

The Five Principles That Underlie Appreciative Living

Appreciative Living is grounded in five core principles that explain

why it works.

These are not techniques or steps, but **foundational truths** about **how people create meaning, motivation, behavior, and wellbeing.**

They are adapted from David Cooperrider's Appreciative Inquiry (AI) Principles created for organizations, and his original names follow in parenthesis.

1

The Perspective Principle (Constructionist):

We create reality through the meaning we make. The Appreciative Inquiry principles rest on the philosophy of social construction, which suggests that what we experience as "reality" is shaped by the interactions we have with others and the meaning we make of it. What we come to see as good and bad, right and wrong, true and false, and all other perspectives are heavily influenced by the people and culture around us.

In this way, two people can live through the same situation and experience it very differently based on their unique life experiences. Appreciative Living recognizes that joy is shaped less by what happens, and more by how it is perceived.

When you learn to appreciatively question the beliefs and interpretations that create your perspectives, new emotional and behavioral possibilities emerge.

2

The Question Principle (Simultaneity):

Questions direct attention and the meaning we create. Questions are powerful because they direct attention. Problem-focused questions keep attention locked on what isn't working, while appreciative questions open awareness to strengths, solutions, and new possibilities.

Appreciative questions are defined as a question that takes you to a better emotional state than you were before asking it. A question is seen as an intervention in and of itself, because it directs attention which then impacts the meaning that gets created. As a result, change begins in the moment of asking regardless of the answer.

3

The Focus Principle (Poetic):

What you focus on grows. Behavior and feelings follow focus, and the human brain has a natural negative bias to focus on what's wrong or threatening. Appreciative Living helps balance this negative bias out by helping us see the positive side we are often blind to.

By intentionally noticing what's good, useful, meaningful, or life-giving, you begin to feel better and experience more of it. This is not covering up the negative, it's expanding the positive to balance your perspective. This shift in focus improves how you feel and what you believe is possible.

4

The Vision Principle (Anticipatory):

We move in the direction of our future images. As neuroscience research shows, people are guided by the pictures they hold of what lies ahead. Appreciative Living works with this natural function by encouraging intentional visioning.

When a person practicing the Vision Principle imagines an ideal future, even imperfectly, their brain begins to align to it. It calls attention to related aspects around them and causes them to begin thinking and acting in that direction.

5

The Positive Principle (Positive):

Positive emotion is essential to human flourishing. Positive emotion is not just about feeling good, it's central to emotional, physical, and mental health.

Neuroscience research consistently shows that positive emotional states expand thinking, improve health, increase resilience, and support learning and creativity. To this end, positive emotion is not a reward following success, it is a catalyst for creating it. It's the key to making personal change that takes root and endures.

It's good to feel good, and not just because it feels good.



Visit [AppreciativeLiving.com](https://www.AppreciativeLiving.com) to learn more, or email Jackie at Jackie@AppreciativeLiving.com.