Focus on *Women*
MAGAZINE

Positive Vs. Negative Emotions: Do We Need Both?

Appreciative Inquiry

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May/June 2019

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1 Thing unhappy people refuse to do for themselves...

Life is really hard sometimes. There's no escaping that reality. It's impossible to live well without encountering a certain level of struggle, and there are some seasons in our lives that are especially heartbreaking.

For Marc and me, one such season occurred over the course of 15 months when we were in our late-20's. It was a period of profound loss, beginning when we lost our jobs and our house in the downturn of the economy. It started out as a financially scary and uncertain time for our family. Worry seeped into everyday life. "Unhappiness" is the simplest word to describe it.

Then, as we were learning to navigate our new reality, we were hit with a devastating loss: the death of a mutual best friend from sudden cardiac arrest. The loss of such a key figure in our lives was intense! We were absolutely devastated and knocked down to what seemed like the lowest of lows for weeks on end. And just as we were beginning to get back on our feet, my older brother died by suicide.

With so much loss in quick succession, there were days when getting out of bed was our biggest accomplishment. This is the nature of struggle, but as the days turned into weeks, months, and then years, we learned to press forward. We learned that we are resilient. And we now hold a greater appreciation for what we have and the people who are dear to us.

Sitting here now, years later, I can honestly say that Marc and I have learned great lessons from that agonizing time in our lives. We've learned how to cope with the hard times, the pain and disappointment, and above all, we've learned the vital importance of self-love and self-care—the magic that makes smiling again (and again) possible.

The truth is, everyone experiences unhappy circumstances on occasion, but there is a big difference between experiencing these bouts of unhappiness and living a habitually unhappy life. That's what chronically unhappy people do. And although many of these people are afraid to admit it, a vast majority of their unhappiness stems from their own perpetual self-neglect.

Over the past decade, Marc and I have helped hundreds of unhappy people rediscover their smiles, and, in the process, we've learned a lot about the negative behaviors that typically hold them back. Self-neglect stands at the very top of this list. Even if you are generally a happy person, self-neglect is something that can easily creep up on you.

The key is to give yourself the extra attention you need and deserve.

Resisting and ignoring your own feelings and emotions does not serve you. It leads to stress, illness, confusion, broken relationships, fits of anger and bouts

of deep, dark depression. Anyone who has experienced any of the above knows that these states of mind are horrifically unhealthy... and when you're in the habit of self-neglect, it's near impossible to escape.

As I recently mentioned on the blog, you have to admit, to a certain extent, you have spent too much of your life trying to shrink yourself. Trying to become smaller. Quieter. Less sensitive. Less opinionated. Less needy. Less YOU. Because you felt broken, and you didn't want to be too much or push people away. You wanted to fit in. You wanted people to like you. You wanted to make a good impression. You wanted to be wanted. So you could feel healed.

So for years, you sacrificed yourself for the sake of making other people happy. And for years, you suffered.

But you're tired of suffering, and you're done shrinking. Right? Good!

It's not your job to change who you are in order to become someone else's idea of a worthwhile human being. You are worthwhile. Not because other people think you are, but because you are breathing your own air, and therefore you matter. Your thoughts matter. Your feelings matter. Your voice matters. And with or without anyone's approval or permission, you must be who you are and live your truth. Even if it makes people turn their heads. Even if it makes them uncomfortable. Even if they choose to leave.

You may have been broken down by adversity, but YOU are not broken. So don't let others (or your own mind) convince you otherwise.

In the Getting Back to Happy Course, we show you how to heal yourself by refusing to shrink.

We show you how to take up a lot of space in your own life... How to give yourself permission to meet your own needs. How to honor your feelings and emotions. And how to make self-care a top priority.

If you're struggling with any of this, you are not alone! Many of us are right there with you, working hard to think more clearly, respond to life more effectively, and get ourselves back on track. This is precisely why Marc and I built the "Getting Back to Happy Course." The course is filled with time-tested steps on how to do just that. And I'm thrilled to let you know that the full Getting Back to Happy Course is now OPEN again to early access members.

But we're closing the doors TODAY, June 13, and sometimes we need a little nudge to invest in ourselves.

This is not some ebook that you read and forget about. It's a revolutionary, self-paced online course and community with 60 HD video lessons, and hundreds of time-tested strategies and techniques that

will teach you scientifically proven methods for Conquering Pain, Eliminating Insecurity, Beating Procrastination, Healing Toxic Relationships, Taming Life's Complications, and Building Consistent Growth into Your Life and Career -- the exact proven strategies and techniques Marc and I have used in our coaching practice to help tens of thousands of people over the past decade.

It took 17 iterations, and thousands of dollars, to get it right.

These techniques work no matter where you stand in your current situation or what you're up against going forward. Even if you have limited experience with self-improvement and personal development tactics. And even if you don't know what you really want for yourself…yet.

Empower
Cocktails

If you've ever heard the word hustle used before, forget what you've heard...
Tiffany Hall is the epitome of it. She's a corporate attorney who launched her
business, Empower Cocktails, during nights and weekends in 2015. As well as
having an extensive career as a former marketer and lawyer for one of the
world's largest spirits conglomerates, Pernod Ricard, Tiffany Hall is a female
entrepreneur that you must know about. While working at the multi-billion-
dollar French spirits company, Hall was surprised by how profitable the liquor
business was, and how most brands were targeted toward men. "Women
were an afterthought," she says. So, although she had zero experience as an
entrepreneur, Hall decided to tap into her savings to set out on her journey to
create a brand that celebrates and honors women while catering to their distinct
tastes.
Knowing that the road ahead was going to be challenging, this female
powerhouse was motivated by what she saw as a gaping hole in the man-centric
spirits marketplace. Despite the obstacles, she pushed through to launch her
company, Empower Cocktails and created her first beverage, the Empower
Cosmopolitan Martini. With wonderful hints of white cranberry and lime coupled
with a luscious sweet-potato vodka and triple sec, this is just the beginning of
what Tiffany has in store for the future. Currently available in about 30 stores
throughout Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, and Rhode
Island, as part of Hall's mission, Empower Cocktails has partnered with several
nonprofits that champion women's initiatives, including the Voss Foundation,
Kicked It In Heels, and the Metro-Manhattan Community Foundation.
For interviews, more information, and high-res images on Tiffany Hall and
Empower Cocktails, please reach out to me directly.

Best,
Alexis Thrasher
Creative Voices PR
PR Coordinator

Family dinners

Why Family Dinners Matter: The Science Of Eating Together
Tanni Haas, Ph.D.
Most families find it difficult to get everyone together at the dinner table on a regular basis. We're all so busy with after-school activities, late meetings at work, and long commutes; it really is too bad. Researchers have learned that eating dinner as a family is extremely important to kids' physical, mental, and emotional health. As Dr. Anne Fishel, professor at Harvard Medical School and an expert on the benefits of family dinners, says: "Sitting down for a nightly meal is great for the brain, the body and the spirit."
Healthier Eating
Kids whose families have regular dinners together are much healthier than those who don't. They eat more fruits and vegetables, and less fried foods and soft drinks. They eat a wider variety of foods, and they continue to do so once they become adults. They're also less likely to become obese. Researchers believe that's because homemade meals are healthier than those in restaurants:

we eat smaller portions, at a slower pace, and spend more time talking with one another.
Increased Vocabulary
Dining with the family impacts kids' minds as well as their bodies. Researchers have discovered that dinner-time conversations increase young kids' vocabulary much more than being read to out loud. So if you have a choice between coming home early for a family dinner or reading your kids a bedtime story, choose the dinner over the bedtime story. Kids who have a large vocabulary learn to read earlier and more easily than those with a more limited vocabulary. Researchers think that's because that kids constantly hear parents use new words during conversation.
Higher Grades
These intellectual benefits carry over into academic achievement. Researchers have discovered that how well kids do in school is determined more by how often they participate in family dinners than by whether they do their homework consistently. Kids who dine regularly with their families are twice as likely get A's in school than those who only do so rarely.
Fewer Risky Behaviors
Having family dinners is also good for kids' emotional health. When they dine with their families, they're much less likely to suffer from eating disorders, abuse alcohol or drugs, or stress and depression. Researchers believe that's because parents who spend time with their kids at the dinner table are more in touch with their emotional well-being and can offer advice and support when needed. As a result, these kids also have higher self-esteem and trust others more.

Stronger Family Bonds

Finally, researchers have learned what we all probably know already: eating dinner together enhances family bonds. Kids whose families have regular dinners are much more likely to have good relationships with their parents and siblings. Kids say that talking, catching-up, and just spending quality family time are much more important to them than what's on the menu. Simply put, eating dinner together creates a strong sense of togetherness and feeling of belonging to a family. Dr. Fishel puts it well: "Dinner is a time to relax, recharge, laugh, tell stories and catch up on the day's ups and downs, while developing a sense of who we are as a family."

Happy Dinner!
Bio:
Tanni Haas, Ph.D. is a Professor in the Department of Communication Arts, Sciences, and Disorders at the City University of New York – Brooklyn College.

Good Deeds:

20 Ways Your Kids Can Make The Community A Better Place For Everyone

Tanni Haas, Ph.D.

May is National Community Action Month, a perfect opportunity to teach your kids the value of caring for their local community, especially those community members who can't care as well for themselves. Here are 20 practical suggestions on what they can do:

- Visit sick kids at the hospital. This is a wonderful gesture during the holidays or school breaks where everyone else is having fun.

- Donate clothing and food to a homeless shelter. That will teach your kids the value of giving to those much less fortunate than themselves.

-
- Help senior citizens learn to use technology, like how to search the internet, send emails, and navigate their smartphones, so they can better communicate with family and friends.
- Offer to paint a less well-maintained house in the neighborhood. There's always that one house that could use some sprucing up.
- Help coach a sports team with younger kids. This can be any sport they are good at or just like playing.
- Assist senior citizens by helping them with their groceries or running errands around town.
- Ask the library if they need tutors for younger kids in reading, writing, and basic math.
- Volunteer for a clean-up day at a park. It's needed in many places and a lot of fun to do, too.
- Help out at charity shops. These shops rely on volunteers and can always use another helping hand.
- Visit the residents at a nursing home or assisted living facility. Many residents get less visits from family and friends than most people realize.
- Organize a back-to-school supplies drive for kids whose families have fallen on hard times.
- Contact a school to see if they need a homework tutor for its after-school program. Sometimes, kids can explain things to other kids in a way that's more relatable and makes more sense than adults.
- Help care for the animals at the animal shelter. There's nothing like giving a little love to an abandoned dog or cat.
- Organize a community get-together at the community center. This could be a movie screening, a dance, or a group activity that encourages collaboration and bonding.
- Donate books such as textbooks and test prep manuals to local schools.
- Walk the dogs for neighbors who are injured, sick or otherwise unable to exercise their pets with daily outdoor walks.
- Help out at a community garden planting flowers, vegetables, weeding, watering or just helping with upkeep and maintenance.
- Volunteer at a soup kitchen. Many people do this at Thanksgiving or during the holidays, but the need is there all year round.
- Read books or newspapers to the visually impaired.
- Help senior citizens with seasonal

tasks like raking leaves in the fall, shoveling snow in the winter, or mowing the grass in the summer.

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Sleep Away Camp

5 Great Reasons To Send Your Kids To Sleepaway Camp

Tanni Haas, Ph.D.
There are so many great reasons why you should consider sending your kids to sleepaway camp this summer, and it's not only because they'll have a whole lot of fun. Based on my experiences as the parent of a 15-year-old boy who loves summer camp, as well as conversations with other parents, I've learned that sleepaway camp can be character-building. Here are five different ways that summer camp can help your kids develop and mature.

Independence

- For most kids, sleepaway camp is the first time they get to experience real independence. They're away from their parents and other adult family members for an extended period of time, and they've got to quickly learn how to take care of themselves, from getting themselves ready in the morning to choosing their daily activities. Of course, there are counselors who're responsible for the overall welfare of the kids, but unlike teachers who tell kids what to do, camp counselors act much more like older brothers and sisters who're on a joint adventure with the kids. I'll never forget the first time my spouse and I picked up our son from sleepaway camp. He acted like a completely different person than the one we'd left behind only a few short weeks earlier: independent, mature, and with a confident, knowing demeanor.

Organization

- Sleepaway teaches kids how to become better organized. From the moment they wake up in the morning to the moment they go to sleep at night, they have to make many choices that require them to organize themselves and their time. For example, in the morning they're supposed to wake up, get dressed, brush their teeth, make their beds, and walk to the dining hall at the same time and together with all the other kids they're bunking with. But unlike in school where teachers tell kids exactly what to do and when, camp counselors expect that kids figure it out themselves. And that includes not forgetting to put their dirty clothes in the hamper on laundry day.

Comradery

- Kids also learn some very valuable lessons about comradery. Camps often let parents request that their kids bunk with friends from home. Yet, they'll also bunk with many other kids, often from different states and countries. This will teach them how to get along with and enjoy the company of kids with very different backgrounds than their own. Most camps are aware of this and organize activities aimed at creating a strong sense of comradery and community, including evening camp fires, sing-a-longs, and the ever-

popular Camp Olympics.

Compassion

- Not every kid easily adjusts to being away from their parents for a long period of time, and not every kid easily makes new friends. If there's one area where camp counselors do actively step in to help kids adapt it's when someone is homesick or just not happy. Camp counselors show kids how to treat others with compassion, care, and respect, and they expect kids do the same. Many camps also have a buddy system where kids are teamed up to support another and do fun things together.

Conflict-Resolution

- Sometimes, despite camp counselors' best efforts, conflicts do occur over who bunks together, who sits next to whom at meal times, and who plays with whom. After all, kids often live in cramped quarters at camp, with unfamiliar roommates. But that's not such a bad thing: one of the most important skills kids learn at sleepaway camp is how to solve interpersonal conflicts on their own. Camp counselors certainly step in to solve serious conflicts. But they'll typically let the kids solve the small ones. And learning how to solve conflict is a great skill kids will bring home with them and use long after the camp is over.

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Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry is about looking for the best in people – in the way they work, they live, and they behave.

Initially, appreciative inquiry (AI) was a "fundamental shift in the overall perspective of organizational development that took into account the entire human functioning – including strengths, possibilities, and success."

The contemporary concept of AI came into focus after the article by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastava in 1987, where they coined that problem-solving is 'overused' in organizational contexts and that active inquiries would perhaps be more helpful in creating innovations and ideas in the industry.

According to them, appreciative inquiry helps in:

- Building the core strengths of an organization.
- Shifting the focus from organizational weaknesses to the organizational strengths.
- Letting individuals as well as the industry stick to its fundamental principles.
- Bringing a wholesome change that benefits every aspect of the firm.

AI aims to explain how human growth and organizational success flow in the direction of constructive change due to a positive and persistent inquiry, and it works around five core principles:

- The Constructionist Principle – which states that our beliefs shape our actions. We do what we feel is right and this is what forms the organizational culture as a whole.

- The Simultaneity Principle – that states that appreciative inquiry or the way we question our internal and external systems help in bringing about the desired change.

- The Poetic Principle – that states that performance culture in an organization grows based on expressions and communication within the human personnel. How we talk to each other, the stories that we share at work, and the emotions that attach employees is what counts for success or failure.

- The Anticipatory Principle – proposes appreciative inquiry happens when we raise questions on things that have meaning to us now, or that will have some value for us in the future.

- The Positive Principle – which coins that appreciative inquiry evokes positive emotions like hope, inquisitiveness, and motivation, all of which collectively contribute to changing the work environment for the better.

What are Appreciative Inquiry Tools and Exercises?

Appreciative inquiry typically undergoes four stages, which is more popularly known as the 4-D cycle of AI.

Discovery – Acknowledging and appreciating what 'is.'
Dream – Imagining and appreciating what 'will be.'
Design – Deciding what 'should be,' and how we can move from reality to the ideal position that we have imagined.
Delivery – Creating or building ways
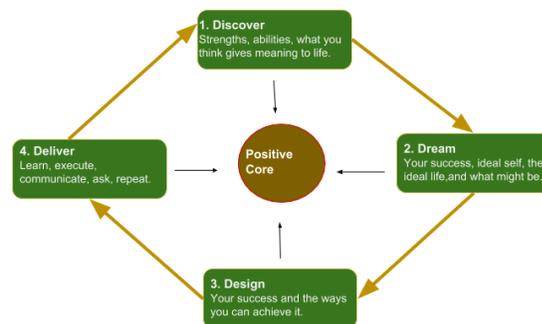
The 4-D Cycle Of Appreciative Inquiry

to achieve the 'dream' and applying the strategies to practice.

Appreciative inquiry tools and exercises come into the picture at the third and fourth stages of the 4-D cycle. Broadly, AI tools are a set of rules or practical hacks that we can use individually or as a team to aim for a positive change at the organizational level.

AI tools are strategic plans and practices that create an impetus

toward large-scale corporate ventures. They give shape to the company's ethical standards, codes of conduct and improve client satisfaction from all aspects.

Appreciative inquiry tools also help in:

- Bringing together individuals who share similar traits and behavioral patterns within an organization.
- Providing quantitative analysis and feedback that fosters organizational growth.
- Capacitating and inspiring people to initiate the development process.
- Facilitating each other with skills, knowledge transfer, and training to maximize productivity as a whole.

