

Appreciative Inquiry Coaching Worksheet

About this Tool

At RAFT, we use these questions to guide monthly coaching calls between each team member and Jeremie, our Executive Director. These conversations help team members focus on their goals and projects. With small tweaks, these same questions can also be used to support someone through a challenge. Below are two sets of questions—one for focus and one for challenges—plus sample responses.

As you use these questions, you will find your own more natural way of asking them that works for you. You will also find other questions you want to ask in between these questions to get clarity or provide support. These questions are just a starting point.

Getting Started with the Appreciative Inquiry Coaching Questions

A great first step with these questions is to use them on yourself. Pick a task you want to focus on, or a challenge you are having and answer these questions for yourself. Writing down your answers to these questions will not only help you work through something but give you a better idea of how you want to ask the questions with another person.

Another option is to find someone on your team and have your first conversation using the questions. Picking someone on your team that you are closer to and trust is a great way to use the questions in a safer space for the first time.

If you are a “jump in with both feet” type of person, then grab your copy of the questions and a team member you need to have a conversation with and just go for it.

The more you use these questions the more natural the flow of the conversation will become. You will find different ways to ask these questions that you are more comfortable with. You will come up with new questions that are helpful during your conversations and, you will find that, sometimes, you skip questions that don't fit and tailor this list to work best for you.

Worksheet Examples

On the next page there are example answers from imaginary advocates, but keep in mind that actual conversations are much more fluid, and will have clarifying questions with longer answers. Although these are not responses from actual advocates, the topics and responses are based on different conversations RAFT has had during our different support calls.

Supporting Team Members with Focus At Work

1. Tell me about one of the best work experiences you've had since we last talked?
2. When you think about that best experience what do you want more of from that experience?
3. What would you like to focus on this upcoming week/month/quarter?
4. What do you hope to accomplish with this focus? What is your vision of success?
5. How could you include more of what you wanted from that earlier experience in this focus?
6. Which of your strengths will help you succeed?
7. What resources or support might you need?
8. What kind of results will help you know that you are succeeding?
9. Once this focus is completed, what other opportunities might open up?
10. What action(s) will you commit to before we meet again?

Examples of Supporting Team Members with Focus At Work

Tell me about one of the best work experiences you've had since we last talked?

The fundraiser a couple of weekends ago was great. I really enjoyed getting out of the office and working with people. You get a different view of people when you are out in the community. I also enjoyed connecting with people during the fundraiser and talking about the work we do.

When you think about that best experience what do you want more of from that experience?

I really enjoyed working with others instead of on my own like I usually do. It was also easy to do the work because we had clear set of steps to get ready for the fundraiser, and a clear deadline on when everything had to be ready. That made me a lot less stressed to have a clear plan.

What would you like to focus on this upcoming week/month/quarter?

I have a bunch of data that needs to be inputted this month in preparation for our grant report. I'm busy with all my regular work, but I know if I don't get the reporting done it puts everyone on the team behind in getting the grant report in.

What do you hope to accomplish with this focus? What is your vision of success?

My vision is that I do the data entry in smaller bits and pieces throughout the month, while staying caught up with my other duties, and don't end up pulling a few all nighters right at the end to get it in on time. Actually, I would love to have the data entered ahead of schedule so that the rest of the team feels less pressure to get their part done.

How could you include more of what you wanted from that earlier experience in this focus?

I can create my own deadline to have the data entered 2 weeks before the deadline. Then I can plan out some time each day at the start of the month to work on entering the data. Maybe I can even ask some other people on the team to work on their data entry at the same time to get some of that community feel.

Which of your strengths will help you succeed?

I am most focused in the mornings, and I find data entry a bit boring and exhausting, so if I do it in the morning that might help me stay focused and get more done. Curiosity is also one of my strengths so maybe I should ask some questions and learn more about why we do all this data entry. Knowing more about why it is important might help motivate me.

Who could you reach out to or collaborate with?

I can set up a meeting with someone on the grant team to ask them some questions. And I think there are a couple of people who would be interested in entering data over a coffee.

Examples of Supporting Team Members with Focus At Work

What resources or support might you need?

If you have any resources on setting deadlines, and breaking tasks down into smaller pieces over time that would be helpful. Also, the printer we use often leaves streaks on the pages, and then we have to reprint things before filling out forms. If it is possible to get the printer fixed that would save some time and frustration.

What results will help you know that you are succeeding?

If I set smaller goals over two weeks, then I will know I am succeeding if I meet each of those smaller goals. And, if I better understand what the data is for and can explain to someone else why we need this data that will be a success.

Once this focus is completed, what other opportunities might open up?

