

# AI Practitioner

*The international journal of AI best practice*

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## Lessons Learned from Living from the Heart of Appreciative Inquiry

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### Introduction

Since people started learning and applying the principles of Appreciative Inquiry, many of us have shared stories with each other about how AI is more than a tool: it is a way of being and an orientation toward living.

Two particular questions I have found compelling for some time are: How does what we learn and develop as we work enhance how we relate in our personal lives, and how does what we learn in relating with our families and communities enhance the work we do in the world? These questions have been the invitation and inspiration for this issue of the AI Practitioner. As we are a community of practitioners who share a commitment to a particular approach to our work, the invitation was to reflect on how we integrate our intentions for being in our work in our every day personal lives. The responses we had to these questions have been personal, insightful, and generative.

The contributors to this issue have provided rich examples of how Appreciative Inquiry, as a paradigm, a social construct and a methodology provides guidance for being in relationships in ways that bring life to possibilities be they personal, consultative, managerial or parental. Living the principles is not something we turn on or off, depending on the context. Attending to how one engages with people, circumstances and challenges both in one's work life and one's personal life is mutually reinforcing. Further, the very relationships we foster become our daily reminders of how our words and our intentions create the vision of what we are moving toward and generate the social worlds we aspire to live.

### What you will find in this issue

We begin with an article by Jackie Kelm, *Walking the Talk: The Principles of AI in Daily Living*. Jackie presents a model of appreciating, imagining and acting and provides personal examples from healthy living as well as from the relationship with her son. In Susan Belgard's *Judging a Book by*

*Its Cover? Re-Designing Our Perceptions of Ourselves and Others from an Appreciative Perspective* she shows how “Words Create Worlds” or the Constructionist Principle plays a crucial role in interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. With *A Passionate Presence – Appreciating Person Centered Connections* Julie Barnes brings together her passion for Carl Rogers' work and AI. Used together, she says, “I connect with my creative energy and my ideas and actions flow.”

But is AI only about addressing positive experiences? Where is the place for pain, struggle, loss, vulnerability and social injustices? These questions frequently arise in our work. Joan Colleran Hoxsey in *Can I “Be” AI and Still Feel Pain?* addresses these commonly asked questions about Appreciative Inquiry in the context of her experience facing a painful personal tragedy. Cheri Torres and Jackie Stavros share their heartfelt reflections about what they learned about living AI in their relationship as co-authors of a book, in their article, *Learning To Live AI In Our Relationships While Writing a Book about Living*.

Three of the articles in this issue are about parenting. Whether you are a parent, working with children, or involved with children in some other way, each of these articles engages you in a conversation about how to nurture growthful relationships with children, and the association between the quality of relationships we foster with children and making the world a better place to live. Dawn Dole, in *Appreciative Parenting: Immediate Impact and Long-term Intent of an Appreciative Conversation with a Child*, talks about her professional work creating a parenting center and offers us specific questions that invite engaging conversations with children. Morgan Zantua writes about the magical surprise of becoming a first-time parent in her 50's in, *Being a New Mother as my Metaphor for Nurturing Life-giving Forces in my Work*. As a peace and justice worker in the global arena, she discusses how becoming a parent strengthened the imperative to increase the depths of the positive conversations and sustainable change in her work. In *Strengthening Boundaries And Connections As A Parent Of Teenagers*, I focus on the teenage years. Sustaining a positive and supportive relationship during these years becomes particularly challenging in a sea of public discourse about teens that is very deficit based. This article suggests that there are ways of letting go and enabling and fostering a sense of autonomy and independence during the teen years that both elevates the best of your children, while maintaining the important parent/child connection.

Finally, we have an inspiring piece from members of the Broccoli Alliance, the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania based AI group. In this piece, Amy Steffen, Lonnie Weiss, Nancy Aronson, and Ferne Kuhn, describe the inspiring journey of this group of eleven AI practitioners in *Living Our Destiny: One Group's Story of Forming and Living Appreciative Practice*.

As with all issues of the AI Practitioner, we aspired to provide a diversity of material from a diverse group of contributors. The diversity of our contributors is found in the span of age (from late 20's to mid 60's) and stages of life, family and personal life constellations. We hope you enjoy the ideas and questions that are provoked by this issue and join this conversation in future issues.

*Ilene Wasserman*  
Guest editor, February 2006