Benefits of Using Appreciative Inquiry Tools

Appreciative inquiry tools work great as icebreakers and communication exercises in professional meetups and discussion.

Some of their benefits include:

- Open communication
- More engagement and work responsibility.
- Scope for developing new skills and improving the existing ones
- Better decision-making power
- Positive learning environment in the workplace.
- Fostering a conducive environment at the work.

4 Tips and Techniques For Application

As mentioned before, appreciative inquiry is the skill of asking relevant and positive questions (see Appreciative Inquiry Questions) that strengthen individual and organizational strength.

AI is collaborative and impacts several areas of functioning including:

- Education
- Healthcare and mental health
- Small business, micro business, and start-ups
- Overall job satisfaction and work motivation
- Interpersonal relationships of individuals both at personal and professional levels
- Collaborations and global transactions in companies.

AI tools and applications are realistic and straightforward. They are flexible and easy to use, and here are some practical tips on how we can make the most of them:

1. Select positivity as the prime focus

An efficient appreciative inquiry model focuses more on what has worked best for the company rather than what did not work out. For example, individuals or teams who rely on a positive AI approach would replace questions like "why were clients unhappy and complained about us?" with affirmative inquiries such as "what made our clients happy earlier? Can we improvise on the same line?" A positive shift in the questions we ask ourselves and the company as a whole is the first and a significant step to bringing about the desirable changes in the workforce. The main idea here is to attend more to what 'we want' and less on what 'we don't want.'

2. Explore the exceptionality of the methods

Positive questions rewire our brain to filter only the fruitful pieces of information and on our internal strengths. An excellent way to ensure this happens is to investigate and ask ourselves what went particularly well after applying the appreciative inquiries.

Exploring the advantages of the questions help in discovering their unique capabilities and understanding which areas of functioning they facilitate the most. For example, we understand whether it is the tone, or the language, or the content of the AI that brought about the positive consequences and identify those areas as the exceptionality of it.

3. Share to gain perspective

Appreciative inquiries extend to involve a large number of individuals and work wonders in creating a positive organizational change. When we share our life incidents, inspirational stories, and exchange perceptions with each other, the likelihood of creating a productive AI structure increases manifold.

Besides, it also allows for the smooth transmission of positive energy from one person to another and positively

impacts our professional development. (Capra, 2002)

4. Keep room for innovation and improvisation

Whether the AI was successful or not, it is always good to continue improvising them. We can do so by regularly monitoring the outcomes, communicating with leaders about new ways of implementing the strategies, or by developing training programs to spread awareness about the inquiry systems.
Whatever way we choose, the whole idea is to keep moving forward and explore the endless benefits of using appreciative inquiry.

4. Appreciative Inquiry Tools

1. Appreciative Inquiry in Evaluation Practice By Hallie Preskill

Hallie Preskill is a Doctorate and a Professor of Behavioral Sciences at the Claremont Graduate University. She is a renowned author and has done great works in the field of appreciative inquiry and organizational learning. Her workshops and research publications are used by professional and educational organizations to alleviate the inhibitions related to asking the right questions, at the right place, and to the right person.

Her workshop on Appreciative Inquiry is a collection of principles and research-backed techniques to conduct positive AI sessions with more efficacy.

Her manual is suitable for individuals

of all ages and includes tasks such as:

- One on one interview sessions with co-participants.
- Taking turns to narrate each others' stories.
- Asking appreciative interview questions such as 'three things you value the most,' 'best experience with clients so far,' and the like.
- Building listening skills by actively paying attention to each others' stories and taking notes while doing the same.
- Collaborating in the workshop to build a joint vision of the future and discuss ways to get there.

The workshop by Preskill guarantees a positive drift in the mindset of the participants from a deficit viewpoint to a strength-based approach.

2. Appreciative Inquiry Coaching Toolkit

This toolkit is based on the 4 D's of appreciative inquiry – discovery, dream, design, and deliver.
It follows a step-by-step approach and discusses practical strategies of AI that works best in each of the four stages of the 4-D cycle.

For example, the relevant AIs in the discovery and dream phase would be asking 'what' to the existing systems and getting the right answers as to where participants wish to see themselves in the future.
In the design and delivery phases, the AIs would focus more on the 'how' aspect of it, exploring better ways to implement the thoughts and gathering knowledge on how to put the ideas into

actions.

3. KS toolkit

The KS toolkit for AI is an adaptation of the Appreciative Inquiry Commons Model. It is a brief model containing the most relevant information that we can successfully apply in personal and professional fronts. The KS toolkit overviews the basics of how and when to use AI.

It is a great resource to ensure that the participants have a clear insight before they take the plunge. Besides, the toolkit has additional sources like examples, stories, and useful hacks that participants can follow to optimize the benefits of AI.

4. The Do It Now Appreciative Inquiry Toolkit

The Do It Now Appreciation Toolkit is a collection of appreciative inquiry exercises used in an AI workshop in Nepal, 2000. The tasks are varied and explained in details in the downloadable resource in the toolkit. The Do It Now Toolkit is a highly recommended set of exercises that individuals at any stage can use to build their skills thoroughly.
It is research-backed, successfully tested, and provides an excellent base for companies who are planning to implement AI as a part of their organizational system.
You can learn more about the research and download the exercises from the link above.

10 Exercises and Activities for Applying AI

Appreciative inquiries are flexible and applied in a variety of ways (see our article on How To Apply Appreciative Inquiry). The AI tools and exercises mostly vary depending on the target population and the contexts in which they come into play.
Here are ten AI activities that are more or less versatile and work equally well for all people and settings. Some of these exercises were also a part of the Do It Now toolkit mentioned earlier and proved to be extremely useful in the workshop it was first used in.

1. Appreciative Meditation Exercise

Appreciative meditation is a short yet powerful exercise to build a firm intention for appreciative inquiry. Usually used as the first exercise in most AI programs, the task merely involves collecting ourselves for a moment.
We can do this by breath control, thought monitoring, or attending to an external focal point and immersing ourselves entirely into it for a while. Appreciative meditation as the initial task makes the participants aware of their internal feelings and help them realize why they want to invest in AI.

2. Individual Self-discovery

This is a fun activity and works exceptionally well with kids and youngsters. The practice involves giving paper and pen to each participant and asking them to recall and sketch one of the happiest moments of their lives. The

sketch need not be too elaborate, just a simple illustration that the respondents would then take turns to describe.

In the discussion part of this exercise, each child comes up with a brief narrative of the story they have sketched, and the others are encouraged to listen to the story and inquire more about the details.

The task benefits the respondents and the audience in three main ways:

- They relive a happy moment of the past and experience the positive emotions related to it.
- They can reflect on their inner feelings and emotions while they narrate the stories.
- By listening to others asking, individuals gain insight into what an AI session looks like and how they can make the most of it with their narratives and questions.

3. Group Discovery

This is an interactive AI exercise used in many organizational setups to promote employee engagement and team spirit. The activity is to form groups and discuss the achievements of each member of the team.

The administrator presents each group with a bunch of pens and a single sheet of paper and urges each team to represent their achievements pictorially.

4. Appreciative Storytelling

Storytelling encourages participants to come up with their life stories that have some meaning to them and can inspire others. The aim is to make the participants realize that their experiences can be of value to someone else.

By sharing their stories and listening to others, participants build a sense of cohesiveness among themselves and motivate each other to keep going. As a result, they do not hesitate to express their concerns, ask for advice, and give their suggestions wherever appropriate to do so.

5. Appreciative Acknowledgement

A positivity booster, this short exercise fills the respondents with energy and appreciation about each other. One or more persons are randomly chosen to come up and share one good thing that they like about each present in the room.

Appreciative acknowledgment can be one long session allowing all participants to get their chance or it can be a daily component in an AI workshop where respondents take turns to appreciate each other every day for a few minutes in between sessions.

The aim is to build a mutually benefiting relationship among participants so that they can see and bring out the best in each other.

6. Morning News Exercise

The morning news exercise was used with participants of the Kathmandu workshop. It is a group activity where participants are assigned to groups and work as a 'Press Team.'

Their tasks involve collecting useful bits of information from the daily newspaper and reading it out at the workshop session every morning. Members take turns to present each piece of news so that each person gets a chance to be the presenter as well as an active listener.

7. Dream Exercise

As the name indicates, this is an imagery-based exercise where the participants close their eyes for a couple of moments and imagine themselves returning home after an extended stay outside.

The administrator guides the respondents to think about everything they would have wanted to achieve by then and try to feel the emotion of returning home after so long. After the session is over, participants take turns to come up and share in details of what they imagined, how they saw themselves, and what changes they desired to see in their lives after so long.

8. Appreciative Communication Exercises

Susan Gaddis, a certified life coach and wellness guide, coined a manual for positive communications systems and appreciative inquiry. Her works focus on building awareness on the benefits of clear communication and appreciative introspection.
In the 'Good Communications' manual, she has put forth some simple, scientific, and objective AI measures that are easy to understand and provides a quick analysis of how

appreciative we are towards ourselves and others.
Learn more about her exercises here.

9. The Problem to Opportunity Exercise

Mac Odell proposed this exercise for fostering appreciative inquiry through challenging the existing problem areas and replacing them with potential opportunities.

The first part of the task is about ruling out what is currently lacking and then replacing the deficits with the scope of new possibilities.

For example, if the problem is a weak social connection within the organization, then the participants would first chalk out what has led to the challenge and what they may think can solve it. After that, they would draw a separate map or chart with the solution part – string interpersonal connections in this case, and formulate the causal factors and ways to attain the goal.

You can learn more about the administration and application of this exercise here.

10. AI Advertising Exercise

An adaptation of the Open Space Technology used by the APA framework, this exercise invites participants to form an advertisement with words, pictures, or graphics on any aspect of the dream they aspire to fulfill. After completing the sketch, the members come up one by one and present their advertisements as

though they are 'selling' them. The response and feedback they get from the audience during the presentation, as well as the intuitions that work while they are delivering their advertisements, serve to provide an understanding of how they should plan on achieving it in real life. The facilitators develop interactive sessions for discussing the design and execution part of the mock-ups, and the participants encourage and appreciate each others' efforts throughout the practice.

AI Team Building Activities

Appreciative Inquiry for building successful teams is the new choice for smart businesses today (see Appreciative Inquiry for Business). Many successful firms of different fields rely on professional group activities that are incredibly solution-focused and guarantee success in the majority of the times. If you are looking for some great ideas for incorporating AI in your organization, these tips can get you started:

1. AI team activities involve a large number of individuals

The more individuals in a team-building AI, the better the results. Whether we are the facilitators or the participants of the AI program, we must ensure that more people join the activities and each of them feels important as a part of the group. When more people work together, there are more significant exchanges of positive energy and more inputs come up in the form of personal stories and experiences.

2. A sense of trust is vital for success

AI group activities can create a sense of trust in the team by introducing trust scales in the program and asking participants to score their level of confidence in themselves and others. Marking the trust level allows open communication among members about what influence their trust in themselves and why they do or do not trust someone.

3. Set up talk-circles
Talk circles are open spaces where people are free to talk with others and share their views on customer service, organizational leadership, and team building at work.
Talk circles work best when they are amalgamated within the AI team activities and practiced daily.

4. Encourage groups to dream together

Groups that imagine together work better as a team. To promote this, we can set up brief sessions during each activity, say for five minutes, where members would visualize a dream and share their feelings.

This could be a group goal, any personal achievement, or imagery of what the ideal workplace would look like. Communicating every tidbit of the visualization helps the members to connect and agree on a single goal (dream) that they could then seek to achieve.

5. Promote the exchange of knowledge and information

Exchange of information can happen in different ways such as 1-minute wisdom bites where each member gets one minute prior or post the activity to share the most relevant information they got that day.

Knowledge transfer creates a cultural shift in the organization as a whole and drives the employees to engage in a valuable exchange of positive news that can create a better ambiance at work.

Appreciative team-building activities create a conducive work environment where employees can feel good about themselves and others. Efficient and compassionate leaders today believe that a healthy and highly functioning team is a primary requisite for success. Team building AI exercises ensure a sustainable and positive performance culture that invites long term gains and ensures satisfaction at all levels of functioning.

5 Appreciative Inquiry Games

1. Thumb wrestling game

Many of us have thumb wrestled in our school days and must have so many fond memories attached to this game! But did you know that thumb wrestling is also a great AI tool for team building and performance enhancement?
The game is simple:

- Ask the participants to choose a partner to thumb wrestle with and let them lock their finger once they are ready to start the game.
- Explain the rules clearly to all the participants so that they do not end

up hurting each other.
- Start the game by asking the participants to wrestle with each other for one minute and give shoutouts for each time they score.
- Make multiple pairs who compete in the game and let them collaborate as a team for scoring higher.

The best part of thumb wrestling as an AI tool is that is can be used for all populations and is a great way to promote team spirit within individuals.

2. Appreciative learning games in schools

Appreciative inquiry, when started earlier, yields the best results. For example, students and youngsters who learn to use AI exercises and activities in their educational institutions can internalize the practice better than others. They are likely to show similar positive traits in all other walks of life more spontaneously than others.

Studies have shown that children who went to schools that promoted AI through daily activities and games were more competitive and self-driven than others. They were more creative, positive-minded and regardful of others they work or study with.

3. Appreciation Cards, Kudo Cards

Praise words never fail! Appreciation or Kudo cards is a popular AI game that enhances employee satisfaction and happiness.

Expressing 'Kudos,' meaning appreciation or acknowledgment is the

key factor in this game. Appreciation cards can be small thank you notes or simple words of recognition from the team leader or supervisor.

Managers and leaders often use this game as a means of acknowledging the employees' hard work and appreciating their efforts. Positive feedback from superiors and co-workers bring an instant feeling of happiness and provide a positive thrust to keep working hard.

4. Agile Games

Agile games are used as appreciative inquiry instruments to solve authentic business issues and manage conflicts. They are a collection of activities and exercises that focus on manifesting positive workplace actions such as group cohesiveness, multitasking abilities, time management, etc. The tools used for these games involve teaching, role modeling, and interactive games and the collaborative nature of the exercises help the participants in understanding, discovering, and executing their dreams.

5. Action Learning Games

Action learning games are mostly group activities that facilitators regularly conduct with other appreciative inquiry techniques. In action learning games, there is a presenter who narrates an incident, a problem, or a life experience.
The others in the group are active listeners who fully attend to the story, take notes while listening, and comes up with relevant questions after the narration is over. The facilitator motivates each person to come up with at least one question and explain how the answer would help them in their lives.

The discussions participants have with each other during the session unlock the thought blocks and make way for positive self-reflection.

Appreciative Inquiry Icebreakers

Icebreakers have a pivotal role in making AI interventions successful. They are simple, catchy, and relevant tasks that the facilitators introduce in the group session to promote appreciative inquiry in the group. (Silberman, 2006).

Hogan (2003) pointed out that icebreakers play a predominant role in an appreciative inquiry by:

- Making participants accustomed and well-adjusted to each other.
- Creating space for open communication and equal responsibility among all members of the organization.
- Promoting positive interpersonal relationships in the workplace.

Icebreakers are mostly practiced in groups, where many individuals work together. Tuckman (1965) said that there are four stages of group development, namely:

- The Forming Stage – where members come together and create the team.
- The Storming Stage – when they discuss and explore the group

goals and the means to achieve them.

- The Norming Stage – where the rules and group standards come into the picture.
- The Performing Stage – where the group members embark on executing the plans and achieving the targets.

According to Tuckman, icebreakers work best when they are used in the early stages of group development (i.e., the forming and the storming stages). Introducing them earlier ensures less performance anxiety in the participants and more excitement to be a part of the performing team. And once the members become familiar with the icebreakers, they can use them repeatedly to instill energy at different levels of the AI sessions (Chulp and Collins, 2010).

Types of AI Icebreakers

There are three broad categories of icebreakers in appreciative inquiry.

1. The Just for Fun Icebreakers

These make participants comfortable and provides an initial energy boost to know and communicate with each other.

2. The Introductory Icebreakers

Introductory Icebreakers make the participants familiar to new topics, new group agendas, and also new members of the group. They may be funny and informal, but usually, aim at achieving a group goal.

3. The Topic-based Icebreakers

They are more specific, detailed, and focus on the ultimate goal of the session.
There is a vast range of icebreakers to choose from. While some of them are more suited to organizational contexts, other icebreakers may be more relevant for educational institutions, or counseling and rehabilitation purposes.
Here are three appreciative icebreakers that are more generalized and can be incorporated in AI across different spheres:

i. Friends Indeed Icebreaker

Friends indeed is an introductory icebreaker that helps people to go around and know each other in a group. It uses physical name cards that make the task more fun and enjoyable, and suitable for using with kids as well.
The job is to write their names on the name cards and stand in a circle with the facilitator in the middle.
The facilitator would then call out statements, and those, for whom the comments hold would go around and stand with each other, maintaining the circle.
In each round, the odd person or persons would come to the center of the ring and call out the next statements aloud. The comments are usually simple and easy, for example – 'friends who have pets at home', 'friends who are late-risers', 'friends who love chocolates', etc.
The game is an excellent way for participants to know each other, participate in a group task, and realize

that they have something in common, which makes the bonding easier.

ii. Storytelling AI Icebreaker

Storytelling techniques are very common AI icebreakers. They are flexible, doesn't require any special arrangements for administration, and help people to voice out their thoughts and emotions.
The task involves allowing some time (usually 2-3 minutes) to each group member for sharing one story with the group. The stories can be personal experiences, or the facilitator can provide cues such as 'a story about the best manager you have worked with so far', ' a story about your biggest professional achievement and why you think you could attain it', etc.
The only rule of this icebreaker is that the story participants choose must have some value and a positive note in it. Storytelling sessions usually take longer as there are many individuals involved and each person gets a fair chance to tell their story.
Once all the stories have been shared, the person in charge of the session recapitulates the critical elements of each story and discusses how the group can use them for learning purposes.

iii. Strength-based Icebreakers

Strength-based icebreakers combine creativity and positive imagery into the team for getting the desired outcomes. Strength-based icebreaker is a recent phenomenon that came up as a part of an experiment to explore how appreciative learning and appreciative inquiry can help training

and orientation programs. Researchers promoting these more intellectual and individualized strategies argue that if icebreakers can rule out and work on building individual strengths and potencies, they can be more useful than the traditional AI icebreakers. Undoubtedly, the strength-based approach gave a new dimension to the application of AI icebreakers, but whether it can take over the conventional interventions is still a matter of investigation.

