

Being Friends Together

Ways of Working > Ways of Working with Groups

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is a way of planning an approach to development and change. The '4D' process, which takes us in stages through *Discover, Dream, Design* and *Deliver*, can increase our awareness of what is good and hopeful in our meeting, help us imagine possibilities for the future, and prompt us to find means of building on these, in unexpected directions.

The process focusses on questions framed in ways that invite us to respond positively (we can generate these questions ourselves). The first questions encourage us to recognise and value our present and past achievements, our strengths and our potential, including our ability to respond to difficulty. We then reflect on what we really aspire to as a meeting community, or in a particular area of meeting activity, and think creatively in our search for practical ways of realising our hopes.

Appreciative Inquiry works through everyone sharing in the process, through seeking accuracy and clarity about how we are at our best, and through releasing imaginative thinking. The idea is not to leap to solutions, but to arrive at decisions on action by building on ideas and exploring achievable possibilities together. This is a very different approach from one that concentrates on analysing problems and seeking ways to solve them.

We can compare these two approaches, and decide which will best suit our circumstances, by looking at typical questions we might ask.

Problem solving *What do we want to see less of?*

- What things are not working well in our meeting?
- Why did things not turn out the way we hoped they would?
- How can we avoid getting it wrong again?
- What must we do to solve this problem?

Our meeting as a problem to be solved

Appreciative Inquiry *What do we want to see more of?*

- What are the things that work really well in our meeting?
- How would we like things to be in our meeting?
- What is the smallest change that could have the biggest impact?
- What would getting it right look like?

Our meeting as a possibility to be realised

<http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk>



Being Friends Together is a joint project of Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre (Registered Charity Number: 313816) and Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) (Registered charity number: 112763).



Being Friends Together

Ways of Working > Ways of Working with Groups

Using Appreciative Inquiry to explore our meeting

The example '4D' stages outlined below are for exploring in sequence in a facilitated group setting. The questions are *examples only* of the way we can approach thinking about our practice by affirming and building on what we are good at, including the way we address difficulty and challenge.

1. **Discover:** *Valuing the best of what is*

What is our meeting like at its best?

- What is special or valuable about our meetings for worship?
- What is good about the way we encourage Friends to deepen their understanding of the Quaker way?
- How do we positively express welcome and inclusion?

2. **Dream:** *Imagining what might be*

What is our ideal for the future?

- What would it take for everyone in meeting to experience real fellowship, spiritual nurture and Spirit-led pastoral care?
- What ideally do we want to see happening in the way we make decisions and how Friends participate in the Quaker business method?
- How would it be if our meeting was truly active in 'creating the Kingdom of Heaven on earth'?

If ideas emerging at this stage feel too fantastical to be do-able, it can help to continue the creative 'dreaming' by introducing some questions that invite people to home in on the possible:

Identifying what could be

What possibilities for the future can we envisage?

- What is the smallest change to the way we do things now that would have the biggest impact?
- Is there one aspect of our meeting that should take priority? How might that aspect be different in the future?
- What particular possibility in our meeting offers the most promising potential for development?

<http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk>



Being Friends Together is a joint project of Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre (Registered Charity Number: 313816) and Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) (Registered charity number: 112763).



Being Friends Together

Ways of Working > Ways of Working with Groups

3. **Design:** *Defining what should be*

How could these possibilities happen?

- What would putting one of these possibilities into practice look like?
- What positive changes can we make to bring about our imagined ideal?
- How can we build on what works well in the way things are now?
- How else might the aims of this possible change be achieved?

4. **Deliver:** *Planning what will be*

How will we implement the change?

- What processes will help? What will our first actions be?
- Who could do what, and who else needs to be involved? How will those involved be supported?
- When is it realistic to get started, and what timescale including a date for evaluating change, might we propose?

An extract from *Spiritual reviews: Reviewing the spiritual life of the meeting and its expression in caring*, Britain Yearly Meeting, Quaker Books, 2012, reproduced with permission

<http://together.woodbrooke.org.uk>



Being Friends Together is a joint project of Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre (Registered Charity Number: 313816) and Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) (Registered charity number: 112763).