If I can complete the data entry ahead of time I will have more time at the end of the month and won't need to work extra under pressure to get things done. This means I'll be less tired when working with clients at the end of the month and will be home on time to spend time with my family. Plus, I will have a plan on how to input my data to use again so that each month the work is more spread out.

What action(s) will you commit to before we meet again?

I commit to talking with one of the grant writers by end of this week. Then I will share my plan with you to get feedback if that is ok. I'll talk to some of the other advocates about setting up some times to work on our data input at the same time. And I commit to following through with my plan and having my data inputted by the deadline I give myself.

Supporting Team Members with a Challenge

1. Tell me about one of the best work experiences you've had since we last talked?
2. When you think about that best experience what do you want more of from that experience?
3. What is the challenge you are facing right now?
4. How would you describe the opposite of this challenge in a positive way?
5. If that positive opposite were true, how would things be better?
6. How can you bring in what you wanted more of to help reach your positive vision?
7. Which of your strengths will help you succeed?
8. Who could you reach out to or collaborate with?
9. What resources or support might you need?
10. What results will help you know that you are succeeding?
11. When you achieve your positive vision what other opportunities might open up?
12. What action(s) will you commit to before we meet again?

Examples of Supporting Team Members with a Challenge

Tell me about one of the best work experiences you've had since we last talked?

I was working with a client that is having trouble meeting her court advocate, and has canceled two meetings, and she is running out of time. I was having trouble getting the reason for the missed meetings, so finally we met in person and I talked with her about the importance of the meetings and asked her directly, what is preventing you from making your meetings. She told me that she was having trouble with child care. We talked about options, and I shared some resources with her for some new child care options she is going to try. Then I got her to call her court advocate and book a new meeting.

When you think about that best experience what do you want more of from that experience?

Meeting her in person worked a lot better than trying to talk through things on the phone. Sometimes I don't have the courage to ask her direct questions about what is wrong, and I really liked that I did this time and got right to the point. This was helpful because it helped us move past the problem quickly and start talking about what she wanted to happen and what resources I could offer to help her accomplish that.

What is the challenge you are facing right now?

I am having some challenges working with one of my colleagues. She has been micromanaging my part in a project we are working on together and it is making it hard for me to do my part. She likes to work in a very different way, and her process conflicts with how I work with my ADHD, and her deadlines are way too fast for me to reach, which is upsetting her, which upsets me.

How would you describe the opposite of this challenge in a positive way?

My colleague and I understand how we work differently and are and is supportive of each others work styles when setting deadlines. She understands my ADHD and how we need to adapt to support my work.

If that positive opposite were true, how would things be better?

We will both be less stressed and upset with each other, and enjoy working together. It will be easier for both of us to meet deadlines and we will be excited to reach those deadlines because we enjoy working together. We are trusting each other to get the work done and I am feeling good with how I am adapting my work with my ADHD so I feel like a valued member of our partnership on this project.

How can you bring in what you wanted more of to help you reach your positive vision?

I need to meet with her personally to talk through things instead of using email or quick phone calls. I need to think about what I want to say and bring up the challenge we are having directly with her, like I did with my client, instead of talking around it. And, instead of sticking too long on the problem we are having I will ask to start discussing solutions and resources so we don't upset each other.

Examples of Supporting Team Members with a Challenge

Which of your strengths will help you succeed?

I can use my perspective strength to look at this problem from her point of view so I can better understand it when we talk, and my kindness strength to remind myself that we both care for each other and want to do our best work together. I'll also lean into my journaling practice to pre-plan some of what I will say so I can be more direct.

Who could you reach out to or collaborate with?

Well, I will need to connect with her to have the conversation, and maybe I can run the conversation past my partner before hand and see what feedback they give.

What resources or support might you need?

Can I schedule a time to meet with you after the meeting to talk through it? I think that would be helpful. If I can look through our policy manual I can see if there is anything in there that relates to this conversation that I can use to help us solve our differences.

What results will help you know that you are succeeding?

Getting our meeting on the calendar will show that I have committed to having the conversation. If I have a script that my partner thinks works will be another sign of success. And, if we come up with a plan together that improves our work together moving forward that would be the biggest sign of success.

When you achieve your positive vision what other opportunities might open up?

Once we finish this project and it goes well hopefully we will want to work together on other projects, I think I can learn a lot from her once we get our differences figured out. I would also like to work more with other people on different things so if this is successful I will be more confident to raise my hand to do different things and join different groups.

What action(s) will you commit to before we meet again?

I will get the meeting on the calendar, have my script ready to start the conversation, and have the meeting with my colleague. Once I get started with this I don't think it will take long.