5 AI Worksheets (Incl. PDF)

1. Appreciative Inquiry Worksheet For Personal And Organizational Use

A short and straightforward worksheet for charting the four D's of appreciative inquiry, this worksheet is the perfect option for self-exploration and introspection of where we are and how we can reach the final destination by being more regardful and considerate of ourselves and others. The task is self-directed, comes in a two-page form, and works equally well as a personal or group AI intervention.

2. Appreciative Inquiry Worksheet by Change Activation

If you are looking to start an AI program in your workplace and expect a large number of individuals as potential participants to the program, then this could be a one-stop go to for you. Change Activation is an online resource that has it sorted for people and organizations using and promoting appreciative inquiry, and their worksheets and manuals are great to

have in the collection for a successful AI program.

3. Appreciative Inquiry Workbook for Children

This set of worksheets and exercises was used in a school program in Houston, Texas, and has valuable content for building AI in school children. The workbook includes simple illustrations of the 4D cycle of appreciative inquiry followed by tasks for self-reflection, positivity, and self-expression. It is undoubtedly a powerful resource to help kids understand and explore success through an appreciative inquiry from the very beginning of their lives.

4. Appreciative Inquiry Quiz

The AI quiz is a short exercise focused on building knowledge application, information exchange, and reading comprehension. The test comprises of multiple choice questions on the basics of appreciative inquiry and is easily scorable.

The quiz is suitable as a follow-up measure for participants of an AI program to ensure that they have internalized the concept and are ready to use them in their personal and professional lives.

5. The SOAR Worksheet

SOAR is an acronym for:
S – Strengths
O – Opportunities
A – Aspirations
R – Result Analysis
The SOAR worksheet is mainly

designed for professional purposes and contains evaluative questions with clear explanations of the four dimensions (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, and result analysis). The worksheet is free and relevant for almost all professional fields. For those who are looking for a great start to AI, the SOAR worksheet is a recommendable one to use.

Appreciative Inquiry Survey

Dr. David Cooperrider, the founder of the AI methodology, mentioned the Appreciative Inquiry Survey in his research publications and appreciative inquiry books. The survey gained immense popularity and was later used in different professional setups to introduce the concept of AI in employees.

Dr. Cooperrider noted about this first at the annual meeting of the ONL (Organization of Nurse Leaders of Massachusetts), in 2014, and previously used it as a part of the AI certifications he provided to professionals.

The survey is now used in healthcare, educational, and organizational sectors and offers comprehensive knowledge and suggestions of how appreciative the respondents are, and how they can be trained to enhance their AI skills.

Other Resources
There are no limits to the ways we can embrace and apply AI in our lives. Whether we practice them individually or enjoy its benefits from the group activities, the result of using AI is

nothing but heightened motivation and achievement.

We have already seen a few exercises and games in the previous sections, and here are some more riches on appreciative inquiry to get the ball rolling.

The Research on Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) helps us move beyond typical problem-solving approaches. AI helps companies and organizations believe in a better solution that can help create a new future.

The idea of AI emerged from the doctoral research of David Cooperrider at Case Western Reserve University. In his research, Cooperrider was studying the various factors that contributed to the effective functioning of an organization, which happened to be the Cleveland Clinic.

In his dissertation, Cooperrider presented a set of AI principles and a rationale, which included different phases of inquiry.

The AI philosophy focuses on leveraging organizations positive core strengths in order to design and redesign the systems within the organization to achieve a more sustainable and effective future.

AI initiatives are implemented using something known as the 4D Cycle

- Discovery
- Dream
- Design
- Destiny

This methodology allows an organization to identify its positive core strengths relative to the affirmative topic.

Image via Crisp

As a result of the Appreciative Inquiry process, concrete operational steps can then be formed for an organization to achieve its goals.

AI is based on the idea that human systems grow much more effectively in the direction of their persistent inquiries. This propensity is the strongest and the most sustainable when the means and ends of inquiry are positively correlated.

With this process, an organization can consciously construct their future based upon their positive core strengths.

Discovery

The discovery phase is all about identifying and appreciating the best of what is. It's about learning to focus on what is already working instead of what is not working. During this phase, an organization would focus on peak times of organizational excellence, and times when the organization was the most effective.

Other areas of focus would include things like leadership, relationships, core processes, values, structures, learning processes and methods of planning as well as external relationships.

Dream

The next step involves dreaming. In this phase, the organization would

envision its future. These dreams would stem from grounded examples from a positive past, instead of a pie in the sky idea.
This phase can be both exhilarating and invigorating.

Design

While the dream phase is focused on a vision of sustainability, a powerful purpose and a compelling statement of strategic intent, the design phase turns its attention to creating the ideal organization.
This ideal image is once again based upon positive practical examples grounded in the past.

Destiny

The destiny phase is all about bringing the discovery, dream and design phases into some kind of logical conclusion. It also forms the beginning of an appreciative learning culture. This phase is a time focused on continuous learning, adjustments, and improvisation. This final phase helps build momentum and a shared positive image of the future.

Interesting Studies

There have been many interesting case studies and success stories when it comes to AI.

Roadway

Roadway, a four billion dollar transportation company has held 65 AI summits to date. These summits have brought together nearly 300 people at a time who were all focused on innovative ways to re-design the facilities.

Through collaborative input, Roadway was able to improve customer peace of mind, collaboratively design the company's information system and move its stock from $14 dollars a share to $48 dollars a share over a five-year time frame.

The company documented significant positive changes in survey indexes of moral, labor-management trust, retention, alignment and building an innovative culture.

Nutrimental Foods in Brazil

Nutrimental Foods in Brazil was faced with the effects of globalization on the industry in their country. Nearly 80% of manufacturers in Brazil became victims of this globalization.
The CEO, Rodrigo Loures, used the AI process as a way to survive this onslaught and to enhance the company's culture.

The AI process was so successful that a short year later the company recorded a 300% increase in earnings, a 75% decrease in absenteeism, and was recognized as one of the 100 best places to work in Brazil.

Green Mountain Coffee Roasters Inc. When Green Mountain Coffee Roasters began using the AI process, their stock prices hovered around $18 a share. Five years later, the shares continue to grow, at $61 per share on the NASDAQ. The company was also ranked the No. 1 on Business Ethics Magazine's 2006 list of 100 Best Corporate Citizens.

AVON Mexico

AVON Mexico started with 3,000 employees at the time of the study. They had a sales force of 250,000 independent distributors.
AVON wanted to increase the number of women in senior management and in executive positions across the company.

The AVON Mexico location was the pilot project. When the project began the company had no women on the executive committee and very few female executives.

AVON used the 4-D model framework for the task at hand – Definition, Discovery, Dream and Destination. The definition phase began with the creation of a planning team made up of internal opinion leaders who could help co-define the topics to be studied. The team then planned the next step, which would be a 2-day workshop. The discovery phase began with the 2-day workshop in which they introduced the AI theory and philosophy.

- They then selected learning teams who would conduct interviews.
- Over the course of 2,000 interviews, the learning teams began uncovering best practices and compelling stories that illuminated what it looks like for men and women to work together.

The dream phase involved writing reports and summarizing the key learnings. This was reinforced with stories, presenting a wide range of possibilities for achieving gender equity.

The reports showed that the ideal was already happening and how it might be possible to foster even more of the same. They also discovered what was possible:

- Men and women working together in teams.
- A clearly defined plan of action for steps moving forward ensuring male and female co-chairmen for project teams.

Within six short months, the first female executive was appointed to the Executive Committee. Avon's profit also increased dramatically. The division then won "The Catalyst Award" which was given each year to a company that had policies and practices that benefited women in the company significantly.

A Look at Appreciative Inquiry in Education

Appreciative Inquiry can also be very beneficial to education. In one study done at California State University, San Bernardino, scholars looked at the AI process as a path to change in terms of education. (Buchanan, 2014)
Most state and federal initiatives for educational change stem from a deficit model that examines what is wrong and how to fix that.

Appreciative Inquiry focuses on what is right and what is already working. The study done explored the various relationships and leadership as well as organizational learning qualities that existed within five unified school districts in the High Desert.
The study used AI as a process to

implement the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) to embrace a distributed leadership structure and to create the conditions for a more impactful implementation of the next reform.

The research question involved examining the relationship between the educators' appreciative capacity, distributed leadership, organizational learning, and preparedness in order to implement a state-mandated curricular reform, the CCSS. The study had the potential to transform educational practice providing a valuable template for ongoing educational reform. The study used the 5-D Model of AI, which focuses on taking a strength-based approach to improve school culture.

This 5-D approach prepares organizations for continuous growth in terms of strengths in the system. The study examined AI in terms of distributed leadership and organizational learning. The context for the study was the educators' preparedness to implement the CCSS reform.

Study participants were drawn from school districts in the High Desert of San Bernardino County, the largest geographical county in the U.S. and home to 33 school districts. The district employs approximately 2,212 teachers and 177 administrators. The hypothesis and proposed analysis were as follows:

- AI capacities inventory will be moderately correlated with the 8 principles of AI.
- Participative decision-making will be moderately correlated with the functions of Leadership.
- Dialogue will be moderately correlated with the idea of taking risks.
- Taking risks will be moderately correlated with experimentation.
- Experimentation will be moderately correlated with dialogue.

The study concluded that Appreciative Inquiry alone is not enough. Distributed leadership and organizational learning are also necessary components to implement successful change.

Many efforts to change will fail even when people have a voice because leaders may fail to sustain input from those voices. Distributed leadership and organizational learning each partially mediated the Appreciative Inquiry to Common Core State Standards preparedness relationship. However, the study revealed that meaningful change takes time.

Participating educators did report that the constructs of the study were related. Furthermore, it was determined that real change cannot often be accomplished in a static one day workshop. Growth needs to be nurtured with continual input and feedback in order to monitor the change to adjust for new information which is continually being gathered.

The study did demonstrate that Appreciative Inquiry is a good fit for

implementing educational reform. According to Cooperrider and Whitney, leaders embracing appreciative inquiry "send a clear and consistent message: positive change is the pathway to success around here." (Cooperrider and Whitney. 2005. p. 46)

Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life

Appreciative Inquiry distinguishes itself from other organizational visioning and change models by the fact that it seeks to focus on the best of what is. It uses this focus as a platform to build future directions. This realm of AI is based upon a "sociorationalist" view of science. Thinkers in organizational behavior are beginning to see why an administrative science based on a physical science model is not really adequate any longer.

It is not adequate because it is not a means for understanding or contributing in relevant ways to the workings of complex, organized human systems.

The sociorationalist vision of science is of great importance. It is of such importance that students, organizational scientists, action-researchers, managers and educators can no longer ignore it.
This kind of viewpoint is very powerful in terms of helping social systems adapt and evolve.
According to the essay " Appreciative Inquiry in Organizational Life," there are five ways by which theory achieves its exceptional potency:

- Establishing a conceptual and/or contextual frame.
- Providing a presumption of logic.
- Transmitting a solid system of values.
- Creating a language that serves the group.
- Creating a vision of possibility or constraint.

Establishing a conceptual and contextual frame helps shape perceptions, cognitions, and preferences, most often at a preconscious level.
For example, when American eugenicists attributed biological determinism as a factor in poverty and as a reason for the inferior genetic construct of poor people, they could not immediately see a different remedy or perspective.

On the other hand, when Joseph Goldberg theorized that pellagra was not determined by genetics, but caused by cultural influences, he could then discover a way to cure it.
By seeing things differently, he overcame the notion that pellagra, a disease typically caused by a lack of the vitamin niacin and often attributed to the dietary habits of the poor, was a disease faced only by the poor.

Providing presumptions of logic is also important. One example is the typical performance evaluation, which is normally done on an individual basis. To adequately assess performance, one really needs to examine the individual in relation to the organizational environment. Looking at the whole setting often changes things because it helps give

you perspective.

Transmitting a system of values is also important. One example is the role that scientific theory played on slavery, colonialism and a belief in the genetic superiority of certain races.

In the 1800s, this theory led a number of America's highest-ranking scientific researchers to unconsciously miscalculate so-called objective data. Samuel Morton, a scientist with two medical degrees gained his reputation by measuring the size of cranial cavities as it relates to brain size. He objectively ranked them by measuring physical characteristics

What he determined was that whites were on top, Indians in the middle and blacks on the bottom, at least as far as size goes, which he equated with the mental worth of races.

This, of course, is not an accurate assumption whatsoever which is where a system of values could have come into play.

Creating a group building language is important as well. It is well known and established that groups are formed around common ideas that are expressed in and through some kind of shared language.

This shared language makes communication and interaction possible.

The sociorationalist philosophy also involves extending visions of possibility or constraint. Theories gain a generative capacity by extending their vision of what is possible. This, in turn, helps expand the realm of possibility.

In order for action-research to reach its full potential as a vehicle for social innovation, it also needs to begin to advance theoretical knowledge of consequence.

A good theory may very well be one of the best means human beings have for affecting change in a postindustrial world.

Through our assumptions and our choice of methodology, each of us essentially creates the world we later discover.

Relevant reading: Appreciative Inquiry in Business

Using AI to Facilitate Organizational Development

Appreciative Inquiry is also a wonderful tool for organizational development. AI accomplishes this by engaging organizational stakeholders and everyone from the factory floor to the executive suite.

Doing this kind of activity without taking into consideration how many years of seniority one has is transformative. During the AI process, one might also bring in external voices such as clients or community stakeholders, in order to expand an organizations' understanding.

In more traditional methods, the process usually involves asking very different questions such as what are the key problems or what is the root cause of failure. This is a very different approach than the AI approach when it comes to organizational development (see our post on AI questions).

While it may be important to understand the root cause or the problem, the AI process helps organizational leaders reframe the problem and look at the situation

differently.

AI is also based on the idea that organizations are made up of networks of people. To quote David Cooperrider:

"Get people talking about a compelling shared future, and you begin creating new levels of understanding and the future in the process."

Let's consider how you would feel upon asking yourself this question – "Am I feeling tired today?"
By asking yourself this question, you would begin to focus on how tired you really were. If you were to ask yourself another question instead, such as "What makes me feel energized today?" you would formulate a much different answer because you would immediately focus on how good you felt.
It's a simple shift, but a powerful one.

The Six Questions of Appreciative Inquiry

Nearly any organization could benefit from asking AI's six questions.

- What led me here?
- What is the high point of the past?
- What do I value?
- What is changing?
- What's the best future I can imagine?
- What will it take to get us there?

Looking back at what led you to a certain point, can really help you focus on the good aspects of your situation. For example, if you were looking at what brought you to a company or led to you to be a part of a certain team, you could think back to what originally attracted you to your team or company. You could explore your initial impressions and your level of excitement. These are also very positive things.

In looking at the high points of the past, you could focus on those times when you felt truly engaged and proud of your involvement.
By focusing on those things you value, you begin focusing on those things or traits you want to preserve going forward.
The next question, what is changing, gives participants a chance to ground the topic in the current reality or situation, which is also important.
This might involve looking at current or future trends, competition or even new developments in technology.
Examining the best possible future helps people push their dreams a little.
It also stimulates the imagination and removes roadblocks.

Framing this question in a playful manner is also a great way to stimulate the imagination. For example, you could ask yourself what life would look like if you fell asleep one night and woke up a year and a half or so later.
You would most likely see major changes in your life, which would prompt you to think outside of the box.
Finally, looking at what it would take you to get somewhere helps you form a strategy that can work going forward.

Focusing on three things you could make a priority, or 3–5 actionable items, is one way to do this.

Using these six questions is a great way to have a different conversation, a much more positive one.

Applying Appreciative Inquiry in Social Work

AI can also be very beneficial when it comes to social work. Social workers are professionals who help empower citizens.
They do this by helping one understand their respective rights and obligations in relation to their condition or position in life.
The idea of empowerment is a wonderful strategic tool that helps strengthen the individual. It also helps the individual take ownership of their life and their situation.
The social worker is a kind of intermediary between the problems and the resources needed to solve those problems.

Applying AI concepts to the realm of social work can help make the social worker much more effective. More often than not, allocating resources for providing problem-centered social services does not actually solve the problems for which the services were designed.
AI involves a paradigm shift from a problem-centered approach the typical social worker faces to an appreciative approach.

