Without being shy, what do you value most about yourself – as a human being, a friend, a sister/brother, a parent, a team-member?

 - B. **YOUR CLASS:** When you are feeling your best about being in a team or group, what do you value about it most?

 - C. **YOUR COURSE:** What do you value most about this massage course?

3. **THREE WISHES:** If you had three wishes for your learning experience what would they be?
 - i)
 - ii)
 - iii)

SUMMARY SHEET

What was the most positive, appreciative **quotable quote** that came out of your interview?

What was the most **interesting story** that came out of your interview? What details and examples did your partner share with you? How was your partner and/or others changed by event in the story?

Did a particularly **creative and/or innovative example (topic or topics)** come out during the interview? If so, describe what you learned about it?

What **three themes** stood out most for you during the interview?

EXTRA MATERIALS

CREATING A GREAT TEAM

A reflective task prior to Monday's session:

YOUR BEST EXPERIENCE

Think about times in your life when you have been part of a really awesome group, team or class of some kind. You might want to start by making a list of these times, for example, when you were part of a kapa haka group, a school netball team or a whānau or school group and then choosing the best one.

Now, looking at your whole experience within that group, think about a time when you felt:

- the happiest;
 - the most alive and involved;
 - most excited about your involvement in that team.
-
- What made it such a great experience?
 - Who was involved?

Think about the event/s in detail.

On Monday, my colleague Belinda will be coming to class and we will have a chance to share these experiences as we think about making sure the next 16 weeks of our course are an awesome experience for us all!