

Appreciative Inquiry Interview Exercise: Set Intentions, Not Resolutions

The power of Appreciative Inquiry lies in the stories. Appreciative interviews invite individuals to share stories, ideas, values, desires, and emotions that illuminate new discoveries for exploration and opportunities for the ideal future. Interview questions are carefully crafted in an intensive effort to discover, illuminate, and understand the distinctive values, strengths, practices, and skills present when we are operating at our best. The affirmative topic of this interview guide is *Creating What Will Be* and is designed to help you discover the generative and life-giving forces that support you in creating positive change.

Interview Instructions:

1. **Choose an interview partner.** Find an interview partner (i.e., family, friend, colleague) that they do not know well and/or would like to get to know better.
2. **Interview each other.** Use the questions on the following page to inquire into your interview partner's story. Offer your best listening skills. There should only be one interviewer at a time, so decide who would like to be interviewed first. Once all questions have been answered, roles are switched and the person who was interviewed now becomes the interviewer.
3. **Watch your time.** This interview is designed to take approximately 40 minutes (20 minutes per person). Manage your time so that each of you can complete your interviews.
4. **Close with a check-in.** After completing your interview, take a moment to thank your partner for sharing their story.

Best Practices – Appreciative Interviewing

Before you begin, take a moment to review best practices for conducting Appreciative Interviews:

Interview vs. conversation. Interviews and conversations may appear similar; however, each involve different modes of interactions, consist of distinct purposes, and result in different outcomes. Conversations consist of individuals exchanging bits of information about themselves to establish rapport. Interviews, on the other hand, are meant to collect information about a person's experience, thinking, and values. During the appreciative interview, let the interviewee tell his/her/their story. Refrain from sharing your stories or giving your opinion about their experiences.

Be genuinely curious. Use the interview protocol as a guide. When you see or hear your interview partner get excited, you are tapping into their life-giving force. Delve deeper into this by asking some additional questions, such as:

- Tell me more.
- What was your contribution?
- What was going on that caused you to feel that way?
- What did others do that helped you achieve this?
- What makes that important to you?
- How has this positive experience changed you?
- How did that affect you?

Allow for silence. Some interviewees may take longer to think about their answers. Give them the option of thinking about the question or skipping onto the next question. If your interview partner does not want to or cannot answer any of the interview questions, that's okay. Continue with the interview and come back to the question at the end of the interview, if possible.

Be mindful of time. Appreciative interviews are magical making it easy to lose track of time. If you run over time, check in out with the person you are interviewing.

Confidentiality. Sharing personal stories and experiences can be uncomfortable for some individuals. Create a safe space by informing your interviewee that the stories they share will remain confidential.

Take Notes. Taking notes during an interview is not required, but highly encouraged. You will use the information embedded within your interviewee's story to identify high-energy and common themes and having notes available will provide helpful. It is important to remain present during the interview, so you may decide to capture notes immediately after the interview has concluded.