Virginia Satir, a social worker, and family therapist, based her professional activity on improving the communication within the family. Satir's work was positively focused and came from a positive consideration of the human being.

According to Satir, the family must nourish and become characterized by being a provider of adequate self-esteem via direct and assertive communication.
Satir taught the importance of change and of growth via communication, which was based on self-respect when interacting with others.
In the history of Social Work, theoretical contributions can also be seen in Mary Richmond's work. Richmond's contributions strengthened the person through the use of skill or chances of the person and also through the use of their will to solve their social troubles, which departed from any social determinism that may have been pre-established.

There are clear links between Appreciative Inquiry and strengths. The AI approach is a solution-focused approach for things like social work, health, workforce development, and community development. AI can, of course, also be used for things like coaching and even leadership development.

Those in social services and even health care understand the importance of asking the right questions.
If one focuses on someone's difficulties and hardships, people will continue to feel hopeless and stuck. Focusing on questions about successes, skills, and strengths, can help someone think differently.

Helping someone acknowledge their achievements is a great way to help them focus on the positive. As they focus on their strengths, they begin to feel enthusiastic, which can help them

pull themselves out of a desperate situation.

It's also important to understand that AI is not a single set of skills per se or a particular method. It is essentially a set of core principles and ideas that can help change existing patterns of thinking and patterns of conversations. It is also a great innovative way to give voice to a new conversation and a new perspective, expanding what is possible in any given moment.

Other Fields of Application

Appreciative Inquiry can also be very useful in the world of sales. One case study examined the use of an AI Model by salespeople for a distributor in the Midwest.

A model was developed that was based on customer orientated selling (SOCO) of salespeople and the subsequent adaptive selling behaviors. The salespeople were surveyed for their adaptive behaviors using an ADAPTS survey model. The salespeople were also surveyed for their customer orientated selling through the SOCO survey.

In a sample of approximately 20 salespeople, which were interviewed by phone, the interviewers determined their use of AI in their particular sales approach.

The results showed a positive approach was utilized by salespeople, but not as predicted.

One of the interesting findings was the usage of the AI approach to developing personal relationships.

Many of the salespeople interviewed mentioned that they often work to develop personal relationships with clients. This also helped to build trust. Discovering what their customer's goals were and helping them achieve those goals is a big part of the process.

It was also discovered that the salespeople used two processes at once. One process involved building personal relationships. Another process was focused on selling.

The process that involved building personal relationships often utilized AI elements. This involved finding the customer's passions and then supporting that passion to the extent that they could.

Finding out what someone likes, being interested in their life and even what their kids are doing, can help you get to know them without being overly pushy.

The study discovered that while some salespeople used the positive-based sales approach, not all did. The next step would then be to develop a formal sales process built on this positive model.

Another interesting usage of Appreciative Inquiry involved the U.S. Navy.

Dr. Ronald Fry, a Professor of Organizational Behavior at Case Western Reserve University, used AI principles for the U.S. Navy, which resulted in a $2 billion cost savings from the creation of a Centre for Positive Change.

AI can be used across many sectors of life including but not limited to:

- Non-profits
- Sales

- Educational Institutions
- Governmental Organizations
- Communities
- Coaching, etc.

A few examples of how AI can transform companies and organizations include the use of AI in: The United Nations Global Compact. Imagine Chicago (an AI inspired community development process copied all over the world). Wal-Mart and its use of AI for its global sustainability.

The International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry

The International Journal of Appreciative Inquiry is a joint effort between The David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry, and Kessels & Smit, The Learning Company.
The partnership strives to build a community of individuals and organizations that support a flourishing model of AI practitioners, who work to continually support one another in their work practices.

The David L. Cooperrider Center for Appreciative Inquiry provides cutting edge educational content in both AI and Positive Development while also providing AI-related organizational consultancy services. They also serve as a scholarship incubator to help advance the theory and practice of AI. Kessels & Smit, the Learning Company, is an international group of professionals who have a passion for learning and development.

They see themselves as a laboratory where they experiment and find their own answers for learning and development issues. They have a firm belief that the best solutions are often developed in partnerships.
They are also interested in developing collaborations with universities, so that research can continue. The overall goal is to create a movement that helps to build an appreciative, curious and democratic society.
The site is filled with interesting articles and blogs including content such as:

- Building Resilience with Appreciative Inquiry: A Leadership Journey through Hope, Despair, and Forgiveness.
- Appreciating Practitioners and the Power of Discovery – Nourish to Flourish.
- The Power of Narrating and Listening: Connecting Through Stories.
- The Intervention Clock – Arjan van Vembde
- Many, many others.

A Take Home Message

Appreciative Inquiry has had a profound impact on organizational development practices around the world.
It is a strength-based approach that strives to create a positive framework. These principles can be applied both personally and professionally.
AI is a life-centric and positive approach to change. Appreciative Inquiry utilizes theories from organizational behavior, the science of sociology and psychology along with some metaphysics tossed in.

The AI methodology assumes that every system, human and otherwise, already has something that works right; it's just a matter of identifying it and building upon it.
AI is a system that seeks to build on a model of positive change that can be sustainable, and, as a result, expand the capacity for wellbeing allowing for a culture that thrives.
For further reading, please see: The 20 Best Books on Appreciative Inquiry

Communication exercises and Game

What are Communication Exercises and Games?

Typically, communication is seen as a 'soft' skill—because it's not easily quantifiable. Compared to profits, losses, and even risk, it is intangible. Unless it's either terrible or completely absent. Communication exercises and games are interactional activities that aim to develop how we relate to one another, including how we share information and get along.

They can be one-on-one or team exercises, but the goal is the same: they help us develop our interpersonal skills and improve our capacity to relate.

The Importance of Communication in the Workplace

Communication is a whole lot more than just talking—although, that is a fundamental part of relationship-building and knowledge-transfer. To really grasp how big of an impact it has, we can touch on some of the theory. Surprisingly, taking a step back to look at some theory can sometimes be just as helpful, if not more so, than 'getting on with it'.

What are Workplace Communication Skills?

Succinctly, they help us convey information to others in an effective way. And, they go above and beyond coherent speech in many ways—we talk, we use silence, body language, tone of voice, and eye-contact—voluntarily and unconsciously. With a broad and beautiful rainbow of ways to communicate, then, how do we know what's considered a skill? What's noise and what's a message? What matters?

Drawing on empirical literature on communication skills in the workplace, we can look at Maguire and Pitcheathly's (2002) study of doctors for a good example. In medical professions, it's particularly critical not just to extract and interpret information—often, from conversation partners who lack crucial information themselves—but to convey it empathetically and with clarity. The authors described several key communication skills as follows.

The ability to elicit patients' problems and concerns.

Swap 'patients' with clients, co-workers, managers, and so forth, and we can see that this is readily applicable in many other work situations. That is, the ability to understand, explore and clarify what others are talking about, and to solicit more details if and when the situation requires it. Doctors also described effective communication as being able to summarize what the patient/other had related to correct information and display understanding.

Benefits: In an objective sense, we need to extract information so we can channel our efforts accordingly. Deadlines, role boundaries, budgets, and the 'why, how, what' of tasks. But active listening encourages pleasant social interactions, which in turn, these boost our well-being and life satisfaction (Baumeister & Leary,

1995).

The ability to deliver information effectively.

The doctors studied also checked with their patients what their beliefs were about what was wrong. In other workplaces, team situations call for clarity—a shared goal is the ideal, but very often we come at situations with at least a few different beliefs. Alternatively, we may be quick to assume that others understand what we are saying when situations actually require further explanation.

To deal with this, the doctors:

- Reorganized information where required (e.g. into categories);
- Checked that patients understood them before moving on; and
- Checked whether they wanted further information.

Benefits: Our messages need to make sense if we want to convey information in a meaningful way. That applies both to our language and the extent to which we empathize. Effective information delivery helps us define goals, transfer knowledge, and successfully accomplish shared tasks.

Discussing treatment options.

Communication, in its most basic form at least, is dyadic—a two-way, and (one would hope) mutually beneficial flow of information. In this study, giving a diagnosis and treatment options was only one part of the job. Doctors described how important it

was to see whether patients wanted to participate in choosing their treatment. They determined their perspectives before decision-making; in other settings, this is inviting participation and engagement.

Benefits: As discussed, information delivery is crucial, but our focus here is opening up discussions. Giving others a chance to contribute allows us to factor in more perspectives and diverse opinions. We can encourage more engagement, commitment, and complement one another's different skills for better results.

Being supportive.

Doctors described empathy in terms of feedback and validation. They showed that they understood how their patients were feeling to relate at an interpersonal level; where they didn't know, they at least made a stab at empathizing through educated guesses.

Benefits: We don't need to look too far to find sources of workplace stress that might be impacting our colleagues. By empathizing, we not only build better relationships, but we show that we are available as key 'job resources' – social support for those around us to reduce the negative impacts of our job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Put even more simply, we make work a nicer place to be while avoiding unnecessary conflict.

Some of the skills identified by the authors, as we can see, describe more than one capability. As humans, we're

complex. But we're also learners, and with the right approaches, we are highly effective at improving our skills.

7 Tips on Improving Communication Skills at Work

Maguire and Pitcheathly's (2002) clinical review offered several learning tips, the first of which was an emphasis on proper communication skills training. As well as identifying key communication deficits and their root causes, these included several that relate to our knowledge of positive psychology and communication.

3 Tips for Creating a Supportive Learning Environment

First, we need to create an optimal learning environment if we want to maximize our improvement; in this sense:

- Communication skills need to be modeled and practiced, not simply taught – a nod to experiential learning, which is frequently emphasized in emotional intelligence learning (SEL) (Haertel et al., 2005; Kolb, 2014);
- They are best learned and practiced in safe, supportive environments, which studies show are central to learning behavior (Edmonson et al., 2004); and
- Constructive performance feedback is helpful, but "only once all positive comments have been exhausted" (Maguire & Pitcheathly, 2002: 699). Peer feedback is also a useful job resource when it comes to work engagement; as a form of

social support, it can help stimulate our learning and development— that includes communication skills (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Bakker et al., 2008).

4 Tips for Enhancing Communication Skills

We can also look at the business literature for some more support of what we identified earlier as key communication skills. Breaking these down into tips, here are 4 fairly broad ways we can enhance our communication skills to increase our effectiveness and well-being.

1. Work on your emotional perception

Perception of emotions is a key component of Mayer and Salovey's emotional intelligence framework and covers the ability to read others' non-verbal cues as well as their potential moods (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

At the individual level, we can make conscious use of this EQ skill to gauge how others are feeling. Is your colleague overwhelmed, perhaps? Is now the best possible time to ask them for help on a task? Or, have you noticed someone in the corner of the room who has been dying to contribute to the meeting?

2. Practice self-awareness

Our non-verbal behavior and the way we speak is critical. Different studies vary on exactly how much of our intended message (and credibility) is non-verbal, but it's undoubtedly

important (DePaulo & Friedman, 1998; Knapp et al., 2013).

When the words we speak convey one message and our body another, we risk confusion and potentially, we jeopardize our intended impact. To enhance our influencing skills and the quality of our working relationships with others, it helps to practice being aware of your own non-verbal behaviors.

3. Give others a chance to engage

Communication is a two-way street, at the very least. And as more than one collective intelligence researcher has pointed out, teams are more than the sum of their parts (Woolley et al., 2010).

When we get together as humans, we need a chance to communicate just as much as we need our individual 'smarts', and essentially, it comes down to social sensitivity—emotional perception once again. We can look at Leary's Rose for more insights on how and why, but this time, the tip is to understand when to communicate or step back (Leary, 2004).

4. Practice listening

Talking is essentially a form of content delivery, and it's not really communication unless we listen. Active listening involves engaging with our co-workers and bringing empathy to the table to enhance the quality of our dialogue.

Sometimes mentioned along with 'reflective questioning', it involves,

"restating a paraphrased version of the speaker's message, asking questions when appropriate, and maintaining moderate to high nonverbal conversational involvement" (Weger Jr et al., 2014: 13). It helps us create more clarity, take in information more effectively, and develop our workplace relationships through empathetic engagement (Nikolova et al., 2013).

3 Games and Exercises to Improve Workplace Communication Skills

Some of these activities will require a facilitator, and some just a group of colleagues. None of them require professional facilitation per se, and any participant can easily volunteer to keep the process on track.

1. Back-to-Back Drawing

This exercise is about listening, clarity and developing potential strategies when we communicate. In communicating expectations, needs, and more, it helps to clarify and create common ground. This can show what happens when we don't…

For this activity, you'll need an even number of participants so everybody can have a partner. Once people have paired off, they sit back-to-back with a paper and pencil each. One member takes on the role of a speaker, and the other plays the part of the listener.

Over five to ten minutes, the speaker describes a geometric image from a prepared set, and the listener tries to

turn this description into a drawing without looking at the image.

Then, they talk about the experience, using several of the following example questions:

Speaker Questions

- What steps did you take to ensure your instructions were clear? How could these be applied in real-life interactions?
- Our intended messages aren't always interpreted as we mean them to be. While speaking, what could you do to decrease the chance of miscommunication in real-life dialogue?

Listener Questions

- What was constructive about your partner's instructions?
- In what ways might your drawing have turned out differently if you could have communicated with your partner?

2. Effective Feedback in "I" Mode

Defensiveness is a root cause of miscommunication and even conflict in the workplace. We're not always ready to receive and learn from criticism, especially when it's delivered insensitively. This exerciseintroduces "I" statements, which describe others' behavior objectively while allowing the speaker to express the impact on their feelings.

Employees can pair off or work alone, in either case, they will need a worksheet of imaginary scenarios like this one. Together or solo, they can create "I" statements about how the imaginary scenario makes them feel. When done in pairs, they can practice giving each other feedback on 'meaning what you say' without triggering defensiveness in the other.

3. Storytelling with CCSG

Storytelling is an engaging way to convey information; when it's positive information, narratives are also highly effective means of motivating and inspiring others (Tomasulo & Pawelski, 2012). Appreciative Inquiry, for example, is one type of positive psychology intervention that uses storytelling in a compelling way, as a means to share hopes and build on our shared strengths.

Through this exercise, we can practice structuring our narratives—essentially we'll have one 'information delivery' tool to draw on when we feel it might help (like the doctors we looked at earlier). CCSG is a structure, and it involves:

C: Characters

C: Conflict

S: Struggle

G: Goal

To use the structure as an exercise, participants simply relate a narrative using CCSG. For example, one team member might describe a past success of the group or team, where

their collective strengths helped them succeed. The Characters would then be whoever was involved, the Conflict may be a challenge the team faced (a new growth opportunity, perhaps). The Struggle might be something like geographical distance between team members, and the Goal would be just that: their objective or success.

Visit this site for more details.

3 Activities to Improve Communication Between Employees

Because communication is so multi-faceted, we've included a selection of different activity types. These interpersonal and team communication games cover topics such as misinterpreting information, awareness of our assumptions and engaging others.

1. Direction Direction

This activity is a slight twist on Chinese Whispers in that it uses a complex set of instructions rather than just a sentence. And here, we have only one link rather than an entire chain of people. Otherwise, the idea is identical—information gets misinterpreted thanks to noise, but we can improve our verbal communication and listening skills to minimize this risk.

First, pick a game with enough instructions that the information is a challenge to memorize. With 2+ co-workers, pick one person (a speaker) to whom you'll explain the instructions. They are responsible for passing the information on to the rest of their team. The group then needs to play the game with only the instructions from the speaker.

Once they've finished the game, start some dialogue about what happened:

- Was there any lack of clarity around the instructions?
- What might have contributed to this confusion?
- What are some key things to be aware of when we give or listen to instructions?

This activity comes from The Wrecking Yard of Games and Activities (Amazon).

2. Mimes

Here's an exercise on the pivotal role of clarification. When it comes to tasks and expectations, it goes without saying that clarity helps us avoid lots of unwanted things. And clarity plays a role on a larger scale when it comes to our roles more broadly, in fact, it's a psychological resource under the Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Succinctly, ambiguity contributes to stress, and clarity is empowering—something that is easy to overlook and which this game reminds us of.

Any number of co-workers can participate in this very simple mime game. You'll need a list of topics for people to act out, then invite players to break off into groups of two. In

these pairs, they will take turns being a mime and being an asker. The mime reads the card, then attempts to act out what's on it (you'll first need to decide on a theme, like weather, activities, or what have you). While the asker can pose questions, the mime can only act out their answers.

It might unearth an awareness of implicit assumptions, bringing our conscious attention to the role these play in our judgments. Potential discussion questions will help you unpack this further:

How did your questioning skills help you comprehend what was going on?
What value do questioning skills have when we're trying to understand others?
What factors sometimes prevent us from asking questions when they might actually be useful?

3. Let's Face It

This exercise from The Big Book of Conflict Resolution Games is about self-awareness. How large of a role does it really play, and how does it influence our communication?

There is no limit to the group size for this game, which requires only enough pens and paper for everybody. It doesn't take very long, either, and can be played in as little as ten to twenty minutes—perfect for breaking up the day.

Start with groups (or sub-groups) of between four and ten players; in each of these, someone will need to volunteer as a facilitator. This facilitator simply keeps the game on track and gets the discussion going afterward.

Each player writes down a feeling on a small piece of paper, folds it, then passes it to the volunteer facilitator. From him or her, they take another piece that someone else has written, and tries to act out that feeling to the rest of their group—using only their facial expressions. The other participants try to guess that emotion and this should lead to a talk about the role of expressions. Useful discussion points include:

What feelings do we understand the easiest, when only facial expressions are used? Why might that be?
Describe some contexts where facial expressions play a particularly important role in communication?
In what ways can facial expressions influence our ability to deal with misunderstandings?

3 Active Listening Games and Exercises for the Workplace

Through active listening, we can enhance our understanding of other people's perspectives (Drollinger et al., 2006). Practicing it during our interactions with others enables us to validate their feelings and potentially avoid the stress of misunderstandings. Exercises that boost our active listening skills help us engage better, through empathy, body language, and non-judgment where required (Rogers & Farson, 1957).

At the end of the day, active listening

games can impact positively on our relationships by encouraging us to practice specific techniques, and these, in turn, find support in the empirical literature (Weger et al., 2014).

1. Concentric Circles

This large group exercise works best when you already have a topic for discussion. It is used a lot during inclusive strategy sessions, where diverse opinions are valuable but team size can hamper rather than facilitate good communication. For this exercise, everybody has a handout which summarizes the goals of the discussion.

Two circles of chairs are set up, one inside the other. Participants who sit in the middle are 'talkers' while those in the outer ring are 'watchers', and these roles should be allocated prior to the exercise. Armed with their handouts, talkers begin to engage with the topic. They use the goals as a guide for the conversation, while the watchers listen carefully and make notes.

After fifteen minutes of discussion, the watchers and talkers switch circles— those who were listening before now sit on the inner circle for a fifteen-minute conversation. It can be on the pre-chosen topic or on a different one, but the activity must conclude with a debrief.

During this debrief, they reflect collectively on the experience itself:

- How was being a watcher, compared to being a listener?

- What did you feel when you were observing from the outer circle, listening but not contributing? How did this influence your learnings, rather than providing your own input?
- In what ways did being a watcher impact your perspectives of the talkers? What about their dynamics?

This gamestorming communications exercise is based on a team coaching technique by Time To Grow Global.

2. 3-minute Vacation

Here is another talker and listener exercise that can be done in pairs. In a larger group of participants, this can be done multiple times as players pair up with different conversation partners. And in each pair, of course, team members will take turns being listener and talker.

The talker discusses their dream vacation for three minutes, describing what they would like best about it but without specifying where it should be. While they talk, the listener pays close attention to the explicit and underlying details, using only non-verbal cues to show that they are listening.

After the 3-minute vacation, the listener summarizes the key points of their conversation partner's dream vacation—as a holiday sales pitch. After they've 'pitched' the ideal vacation spot in the space of a few minutes, the pair discuss how accurately the listener understood the talker.

They outline how they could improve their dialogue with regard to active listening, then swap roles. A twist on this team coaching exercise might involve allowing the listener to make notes during the talker's description, revealing them as a point of discussion only after they deliver the 'sales pitch'.

Used with permission from Time To Grow Global.

3. Pet Peeve

How about a chance to blow off some steam and get that empathetic listening ear at the same time? And at the same time, helping your co-worker practice active listening?

In this game, one colleague has a full 60 seconds to rant about something which irks them. It's best if this isn't inappropriate for the workplace, but at the same time, it doesn't have to be work-related. If you hate pop-up ads, for instance, you've already got great material for your rant.

The first colleague (Player A) simply lets loose while the second person (Player B) listens carefully, trying to cut through the noise by singling out:

- What Player A really cares about – for instance, smooth user experience on the internet;
- What they value – e.g. clarity and transparent advertisements;
- What matters to them – e.g. getting work done, doing their online shopping in peace, or a more intuitive, user-friendly ad blocker.

Player B then 'decodes' the rant by repeating it back to Player A, isolating the key positive points without the fluff or negativity. They can use some variant on the following sentence stems to guide their decoding:

"You value…"
"You care about…"
"You believe that…matters a lot"

Then, they can switch over and repeat the game again. As you can probably see, the activity is aimed at helping teammates appreciate that feedback has positive goals.

3 Team Building Communication Games and Exercises

When we give attention to our relationships as well as the task(s) at hand, we create trust and collaborate more effectively. The games and exercises in this section are about connecting on a human level so that we can communicate with more emotional intelligence in the workplace.

1. Personal Storytelling

In large organizations especially, we may only bring a part of ourselves to the workplace. If we want to communicate empathetically and build relationships with co-workers— important social resources—personal storytelling is one way we can build our teams while developing communication skills.

There is no set time or place for storytelling, but it works best when a story is followed by an invitation to the group to give input. Feel free to use the CCSG technique described earlier in this article, and that the speaker uses a reflective tone, rather than purely informative, when addressing the group.

To try out personal storytelling, set aside a teambuilding afternoon, meeting, or workshop. Ask the group to each prepare a reading that they will share. Here are some ideas that nicely blend the emotional with the professional:

- Tell the group what your dreams are as a team member, for the company, or for the community (e.g. Whitney & Cooperrider, 2011);
- Tell them about your first job, or your very first working experience;
- If you've got a budget, give team members a small amount of money each to do something good with. Then, let them share the story of what they did with it;
- When onboarding new people, invite the group to bring in an object which symbolizes their wishes for the new team member. Then, let them share the story behind the object.

More personal storytelling ideas can be found in this toolcard.

2. I'm Listening

We learn from our peers' feedback, and that learning is most productive in a supportive work environment (Odom et al., 1990; Goh, 1998). Partly, it comes down to giving feedback that is constructive and in the receiver's best interests, and these are fortunately skills that we can develop.

I'm Listening can be played with an even number of participants, as they will need to find a partner for this one-on-one game. In the book mentioned below, there are also hand-outs, but you can prepare your own for this activity. Ideally, more than one 'Talker Scenario' and more than one 'Listener Scenario':

- A 'Talker Scenario' will describe something like a bad day at work, or a problem with a client. In a small paragraph, it should outline what's gone wrong (maybe it's everything from a cracked smartphone screen to a delay during your commute). This scenario is followed by an instruction for the Talker to play a role: "You call up your colleague for some support" or "You decide to let off some steam by talking to your co-worker".
- A 'Listener Scenario' is a bit different. In several sentences, the scenario outlines a situation where they are approached by a colleague with problems but might have other things on their plate. They might be up to their ears in work, or their colleague's complaints might seem trivial. After reading the scenario of their context (e.g. it's a hectic day, your computer's just crashed), the Listener's role is to act it out while they respond, for example: "Show with your body language that you're

far too busy".

The exercise is a good starting point for a conversation about constructive listening strategies. Together, the pairs can come up with more productive, empathetic, and appropriate responses, with the acting experience fresh in mind. Some discussion points include:

As Talker, what feedback did your Listener appear to give?
How did you feel about the feedback you received?
How might you create some listening and feedback approaches based on this?

This game comes from The Big Book of Conflict Resolution Games (Amazon).

3. "A What?"

Inspired by the kid's game Telephone, this exercise draws on different elements of effective communication between team members, while highlighting where things often go wrong. It works with any sized team and requires only a facilitator and some novel objects that can be passed between participants. So, plush toys, tennis balls, or similar—but the more imaginative they are, the better.

Players stand in a circle and pass two of the objects along to each other. One object should be passed clockwise, and the other counter-clockwise. Prior to passing on the toy, ball, or what have you, players ask something about the object and answer a question

about it. Essentially, the message will change as the object gets passed along, and players will need to stay sharp to remember who they are passing and talking to.

For instance:

- The facilitator starts out by handing one of the items to the person on their right, saying "Ellen, this is a tattered elephant with pink ears."
- Ellen then needs to ask "A What?", prompting you to repeat the item's name.
- Taking the item, Ellen turns to her right and repeats the same with Pedro: "Pedro, this is a tattered elephant with pink ears." Pedro asks, "A What?"
- Before she passes the item to Pedro, however, Ellen's answer to his question must come back to the facilitator, who says it aloud. This way, it's possible to see if and how the message changes as it goes around the group. By the time it reaches Hassan, who is Person 5, for instance, it might be "A grey elephant with tattered ears."
- Once people get the gist of how to play with one item, the facilitator adds in the second by passing it to the left.

Debrief with a chat about the communication that went on. Did anybody end up with both items at once? How did they cope? Did others help them?

Other questions include:

- How did communication look with

a longer or shorter chain? Where was the weakest link, and why?
- In what ways did players support each other?
- How did you feel during the game? What was the impact of that emotion on you and on others?

This exercise comes from this Teambuilding Facilitation Manual: A Guide to Leading and Facilitating Teambuilding Activities, by Penn State University.

3 Communication Exercises and Activities for Groups

A lot of team situations are about creativity. We each have unique experiences, competencies, and viewpoints, the way we collaborate inevitably decides whether we synergize or fall flat. Here are two activities that will help your team work together creatively to solve a problem, as well as one about the role of silence.

1. Crazy Comic

This is a fun game in communication skills that will also give team members some creative freedom. They will need to communicate those creative ideas to one another, but also engage in joint decision-making for the activity to be a success. And that activity is to create a comic together, using their complementary skills and communication to realize a shared vision.

You'll need more than 9 participants for this activity, as well as paper, drawing, and coloring materials for each colleague. From your larger group of co-workers, let them form smaller groups of about 3-6 participants and tell them their task is to produce a unique comic strip, with one frame from each person. So, a 6-person group will make a 6-frame strip, and so forth.

Between them, they need to decide the plot of the comic, who will be carrying out which tasks, and what the frames will contain. The catch is that they all need to draw at the same time, so they will not be seeing the preceding frame in the strip. Make it extra-hard if you like, by instructing them not to look at one another's creative progress as they draw, either.

Afterward, trigger some discussion about the way they communicated; some example questions include:

How critical was communication throughout this exercise?
What did you find the toughest about this activity?
Why was it important to make the decisions together?

This exercise was adapted from 104 Activities that build (Amazon).

2. Blindfold Rope Square

This is similar in some ways to the Back-to-Back Drawing exercise above. That is, the Blindfold Rope Square exercise challenges us to look at how we communicate verbally,

then think about ways to develop our effectiveness. In a large group of participants or employees, particularly, we often need to cut through the noise with a clear and coherent message—and this game can be played with even a large group of people.

You will need about ten meters of rope and a safe place for employees to walk around blindfolded in. So, flat and ideally with no walls or tripping hazards.

1. Explain first up that the goal of the task is effective verbal communication, and give each participant a blindfold.
2. Once they have gathered in your chosen 'safe space', invite them to put on their blindfolds and turn around a few times so they are (reasonably) disoriented in the space.
3. Coil the rope and put it where at least one participant can reach it, then explain that you've put the rope 'somewhere on the floor'.
4. Tell them their shared aim is to collaborate: first to find the rope, then to lay it out into a perfect square together on the floor.
5. Let the participants go about it, taking care not to let any accidents occur. Tell them to let you know once they've agreed that the job is done.
6. Finally, everybody removes their blindfolds, and it's time for feedback. This is the perfect opportunity to congratulate them or start a discussion about what they might do differently the next time around.

Find more information on the exercise here.

3. Zen Counting

Silence is not always a bad thing. Sometimes it gives us a chance to reflect, in others it creates a space for others to take the floor. Nonetheless, we're often inclined to view it as awkward—a gap to be filled or avoided—rather than a chance to listen. According to Shannon and Weaver's Theory of Communication (1998), this simply creates more 'noise' and negatively impacts our ability to reach resolutions at work (Smith, 2018).

Zen counting is incredibly straightforward: team members simply sit in a circle but face outward. With nobody in particular starting first, they are asked to count from one to ten as a group, but each member can only say one number. Nothing else is said. When someone repeats or interrupts another group member, they start again from one.

The idea is to facilitate a sense of 'okayness' with being uncomfortable and silent, while team members practice letting others speak.

A Take Home Message

Imagine attending a communication workshop, in purely lecture format. Or, reading about how to communicate without actually trying what you learn. Communication exercises may not

feel 100% natural at first, but they let us work with—rather than live in fear of—that discomfort. Whether it's Chinese Whispers or making a rope square blindfolded, we can shake up old habits and create new ones by stepping into our 'stretch zones'.

Try out activities which are best suited to your organizational goals so they have the most relevance. If you're focused on innovation, try a creative communication exercise like Mime. If you're a cross-functional team, why not try out an activity that challenges assumptions?

Tell me if any of these are particularly useful, and let us know if you've got tweaks for this current set of activities. What has worked in the past for your team?

About the Author

Catherine Moore has a BSc in Psychology from the University of Melbourne. She enjoys researching and using her HR knowledge to write about Positive and Organizational psychology. When she isn't getting super 'psyched' about her favorite topics of creativity, motivation, engagement, learning, and happiness.

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Certificate of Sale

This contract of sale, in respect of Glencoe Wood, Keil Hill, in the Parish of Lismore and Lordship of Lorne, is made on the 24th day of September in the year 2012, between Highland Titles and

Lord Stephen Rossiter

(hereinafter called "THE LORD"), *[address illegible]*

Whereas Highland Titles has set out part of the estate known as

GLENCOE WOOD, KEIL HILL, HIGHLAND, SCOTLAND

as a scheme of souvenir plots and has caused a common form of Conveyance to be prepared. Highland Titles has agreed with THE Lord for the sale of one hundred square feet of Glencoe Wood, Keil Hill, which for the purpose of identification is plot number C12312, and is precisely defined as a plot ten foot by ten foot with the south west corner of the said plot resting on the Ordnance Survey Reference point *[illegible]* and is hereinafter referred to as "the plot".

The plot forms part of the estate identified as ALL and WHOLE the plot of ground and being the subjects more particularly described in and recorded in the General Register of Sasines (Book 836 Folio 163-107) and forming ALL and WHOLE the four merkland of old extent of Kilcolmkill or Keill and others lying in Duror.

NOW THIS DEED WITNESSETH as follows: -

Highland Titles, in CONSIDERATION of all sums due and paid to us by THE LORD of which we acknowledge receipt and discharge has HAVE SOLD and DO HEREBY DISPONE to and in favour of THE LORD and to his executors and assignees all and whole the plot but without rights thereto over the larger subjects; reserving those rights and the rights over the plot to Highland Titles and its successors in title of the larger subjects and all others authorised by it; WITH ENTRY as at the below date. This deed shall be governed by the Law of Scotland.

THE LORD hereby covenants with Highland Titles that THE LORD and successors in title shall not sell the plot number C12312 except as a whole, specifically not in such a way that it could be registered or owned in separate titles or in separate ownerships.

In witness whereof Highland Titles has affixed its common seal on the place and on the date above mentioned.

HIGHLAND TITLES

Director — *[signature]* — 24 September 2012

Secretary — *[signature]* — 24 September 2012

www.HighlandTitles.com

Positive Negative Emotions

What are Positive and Negative Emotions and Do We Need Both?

27 APR 2019

COURTNEY ACKERMAN

10 COMMENTS

Last Updated on April 27, 2019

You might think that positive psychology is all about positive emotions. You'd be forgiven for thinking that, given positive psychology's inherent positive bent!

But the field isn't all about positive emotions. Negative emotions are an inevitable part of life and something that we need to experience in order to have a full, rich life.

Why do we need negative emotions to complement the positive ones? Read on to find out.

This article contains:

A Look at the Psychology

People have been studying emotions for thousands of years. Given the heavy focus on feelings, it's not surprising that we know quite a bit about them; what is surprising is the lack of understanding around the necessity of both emotions for healthy functioning.

Let's start by defining our terms.

What Are Positive Emotions?

Positive emotions are emotions that we typically find pleasurable to experience. The Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology defines them as "pleasant or desirable situational responses… distinct from pleasurable sensation and undifferentiated positive affect" (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2009).

Basically, this definition is stating that positive emotions are pleasant responses to our environment (or our own internal dialogue) that are more complex and targeted than simple sensations.

What Are Negative Emotions?

On the other hand, negative emotions are those that we typically do not find pleasurable to experience. Negative emotions can be defined as "as an unpleasant or unhappy emotion which is evoked in individuals to express a negative effect towards an event or person" (Pam, 2013).

If an emotion discourages and drags you down, then it's most likely a negative emotion.

17 Examples: A List of Positive and Negative Emotions

Examples of positive and negative emotions will vary based on who you ask; even the definition of an emotion can vary based on who answers the question. However you define emotion, discerning between the two is an intuitive process—we seem to "just know" which emotions are positive and which are negative.

Some common positive emotions include:

- Love
- Joy
- Satisfaction
- Contentment
- Interest
- Amusement
- Happiness
- Serenity
- Awe

A few of the most commonly felt negative emotions are:

- Fear
- Anger
- Disgust
- Sadness
- Rage
- Loneliness
- Melancholy
- Annoyance

Do We Need Both?

Look back over the list of sample negative emotions. Do you want to feel any of those emotions? You probably don't, and it's no wonder! It doesn't feel good to experience any of those emotions.

Now, refer to the list of sample positive emotions. Have you ever felt one of these emotions and thought to yourself, "I wish I wasn't experiencing this emotion?" Although you may have experienced this once or twice—generally at a time when we think we shouldn't feel positive emotions—it's easy to see that this list is full of pleasurable emotions that people tend to seek out. We know that we need positive emotions to function effectively, grow, and thrive.

So if it's basically universally unpleasant for us to experience negative emotions and universally pleasant and desirable to experience positive emotions, do we actually need the negative ones at all?

As it turns out, yes!

Are Negative Emotions Necessary?

Although they are not pleasant to experience, negative emotions really are necessary for a healthy life. This is true for two big reasons:

Negative emotions give us a counterpoint to positive emotions; without the negative, would the positive emotions still feel as good? Negative emotions serve evolutionary purposes, encouraging us to act in ways that boost our chances of survival and help us grow and develop as people.

As Tracy Kennedy from Lifehack.org points out, there is a good reason for each of the basic emotions, both positive and negative:

- Anger: to fight against problems
- Fear: to protect us from danger
- Anticipation: to look forward and plan
- Surprise: to focus on new situations
- Joy: to remind us what's important
- Sadness: to connect us with those we love
- Trust: to connect with people who help
- Disgust: to reject what is unhealthy (2018)

Without fear, would you be here today? Or would you have engaged in some risky practices, putting yourself in unnecessary danger? Without disgust, would you have been able to refrain from putting any of the many, many harmful substances that you had access to as a toddler?

As unpleasant as they may be, it can't be denied that negative emotions serve important purposes in our lives.

Although you may think of stress as a solidly negative emotion or response to a situation, it's actually quite common for people to experience stress in neutral and positive situations as well.

In fact, many experiences commonly thought of as positive can contribute huge amounts of stress to our lives.

Here are just a few examples of positive experiences that can bring us stress:

Planning for an upcoming wedding
- Preparing to move to somewhere you are excited to live
- The holidays—especially with family!
- Having a baby
- Starting an exciting new job

It's perfectly natural to feel stress in all of these situations, even though you would probably classify them as happy and positive. It's yet another example of the interplay between positive and negative that gives our lives balance.

Positive vs. Negative Emotions: A Look at the Differences

As we now know, positive and negative emotions are both vital for a healthy, well-rounded life. Let's take a look at how emotions in both categories impact us.

How Do They Affect the Brain?

Positive and negative emotions both have important roles to play when it comes to the brain, but they are generally separate roles.

For example, positive emotions have been shown to impact the brain in the following ways:

- They can increase our performance on a cognitive task by lifting our spirits without distracting us like negative emotions do (Iordan & Dolcos, 2017).
- Positive emotions can trigger the reward pathways in the brain, contributing to lower levels of a stress hormone and greater well-being (Ricard, Lutz, & Davidson, 2014).
- Positive emotions may help us broaden our horizons and widen our brain's scope of focus (Fredrickson, 2001).

Meanwhile, negative emotions are known to affect the brain in the following ways:

- Facilitating emotional conflict processing, helping us to make sense of incongruent or conflicting emotional information; in other words, negative emotions can help us figure tough emotional problems (Zinchenko et al., 2015).
- Facilitating cognitive conflict processing, aiding us in

comprehending incongruent or conflicting cognitive information; in other words, negative emotions can also help us make sense when we receive confusing signals (Kanske & Kotz, 2010; 2011).

- Reducing the experience of empathy, which can help protect us from getting too involved with others and stay focused on our goals (Qiao-Tasserit, Corradi-Dell'Acqua, & Vuilleumier, 2017).

Both have impactful roles to play in our brain, and these roles are complementary rather than competitive.

The Role of Both in Positive Psychology

Given the impact of positive and negative emotions on our thoughts and behaviors, it's easy to see why positive psychology keeps a close eye on negative emotions in addition to the positive. As vital as it is for us to learn how to boost our positive emotions and take advantage of the opportunities they bring, it's just as vital to learn how to adapt from negative emotions and cope with them effectively.

When we are able to accept, embrace, and exploit both our positive and our negative emotions, we give ourselves the best chance to live a balanced, meaningful life. This is why the field of positive psychology is hesitant to focus too much on positive emotions alone— it is just as important to understand how to turn negative emotions into a positive experience as it is to

capitalize on our positive emotions.

How Can We Best Track Our Emotions?

Now we know about the importance of accepting and managing our emotions—both positive and negative— the next question is how we actually do this.

The first step to effectively managing our emotions is to identify, understand, and find the patterns in our emotional experiences.

Positive and Negative Emotions Chart (PDF)
If you need help identifying positive vs. negative emotions or tracking your own emotions, there are several charts that can help.

Check out the examples below, or make your own if you're feeling creative.

Positive emotions

ecstatic	blissful	confident	happy	curious
pleased	triumphant	attentive	self-collected	dreamy
peaceful	delighted	loving	sleepy	lovestruck
hopeful	sheepish	withdrawn	thoughtful	surprised
good	glad	proud	jolly	assured
bashful	idiotic	innocent	admiring	kind
adoring	calm	strong-willed	engaged	excited
interested	jubilant	inspired	grateful	tender
satisfied	phlegmatic	optimistic	meditative	sympathizing

Negative emotions

demure	cautious	guilty	frightened	tired
envious	unsure	disappointed	hurt	bored
insulted	sneaky	discontented	ashamed	wistful
nervous	humiliated	weak	astonished	jealous
enraged	speechless	depressed	upset	lonely
arrogant	anxious	aggressive	eavesdropping	hopeless
gloomy	heart-broken	contemptuous	impatient	prudish
shy	repentant	grieving	resentful	mean
regretful	annoyed	suffering	obstinate	negative

Simple List of Positive and Negative Emotions:

Negative	Positive
Grief	Interest
Sorrow	Inspiration
Heartache	Enthusiasm
Sadness	Laughter
Unhappiness	Amusement
Depression	Empathy
Hatred	Curiosity
Blame	Cheer
Regret	Contentment
Misery	Calmness
Resentment	Serenity
Threatening	Peace
Antagonism	Trust
Anger	Bliss
Fury	Delight
Hostility	Happiness
Hate	Pleasure
Shame	Joy
Insecurity	Carefree
Self-consciousness	Ease
Bravado	Satisfaction
Embarrassment	Fulfillment
Worry	Hopeful
Panic	Confidence
Frustration	Optimism
Pessimistic	Passion
Cynicism	Harmony
Jealousy	Excitement
Weariness	Gratitude
Pain	Kindness
Anxiety	Affection
Fright	Love
Fear	

A Brief Look at Neutral Emotions

While positive and negative emotions have received substantial attention from researchers and psychology practitioners, there's another category of emotions that have been all but ignored in many circles: neutral emotions.

You won't hear much about these middle ground feelings from psychologists, but they are a much-discussed topic in some Buddhism circles. These emotions are referred to as adukkhamasukha, which can translate to "not painful not pleasant" (Anālayo, 2017). They refer to "a range in the middle part of the spectrum of felt experience… between pain and pleasure… relatively bland and neither distinctly painful nor clearly pleasant" (Anālayo, 2017).

Since neutral feelings are such a mundane topic for most of us, we rarely give them much thought; however, they may be the emotional category where we spend most of our time! Think about your day: how much of it was spent in joy and contentment? How much in anger and sadness? The answer to those questions is likely to be far less time than you had in the day. The emotions you felt the rest of the time were likely neutral.

Although neutral feelings do not have a valence—positive or negative—some say that neutral feelings can be counted as positive feelings, since they are

characterized by the absence of pain and suffering.

Whatever you believe about negative emotions, keep them in mind as an important, if oft-forgotten, piece of your emotional experience. Here is more reading about the Buddhist perspective on neutral emotions.

5 PowerPoints on Positive and Negative Emotions
For more information on positive and negative emotions, give these five PowerPoint presentations a look:

Positive Emotions and Well-Being from Pearson Education, Inc.
Emotions and Uncontrolled Emotions from the Utah Education Network
Emotions from Nagarjuna Kalluru at the ISBR Business School
Emotions, Body, and Brain from M. Guthrie Yarwood at Penn State
Emotion, Stress, and Health from Carole Wade, Carol Tavris, and Pearson Education

A Take-Home Message
As always, I hope you leave this piece with a little more knowledge than when you began reading. Identifying, accepting, and managing our emotions—both positive and negative—is such an important task for living a healthy and happy life. Use what you have learned here to enhance your understanding of your own feelings and the feelings of others, and commit to greater awareness and management of your own emotional state. You won't regret it!

What are your thoughts on the subject? Do you think negative emotions are necessary, or do you think we could do away with them without any adverse effects? What sort of balance do you aim for? Let us know in the comments section below.

Thanks for reading!

References
Related Posts

About the Author
Courtney Ackerman is a graduate of the positive organizational psychology and evaluation program at Claremont Graduate University. She is currently working as a researcher for the State of California and her professional interests include survey research, well-being in the workplace, and compassion. When she's not gleefully crafting survey reminders, she loves spending time with her dogs, visiting wine country, and curling up in front of the fireplace with a good book or video game.

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Best & Worst States for Women's Equality

Adam McCann, Financial Writer

Women's rights in the U.S. have made leaps and bounds since the passage of the 19th Amendment. Yet many women still struggle to break the glass ceiling because of unequal treatment in society. Unfortunately, the gender gap in 21st century America has only expanded. In 2017, the U.S. failed to place in the top 10 — or even the top 40 — of the World Economic Forum's ranking of 144 countries based on gender equality. In fact, the U.S. dropped to 49th position from its previous rank 45th.

The workplace provides even more evidence of the issue. Despite their advances toward social equality, women are disproportionately underrepresented in leadership positions. Women make up more than 50% of the population. According to the American Association of University Women, women only constitute 25% of legislators and less than 29% of business executives.

Apart from unequal representation in executive leadership, salary inequity has been central to the gender-gap debate. Few experts dispute an earnings gap between women and men, but there's disagreement when it comes to the proper method of measuring that disparity. The fact remains, however, that nearly two-thirds of minimum-wage workers across the country are female, according to the National Women's Law Center. Unfortunately, women are underrepresented in government, which makes changing laws relating to their condition more difficult.

To determine where women receive the most equal treatment, WalletHub compared the 50 states across 16 key indicators of gender equality. Our data set ranges from the gap between female and male executives to the disparity in unemployment rates for women and men. Read on for our findings, expert commentary and a full description of our methodology.

Best States for Women's Rights

Overall Rank (1 = Best)	State	Total Score	'Workplace Environment' Rank	'Education & Health' Rank	'Political Empowerment' Rank
1	New York	68.66	9	12	2
2	Minnesota	67.07	4	21	5
3	Maine	64.78	24	15	7
4	Nevada	64.33	34	25	1
5	Hawaii	62.85	26	6	13
6	Delaware	62.37	32	4	12
7	Alaska	62.27	2	28	11
8	North Dakota	62.21	31	8	9
9	Washington	61.69	10	41	3
10	New Mexico	61.65	1	7	25
11	Massachusetts	59.83	49	10	6
12	West Virginia	58.79	16	1	29
13	Illinois	58.49	35	37	4
14	Iowa	58.20	13	19	17
15	California	58.11	29	22	10
16	Wisconsin	57.31	20	20	18
17	Rhode Island	57.18	11	5	28
18	Vermont	57.18	40	2	27
19	Connecticut	55.90	44	24	8
20	Indiana	55.06	22	26	20
21	New Jersey	54.86	33	16	19

22	Michigan	53.96	42	27	16
23	Colorado	53.30	47	9	21
24	Ohio	52.62	27	3	36
25	Montana	51.88	28	14	38
26	Oregon	51.73	5	39	22
27	Nebraska	51.19	3	43	24
28	Kentucky	49.52	18	23	34
29	Pennsylvania	49.52	21	13	39
30	Wyoming	49.46	12	35	30
31	Maryland	49.43	6	18	45
32	New Hampshire	48.41	48	38	14
33	Missouri	48.20	43	44	15
34	Mississippi	47.99	30	34	26
35	Tennessee	47.73	17	17	48
36	North Carolina	46.95	23	33	32
37	South Dakota	44.29	50	11	42
38	Alabama	43.83	36	32	33
39	Kansas	43.79	15	42	35
40	Georgia	42.43	14	40	44
41	Oklahoma	42.37	46	29	37
42	Florida	42.15	7	47	31
43	Arkansas	41.77	39	31	40
44	Louisiana	41.10	25	30	50
45	South Carolina	40.68	19	36	49
46	Virginia	40.45	8	46	46
47	Arizona	38.76	41	48	23
48	Texas	36.89	37	45	47
49	Idaho	30.51	38	49	41
50	Utah	25.51	45	50	43

Smallest Income Gap
1. Vermont
T-2. California
T-2. New Mexico
4. Oregon
5. Maryland

Largest Income Gap
46. Alabama
47. Connecticut
48. New Hampshire
49. Wyoming
50. Utah

Disadvantaged Gender: Women

Smallest Executive Positions Gap
1. Wyoming
2. Alaska
3. New Mexico
4. North Dakota
5. West Virginia

Largest Executive Positions Gap
46. Utah
47. New Jersey
48. Massachusetts
49. New York
50. Connecticut

Disadvantaged Gender: Women

Smallest Work Hours Gap
1. Nevada
2. Maryland
3. Florida
4. Delaware
5. Hawaii

Largest Work Hours Gap
46. Idaho
47. Alaska
48. Utah
49. Wyoming
50. North Dakota

Disadvantaged Gender: Men

Smallest Educational Attainment Gap (among Advanced Degree Holders)
T-1. New York
T-1. North Dakota
T-1. Alaska
T-1. Vermont
T-1. South Dakota
T-1. Maine

Largest Educational Attainment Gap (among Advanced Degree Holders)
46. New Jersey
47. Florida
48. Virginia
49. Idaho
50. Utah

Disadvantaged Gender: Mixed

Smallest Political Representation Gap
1. Nevada
2. New York
3. Washington
4. Illinois
5. Minnesota

Largest Political Representation Gap
46. Virginia
47. Texas
48. Tennessee
49. South Carolina
50. Louisiana

Disadvantaged Gender: Women

Ask the Experts

As the U.S. slips further down the WEC's Global Gender Gap Index, we asked a panel of experts to shed light on the reasons behind the country's disappointing performance in closing its gender gap. Click on the experts' profiles to read their bios and responses to the following key questions:

1. The U.S. currently ranks 82nd globally when it comes to the gender gap in health and survival. What is driving this? What should be done to close this gap?
2. The U.S. currently ranks 96th globally when it comes to the gender gap in political empowerment. Are there strategies the U.S. can learn from other countries to help close this gap?
3. What policies would be most effective in closing the gender pay gap?
4. What policies would prove effective at increasing female representation in senior management roles in the Fortune 500 and other large, multinational corporations?

Rand W. ResslerPh.D., Associate Dean, College of Business, Georgia Southern University

Lisa JepsenAssociate Dean, Associate Professor of Economics, University of Northern Iowa

Antoinette Ellis-WilliamsProfessor of Women's and Gender Studies at New Jersey City University

Shulamit ReinharzPh.D., Jacob Potofsky Professor Emerita of Sociology, Brandeis University & Research Fellow, International Gender Studies at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford University

Amy H. ShapiroPh.D, Professor of Philosophy and Humanities, Program Director, Philosophy, Program co-Director, Women's and Gender Studies, Alverno College

Cheryl CarletonAssistant Professor, Economics; Director, Villanova Women's Professional Network, Villanova University

Most Fun Cities in America

Sep 17, 2018 | Adam McCann, Financial Writer

Everyone likes to have fun. But we all prefer our personal brand of a good time. Some people like trying new restaurants, traveling, going to bars and clubs or playing outdoor sports. Others enjoy riding roller coasters, going to the movies, or playing video games. But having fun can be expensive – the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the average American spends nearly $3,000 on entertainment per year.

With such different preferences, what, then, makes a fun city? At WalletHub, we define such a place as one that packs a little bit of everything for everyone — except maybe people seeking the most extreme of thrills. In a city with enough variety, you won't have to compromise with your friends, your family or even yourself about the next fun activity to do alone or together.

To help Americans find the cities with the greatest number and variety of fun yet cost-effective options, WalletHub compared more than 180 U.S. cities based on 65 key metrics. They range from fitness centers per capita to movie costs to average open hours of breweries. Read on for the winners, money-saving advice from experts and a full description of how we ranked the cities.

Most Fun Cities in America

Overall Rank (1 = Most Fun)	City	Total Score	'Entertainment & Recreation' Rank	'Nightlife & Parties' Rank	'Costs' Rank
1	Las Vegas, NV	70.37	6	1	81
2	Orlando, FL	61.31	4	3	21
3	New York, NY	55.29	1	2	182
4	Atlanta, GA	54.11	13	4	91
5	Miami, FL	53.53	10	5	123
6	Chicago, IL	51.38	7	9	147
7	Portland, OR	50.53	14	7	128
8	San Francisco, CA	50.44	5	8	178
9	New Orleans, LA	49.43	23	6	120
10	San Diego, CA	48.89	3	19	144
11	Denver, CO	48.42	15	12	87
12	Honolulu, HI	48.07	2	21	163
13	Los Angeles, CA	47.88	8	16	151
14	Austin, TX	47.49	19	13	54
15	Washington, DC	47.39	11	10	165
16	Seattle, WA	47.13	9	11	172
17	Philadelphia, PA	45.79	18	15	100
18	Houston, TX	45.72	31	14	29
19	St. Louis, MO	45.63	30	17	11
20	Tampa, FL	45.56	12	23	55
21	Cincinnati, OH	44.15	17	28	12
22	San Antonio, TX	41.43	38	24	6
23	Salt Lake City, UT	40.99	24	34	77
24	Sacramento, CA	40.82	25	18	141
25	Pittsburgh, PA	40.82	20	33	102
26	Fort Lauderdale, FL	40.81	16	29	124
27	Dallas, TX	40.06	44	20	56
28	Tucson, AZ	39.78	28	61	3
29	Minneapolis, MN	39.62	21	48	76
30	Scottsdale, AZ	39.39	29	37	65
31	Nashville, TN	39.17	43	25	70

Rank	City				
31	Nashville, TN	39.17	43	25	70
32	Milwaukee, WI	38.91	39	41	19
33	Jacksonville, FL	38.72	33	45	30
34	Reno, NV	38.72	41	35	41
35	Raleigh, NC	38.47	59	26	49
36	Indianapolis, IN	38.23	56	39	7
37	Omaha, NE	38.21	37	52	13
38	Charleston, SC	37.78	26	72	62
39	Cleveland, OH	37.30	35	54	36
40	Portland, ME	37.30	63	31	108
41	Henderson, NV	37.29	61	30	68
42	Richmond, VA	37.00	34	51	88
43	Phoenix, AZ	36.97	48	60	5
44	Columbus, OH	36.90	55	53	9
45	Birmingham, AL	36.90	78	42	22
46	Oklahoma City, OK	36.71	76	49	2
47	St. Petersburg, FL	36.19	32	67	58
48	Knoxville, TN	36.14	65	47	60
49	Tempe, AZ	36.05	52	57	67
50	Louisville, KY	35.81	62	63	18
51	Mobile, AL	35.81	125	36	46
52	Boston, MA	35.79	22	32	179
53	Kansas City, MO	35.41	73	43	37
54	Charlotte, NC	35.35	68	44	51
55	Rochester, NY	35.30	36	62	104
56	Fort Worth, TX	35.10	83	27	101
57	Buffalo, NY	34.88	46	58	90
58	Baton Rouge, LA	34.74	60	65	48
59	Boise, ID	34.69	66	102	4
60	Lincoln, NE	34.63	70	55	79
61	Albuquerque, NM	34.46	45	99	42
62	Virginia Beach, VA	34.40	42	74	105
63	Baltimore, MD	34.36	49	40	139
64	Detroit, MI	34.27	82	50	38
65	Springfield, MO	34.26	114	80	1
66	Colorado Springs, CO	34.04	53	85	32
67	Columbia, SC	33.54	64	82	78
68	Madison, WI	33.39	40	79	110
69	Oakland, CA	33.17	69	22	168
70	Memphis, TN	33.05	106	69	8
71	Tulsa, OK	32.92	75	66	75
72	Grand Rapids, MI	32.69	98	83	25
73	El Paso, TX	32.21	77	116	17
74	Irvine, CA	32.19	27	88	173
75	Chattanooga, TN	32.18	89	64	109
76	Huntsville, AL	32.02	142	59	66
77	Spokane, WA	32.01	87	98	40
78	Long Beach, CA	31.88	50	56	152
79	Garden Grove, CA	31.66	67	68	133
80	Providence, RI	31.65	84	46	142
81	Gulfport, MS	31.64	170	71	20
82	Wichita, KS	31.54	136	70	15
83	Greensboro, NC	31.43	85	100	16
84	Sioux Falls, SD	31.33	135	75	72
85	Overland Park, KS	31.19	127	122	31
86	Arlington, TX	31.15	115	38	127
87	Norfolk, VA	31.09	51	109	121
88	St. Paul, MN	31.02	54	114	95
89	Durham, NC	30.98	97	95	64
90	Mesa, AZ	30.89	92	132	23
91	Rapid City, SD	30.77	119	81	59
92	Chandler, AZ	30.68	101	104	24
93	Lexington-Fayette, KY	30.58	93	101	43
94	San Jose, CA	30.54	47	73	159
95	Tallahassee, FL	30.53	122	76	93
96	Akron, OH	30.46	120	107	35
97	Missoula, MT	30.43	100	78	113
98	Billings, MT	30.07	117	91	73
99	Corpus Christi, TX	29.71	80	127	71
100	Glendale, AZ	29.54	91	93	53
101	North Las Vegas, NV	29.30	86	84	114
102	Wilmington, DE	29.17	72	96	136
103	Des Moines, IA	29.14	158	130	33
104	Newark, NJ	29.04	88	124	118
105	Huntington Beach, CA	28.99	58	94	158
106	Shreveport, LA	28.94	164	112	34
107	Anaheim, CA	28.93	71	77	162
108	Chesapeake, VA	28.88	108	153	80
109	Las Cruces, NM	28.87	133	171	27
110	Tacoma, WA	28.80	129	89	99
111	Modesto, CA	28.68	145	90	116
112	Bakersfield, CA	28.65	113	115	83
113	Winston-Salem, NC	28.64	107	118	97
114	Jersey City, NJ	28.31	105	87	130
115	Fayetteville, NC	28.30	148	128	69
116	Little Rock, AR	28.27	153	126	47
117	Hialeah, FL	28.15	81	121	137
118	Toledo, OH	27.90	123	142	26
119	Cape Coral, FL	27.82	94	135	39
120	Newport News, VA	27.64	165	92	111
121	Plano, TX	27.64	90	86	146
122	Glendale, CA	27.58	79	111	154
123	Amarillo, TX	27.52	172	175	10
124	Fort Smith, AR	27.40	168	146	63
125	Augusta, GA	27.36	162	123	98
126	Peoria, AZ	27.30	141	129	89
127	Huntington, WV	27.30	154	167	50
128	Gilbert, AZ	27.22	143	119	44
129	Fort Wayne, IN	27.18	118	154	52
130	Aurora, CO	27.05	130	108	112
131	Fargo, ND	26.99	149	150	82
132	Pembroke Pines, FL	26.87	95	152	132
133	Riverside, CA	26.79	103	113	135
134	Montgomery, AL	26.75	176	145	61
135	Manchester, NH	26.68	161	103	126

136	Stockton, CA	26.37	102	148	122
137	Burlington, VT	26.36	112	110	150
138	Columbia, MD	26.31	128	125	138
139	Lubbock, TX	26.28	116	151	74
140	Santa Ana, CA	26.25	96	105	160
141	Fresno, CA	26.10	121	138	86
142	Cedar Rapids, IA	26.09	174	136	84
143	West Valley City, UT	25.89	150	147	107
144	Salem, OR	25.68	151	97	129
145	Port St. Lucie, FL	25.63	160	159	45
146	Casper, WY	25.58	159	179	57
147	Oceanside, CA	25.51	124	141	131
148	Irving, TX	25.42	138	156	119
149	Jackson, MS	25.37	179	165	96
150	Columbus, GA	25.35	169	170	92
151	Grand Prairie, TX	25.21	157	158	125
152	Garland, TX	25.16	146	143	117
153	Worcester, MA	24.96	143	117	155
154	Anchorage, AK	24.95	57	172	170
155	San Bernardino, CA	24.84	140	120	145
156	Charleston, WV	24.44	166	169	115
157	Nashua, NH	24.32	137	133	140
158	New Haven, CT	24.27	152	137	143
159	Ontario, CA	24.23	131	149	134
160	Chula Vista, CA	23.98	132	134	148
161	Warwick, RI	23.84	134	106	169
162	Bismarck, ND	23.73	177	173	103
163	Santa Clarita, CA	23.70	110	131	174
164	Vancouver, WA	23.46	126	140	156
165	Fremont, CA	23.12	104	157	171
166	Nampa, ID	23.06	180	166	94
167	Cheyenne, WY	22.97	181	174	85
168	Laredo, TX	22.79	156	181	14
169	Lewiston, ME	22.62	173	180	106
170	Brownsville, TX	22.31	182	182	28
171	Aurora, IL	21.88	171	163	153
172	Dover, DE	21.67	147	177	161
173	Moreno Valley, CA	21.46	163	139	164
174	Juneau, AK	21.42	74	168	180
175	South Burlington, VT	21.18	99	178	157
176	Rancho Cucamonga, CA	20.82	139	155	166
177	Yonkers, NY	20.67	111	160	177
178	Fontana, CA	20.60	175	162	149
179	Santa Rosa, CA	20.07	109	144	181
180	Bridgeport, CT	19.36	178	164	167
181	Oxnard, CA	19.34	155	161	175
182	Pearl City, HI	17.55	167	176	176

Most Festivals per Capita
T-1. Honolulu, HI
T-1. San Francisco, CA
T-1. New Orleans, LA
T-1. Tampa, FL
5. Las Vegas, NV

Fewest Festivals per Capita
162. Amarillo, TX
163. Gilbert, AZ
164. Garland, TX
165. Laredo, TX
166. Corpus Christi, TX

Most Restaurants per Capita
T-1. New York, NY
T-1. San Francisco, CA
3. Miami, FL
4. Las Vegas, NV
5. Orlando, FL

Best City vs Worst City
32x Difference

Fewest Restaurants per Capita
178. Lewiston, ME
179. South Burlington, VT
180. West Valley City, UT
181. Pearl City, HI
182. Peoria, AZ

Most Park Playgrounds per Capita
T-1. New York, NY
T-1. Chicago, IL
3. Madison, WI
4. Jacksonville, FL
5. Norfolk, VA

Best City vs Worst City
19x Difference

Fewest Park Playgrounds per Capita
95. Jersey City, NJ
96. Santa Ana, CA
97. Newark, NJ
98. Gilbert, AZ
99. Hialeah, FL

Most Acres of Parkland per Capita
T-1. Honolulu, HI
T-1. Chesapeake, VA
T-1. Jacksonville, FL
4. Scottsdale, AZ
5. Anchorage, AK

Fewest Acres of Parkland per Capita
95. Miami, FL
96. Stockton, CA
97. Newark, NJ
98. Santa Ana, CA
99. Hialeah, FL

Most Fitness Centers per Capita
T-1. San Francisco, CA
T-1. New York, NY
T-1. San Diego, CA
T-1. Miami, FL
5. Los Angeles, CA

Fewest Fitness Centers per Capita
178. Juneau, AK
179. Gulfport, MS
180. Pearl City, HI
181. Huntington, WV
182. West Valley City, UT

Most Accessible Bars
1. New York, NY
2. Las Vegas, NV
3. Portland, OR
4. Pittsburgh, PA
5. Washington, DC

Least Accessible Bars
178. Fontana, CA
179. Brownsville, TX
180. Grand Prairie, TX
181. Moreno Valley, CA
182. West Valley City, UT

Most Dance Clubs per Capita
T-1. San Francisco, CA
T-1. Las Vegas, NV
T-1. Atlanta, GA
T-1. Orlando, FL
5. Los Angeles, CA

Best City vs Worst City
87x Difference

Fewest Dance Clubs per Capita
163. Brownsville, TX
164. Yonkers, NY
165. Moreno Valley, CA
166. Fremont, CA
167. Plano, TX

Lowest Avg. Beer Price
1. Oklahoma City, OK
2. Milwaukee, WI
3. Las Cruces, NM
4. Albuquerque, NM
5. Lincoln, NE

Best City vs Worst City
2x Difference

Highest Avg. Beer Price
T-177. Baltimore, MD
T-177. Columbia, MD
179. Juneau, AK
180. Anchorage, AK
181. Seattle, WA
182. New York, NY

Lowest Movie Costs
1. Port St. Lucie, FL
2. Cape Coral, FL
3. Charleston, SC
4. Montgomery, AL
5. Corpus Christi, TX

Best City vs Worst City
2x Difference

Highest Movie Costs
T-174. Santa Clarita, CA
T-174. Garden Grove, CA
179. New York, NY
180. Los Angeles, CA
181. Oxnard, CA
182. Atlanta, GA

Ask the Experts

Fun doesn't have to mean expensive. For money-saving ideas and advice to city leaders on attracting fun lovers to their cities, we asked a panel of experts to share their thoughts on the following key questions:

1. What tips do you have for having fun while on a budget?
2. What should people be looking for when choosing a fun and affordable city?
3. Should cities allow drinking in public — either during certain times or in specially designated "entertainment districts" — to make their cities more fun?
4. What can local authorities do to make their city a more fun destination to visit?

Alex SusskindAssociate Professor, School of Hotel Administration, Cornell University

Sertan KabadayiPh.D., Area Chair, Marketing, Professor of Marketing, Gabelli School of Business, Fordham University- Lincoln Center

Methodology

In order to determine the most fun cities in the U.S., WalletHub compared 182 cities — including the 150 most populated U.S. cities, plus at least two of the most populated cities in each state — across three key dimensions: 1) Entertainment & Recreation, 2) Nightlife & Parties and 3) Costs.

We evaluated those dimensions using 65 relevant metrics, which are listed below with their corresponding weights. Each metric was graded on a 100-point scale, with a score of 100 representing the greatest number and variety of fun and cost-effective activities. For metrics marked with an asterisk (*), the square root of the population was used to calculate the population size in order to avoid overcompensating for minor differences across cities.

Finally, we determined each city's weighted average across all metrics to calculate its overall score and used the resulting scores to rank-order our sample. Our sample considers only the city proper in each case and excludes the surrounding metro area.

Entertainment & Recreation – Total Points: 40

- Number of Attractions: Double Weight (~1.95 Points)
- "TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Awards Top 25 Destinations" Ranking: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Coffee & Tea Shops per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Restaurants per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Diversity of Restaurants: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Ice-Cream & Frozen-Yogurt Shops per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Bowling Alleys per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Baseball & Softball Diamonds per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Basketball Hoops per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Tennis Courts per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Public Golf Courses per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Skiing Facilities per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Public Swimming Pools per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Public Beaches per Capita: Half Weight (~0.49 Points)
- Presence on TripAdvisor's "Top 25 Beaches" List: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Fishing Facilities per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Marinas per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Boat Tours & Water Sports per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Water & Amusement Parks per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Hiking Trails per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Scenic and Sightseeing Establishments per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Spas & Wellness Centers per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Shopping Centers per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Share of Population with Walkable Park Access: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Share of Designed Parkland Areas: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Presence on TripAdvisor's "Top 25 Parks" List: Half Weight (~0.49 Points)
- Park Playgrounds per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Parkland as Share of City Area: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Acres of Parkland per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Bike-Rental Facilities per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Sports Venues per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Fitness Centers per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Recreational Sports Centers per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Sports Fan-Friendliness: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Note: This metric is based on WalletHub's "Best Sports Cities" ranking, which includes football, basketball, baseball, hockey and soccer.
- Movie Theaters per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Performing-Arts Theaters per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Festivals per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Arcades per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)

- Amusement Parks per Capita*: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Presence on TripAdvisor's "Top 25 Amusement Parks" List: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Ideal Weather: Full Weight (~0.98 Points)
- Note: This metric is based on WalletHub's "Cities with the Best & Worst Weather" ranking.

Nightlife & Parties – Total Points: 40

- Bar Accessibility: Full Weight (~3.08 Points)
- Note: This grade is a combination of bars per capita* (measures availability) and bars per square mile (measures proximity).
- Pool Halls per Capita*: Full Weight (~3.08 Points)
- Lounges per Capita*: Full Weight (~3.08 Points)
- Beer Gardens per Capita*: Full Weight (~3.08 Points)
- Legality of Public Drinking: Full Weight (~3.08 Points)
- Time of Last Call: Full Weight (~3.08 Points)
- Average Open Hours of Breweries: Full Weight (~3.08 Points)
- Presence of Music Festivals: Full Weight (~3.08 Points)
- Note: The cities that have music festivals will receive 1, the others 0.
- Music Venues per Capita*: Full Weight (~3.08 Points)
- Dance Clubs per Capita*: Full Weight (~3.08 Points)
- Dance Party Index: Full Weight (~3.08 Points)
- Arts & Crafts–Supplies Establishments per Capita*: Full Weight (~3.08 Points)
- Casinos per Capita*: Full Weight (~3.08 Points)

Costs – Total Points: 20

- Average Price of Party Ticket: Full Weight (~1.67 Points)
- Average Beer Price: Full Weight (~1.67 Points)
- Note: This metric measures the price of a six-pack of 12-ounce Heineken containers, excluding any deposit.
- Average Wine Price: Full Weight (~1.67 Points)
- Average Food Price (Pizza & Burger): Full Weight (~1.67 Points)
- Prevalence of Affordable Restaurants Rated 4.5+ Stars: Full Weight (~1.67 Points)
- Restaurant-Meal Costs: Full Weight (~1.67 Points)
- Movie Costs: Full Weight (~1.67 Points)
- Bowling Costs: Full Weight (~1.67 Points)
- Average Fitness-Club Fee: Full Weight (~1.67 Points)
- Price for Three-Star Hotel Room: Full Weight (~1.67 Points)
- Cost of Living: Double Weight (~3.33 Points)

Best & Worst Cities for an Active Lifestyle

Jan 4, 2019 | Adam McCann, Financial Writer

- It's easy to simply aspire to become the best and fittest versions of ourselves. Actually achieving that goal is much more difficult, and requires a consistently active lifestyle. The road to an active lifestyle can be filled with obstacles, sometimes because where we live may be failing to promote a healthy way of life. Some cities, for instance, lack sidewalks or neighborhood parks while others encourage few fitness centers to open for business.

- It's no wonder "lose weight and exercise more" top the list of the most popular New Year's resolutions in America. At the same time, as many as 92 percent of people fail to keep their resolutions each year.

- With New Year self-improvement in mind, WalletHub compared the 100 biggest U.S. cities based on 38 key indicators of an active lifestyle. Our data set ranges from average monthly fitness-club fee to bike score to share of physically inactive adults. Read on for the complete ranking, additional insight from our panel of experts and a full description of our methodology.

Best & Worst Cities for an Active Lifestyle

Overall Rank (1 = Best)	City	WalletHub's Active Lifestyle Score	'Budget & Participation' Rank	'Sports & Outdoors' Rank
1	Honolulu, HI	63.36	47	1
2	Chicago, IL	59.98	56	2
3	San Francisco, CA	59.07	55	3
4	Portland, OR	59.00	1	7
5	Seattle, WA	55.11	26	5
6	Minneapolis, MN	54.21	12	9
7	Washington, DC	54.19	28	6
8	Denver, CO	54.16	4	12
9	San Diego, CA	53.26	27	8
10	Madison, WI	52.14	8	13
11	New York, NY	50.82	93	4
12	Philadelphia, PA	50.46	39	11
13	Boston, MA	50.36	44	10
14	Lincoln, NE	50.32	6	16
15	Boise, ID	49.56	2	20
16	Sacramento, CA	48.46	22	15
17	Atlanta, GA	48.03	11	18
18	Austin, TX	46.98	42	14
19	Tampa, FL	46.87	21	19
20	Las Vegas, NV	46.00	5	31
21	St. Paul, MN	45.99	24	21
22	Reno, NV	45.86	3	34
23	Irvine, CA	45.70	17	24
24	Orlando, FL	45.69	13	26
25	Los Angeles, CA	45.68	48	17
26	Milwaukee, WI	45.18	20	25
27	Cincinnati, OH	44.83	18	28
28	Omaha, NE	43.77	57	22
29	St. Louis, MO	43.50	9	38
30	Tucson, AZ	43.10	32	30
31	Buffalo, NY	42.80	7	43
32	Baltimore, MD	42.47	73	23
33	Colorado Springs, CO	41.61	38	33
34	Miami, FL	41.60	41	32

35	Norfolk, VA	41.41	71	27
36	Cleveland, OH	41.36	61	29
37	Scottsdale, AZ	41.28	19	45
38	San Jose, CA	40.92	46	35
39	Virginia Beach, VA	40.46	45	36
40	Charlotte, NC	39.92	43	41
41	Pittsburgh, PA	39.88	10	53
42	Houston, TX	39.61	52	42
43	Phoenix, AZ	39.58	58	37
44	Albuquerque, NM	38.56	31	47
45	Chesapeake, VA	37.95	81	39
46	Fremont, CA	37.74	23	60
47	Henderson, NV	37.63	35	50
48	Jacksonville, FL	37.01	83	44
49	Nashville, TN	36.93	72	46
50	New Orleans, LA	36.50	51	55
51	Raleigh, NC	36.22	37	62
52	Indianapolis, IN	36.19	54	59
53	Dallas, TX	35.69	69	52
54	Glendale, AZ	35.58	98	40
55	Aurora, CO	35.19	79	51
56	Long Beach, CA	35.17	36	67
57	Lubbock, TX	35.12	14	78
58	Oakland, CA	35.08	77	56
59	Greensboro, NC	35.00	87	48
60	Kansas City, MO	34.99	76	58
61	San Antonio, TX	34.99	68	61
62	Anchorage, AK	34.74	89	49
63	Durham, NC	34.55	65	63
64	Fort Wayne, IN	34.26	15	83
65	Birmingham, AL	34.22	33	80
66	Columbus, OH	34.09	86	57
67	St. Petersburg, FL	34.04	66	65
68	Plano, TX	33.75	92	54
69	Baton Rouge, LA	33.53	64	68
70	Anaheim, CA	33.49	16	86

70	Anaheim, CA	33.49	16	86
71	Laredo, TX	33.41	74	64
72	Mesa, AZ	33.16	62	70
73	Louisville, KY	33.16	59	73
74	Lexington-Fayette, KY	32.77	49	76
75	Jersey City, NJ	32.63	75	71
76	Detroit, MI	32.49	82	66
77	San Bernardino, CA	32.48	53	91
78	Chandler, AZ	32.27	70	75
79	Chula Vista, CA	32.18	25	87
80	El Paso, TX	31.97	78	74
81	Tulsa, OK	31.86	88	69
82	Winston-Salem, NC	31.73	40	82
83	Riverside, CA	31.73	34	88
84	Fort Worth, TX	31.25	80	77
85	Santa Ana, CA	31.06	30	94
86	Stockton, CA	30.94	29	95
87	Gilbert, AZ	30.21	96	72
88	Oklahoma City, OK	30.04	84	81
89	Corpus Christi, TX	29.95	63	90
90	Newark, NJ	29.67	60	93
91	Memphis, TN	29.05	97	79
92	Garland, TX	28.62	94	84
93	Toledo, OH	28.61	85	89
94	Wichita, KS	28.13	50	99
95	Arlington, TX	27.74	91	92
96	Fresno, CA	27.64	67	98
97	Irving, TX	26.12	95	96
98	Bakersfield, CA	24.49	90	100
99	North Las Vegas, NV	24.44	100	85
100	Hialeah, FL	23.59	99	97

Lowest Monthly Fitness-Club Fee

1. Stockton, CA
2. El Paso, TX
3. Buffalo, NY
4. St. Petersburg, FL
T-5. St. Louis, MO
T-5. Chula Vista, CA

Highest Monthly Fitness-Club Fee

93. Washington, DC
94. Oakland, CA
95. Anchorage, AK
96. New York, NY
97. San Francisco, CA

Best Cities
vs
Worst Cities

5x Difference

Lowest % of Physically Inactive Residents

1. Portland, OR
2. Seattle, WA
3. Colorado Springs, CO
T-4. Denver, CO
T-4. Raleigh, NC
T-4. Aurora, CO

## Highest % of Physically Inactive Residents

77. El Paso, TX
78. Memphis, TN
79. Birmingham, AL
T-80. Miami, FL
T-80. Hialeah, FL

Best Cities
vs
Worst Cities

2x Difference

Most Swimming Pools per Capita

T-1. Cleveland, OH
T-1. Philadelphia, PA
T-1. Tucson, AZ
T-1. Chicago, IL
T-1. Washington, DC
T-1. Cincinnati, OH

Fewest Swimming Pools per Capita

94. Fort Worth, TX
95. Madison, WI
96. Anaheim, CA
T-97. Chesapeake, VA
T-97. Fremont, CA

Most Basketball Hoops per Capita

T-1. Norfolk, VA
T-1. New York, NY
T-1. Irvine, CA
T-1. Chicago, IL
T-1. Honolulu, HI
T-1. Philadelphia, PA

Fewest Basketball Hoops per Capita

94. Fresno, CA
95. Wichita, KS
96. Winston-Salem, NC
97. Irving, TX
98. Gilbert, AZ

Best Cities
vs
Worst Cities

36x Difference

Most Tennis Courts per Capita

1. Honolulu, HI
2. Chicago, IL
3. Omaha, NE
4. Norfolk, VA
5. Washington, DC

Fewest Tennis Courts per Capita

94. Mesa, AZ
95. Irving, TX
96. North Las Vegas, NV
97. Jersey City, NJ
98. Gilbert, AZ

Best Cities
vs
Worst Cities

24x Difference

Most Public Golf Courses per Capita

T-1. Gilbert, AZ
T-1. Scottsdale, AZ
T-1. Chandler, AZ
T-1. Mesa, AZ
T-1. St. Paul, MN
T-1. Glendale, AZ

Fewest Public Golf Courses per Capita

96. Corpus Christi, TX
97. Bakersfield, CA
98. El Paso, TX
99. New York, NY
100. Laredo, TX

Best Cities
vs
Worst Cities

41x Difference

Most Fitness Centers per Capita

T-1. San Francisco, CA
T-1. New York, NY
T-1. San Diego, CA
4. Miami, FL
5. Los Angeles, CA

Fewest Fitness Centers per Capita

96. San Bernardino, CA
97. Garland, TX
98. North Las Vegas, NV
99. Laredo, TX
100. Newark, NJ

Best Cities
vs
Worst Cities

23x Difference

Most Park Playgrounds per Capita

T-1. New York, NY
T-1. Chicago, IL
3. Madison, WI
4. Jacksonville, FL
5. Norfolk, VA

Fewest Park Playgrounds per Capita

94. Jersey City, NJ
95. Santa Ana, CA
96. Newark, NJ
97. Gilbert, AZ
98. Hialeah, FL

Best Cities
vs
Worst Cities

19x Difference

Ask the Experts

- Maintaining an active lifestyle not only improves quality of life, but it's also a much cheaper alternative to fighting and preventing illness. Promoting healthy choices, however, requires a group effort. We asked a panel of experts to share their advice on introducing positive changes both at home and at the policy level. Click on the experts' profiles to read their bios and responses to the following key questions:

- How can local communities encourage and facilitate active lifestyles among residents?
- Does the presence of professional sports teams in a city encourage residents to be more active? Should cities subsidize professional sports franchises through tax incentives and facilities?
- How can we increase access to and use of gyms and recreational facilities? Would incentives, such as tax deductions for gym memberships or penalties such as higher health care premiums, be more effective?
- What tips do you have for someone looking to maintain an active lifestyle on a budget?
- How can parents encourage children to be active in order to combat obesity?

Steven H. FriermanAssociate Professor of Specialized Programs in Education, Hofstra University
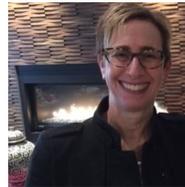
Susan G. ZieffPh.D. – Professor, Director, Active Living Across the Lifespan Research Group, Department of Kinesiology, San Francisco State University

Melissa BoppPh.D., FACSM – Associate Professor, Undergraduate Professor in charge, Faculty Coordinator, Exercise is Medicine on Campus Initiative at Penn State, The Pennsylvania State University

Behavioral Health & Wellness Research
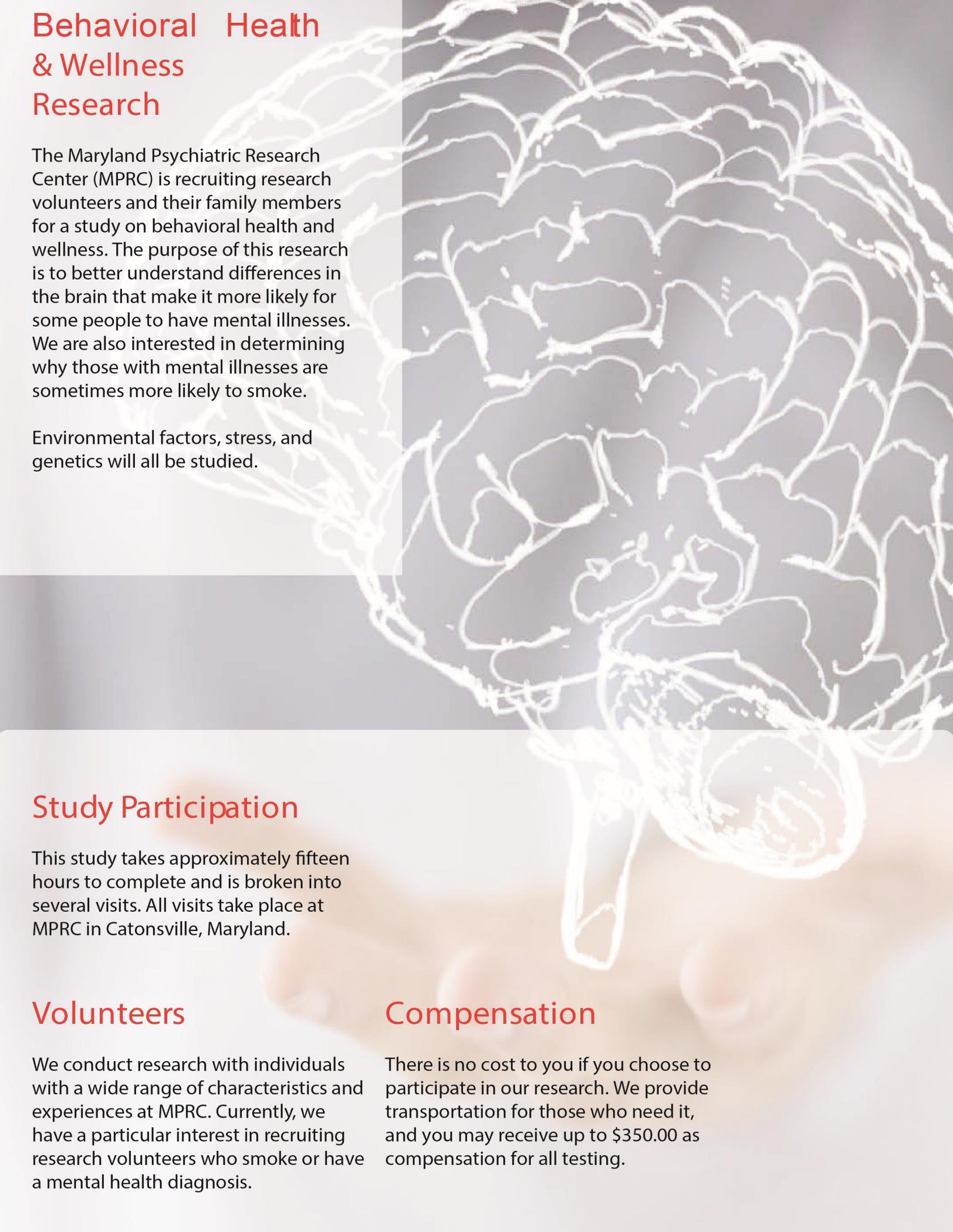
The Maryland Psychiatric Research Center (MPRC) is recruiting research volunteers and their family members for a study on behavioral health and wellness. The purpose of this research is to better understand differences in the brain that make it more likely for some people to have mental illnesses. We are also interested in determining why those with mental illnesses are sometimes more likely to smoke.

Environmental factors, stress, and genetics will all be studied.

Study Participation

This study takes approximately fifteen hours to complete and is broken into several visits. All visits take place at MPRC in Catonsville, Maryland.

Volunteers

We conduct research with individuals with a wide range of characteristics and experiences at MPRC. Currently, we have a particular interest in recruiting research volunteers who smoke or have a mental health diagnosis.

Compensation

There is no cost to you if you choose to participate in our research. We provide transportation for those who need it, and you may receive up to $350.00 as compensation for all testing.

Will I Qualify?

Please contact one of our research coordinators to see if you will qualify. We seek volunteers with a wide range of characteristics, and our preliminary screening can be done over the phone in just 10 minutes.

Contact Us

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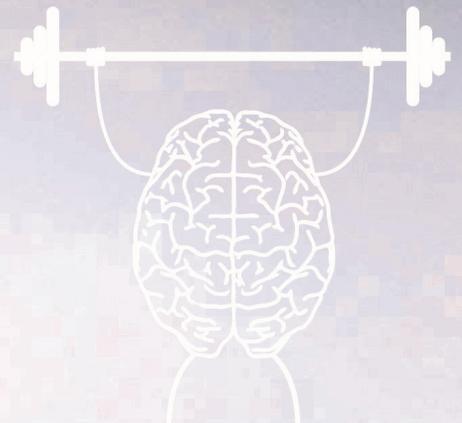
Positive Psychology in 100 words

Live **courageously**, through creation and adversity. Take maximum **responsibility**. **Belong**. Share a **purpose**. **Fulfilment** over instant gratification. **Resilience** over happiness. **Gratitude** over habituation. **Savour** the good. **Expect** the good, realistically. Work from **strengths**, in **flow**, **autonomously**. Less comfort, more **growth**. Realize **meaning** by **helping** others. **Kindness** as religion. **Give**, give, give, receive. **Passion** over profit. **Laugh** and **play** while you can. **Express** yourself soulfully. Explore your **ego**, check the narrative. **Reflect** don't ruminate. Just **be**, mindfully present, **vulnerably** now. **Forgive**. **Accept** yourself, unconditionally. Perceive **emotions** as data. Love what's broken. Embrace the **uncontrollable**. **Hug** one second longer...till...the end.

M&T BANK PRESENTS
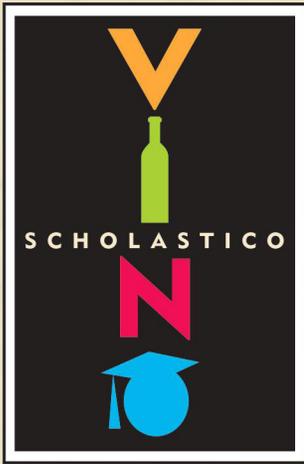
VINO SCHOLASTICO

THANK YOU

FOR HELPING US
RAISE A GLASS, RAISE A SCHOLARSHIP

The Howard Community College Educational Foundation extends its deepest gratitude and appreciation to all the generous sponsors of the 2019 Vino Scholastico event held on April 26 at Howard Community College. Their valuable support helped us to celebrate an elegant evening of fine wines, craft beers, and spirits. The event included delicious food from area restaurants and desserts from the HCC Culinary Department along with live entertainment raised vital scholarship funds to help deserving students achieve their educational goals.

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