

Background

Appreciative Inquiry is an approach to change management that encourages team collaboration when working towards a common purpose. It challenges participants to figure out what is currently working and build on this to discover the possibilities for the future.

Our team was faced with the challenge of diminished engagement and the inability to sustain change over time. Application of the Appreciative Inquiry model for change provided an exciting opportunity to challenge our leadership skills and shift away from the utilization of a problem solving approach.

Objective

To apply the appreciative inquiry model as an innovative approach to assist with the development of team values for one of our inpatient rehabilitation units. The goal of this project was to identify and implement team values that would enhance opportunities for cross discipline dialogue, shared decision making and greater understanding of the unique contributions of each team member.

Methods

The Appreciative Inquiry model was selected to guide the work of this project. The leaders of the project were 2 members of the team who were enrolled in the Collaborative Change Management Leadership Course and who were receiving education and coaching related to application of the model.

Members of the inpatient team were invited to take part in the working group and introduced to the change model. This group of individuals became the core team, the team that would represent the system, determine and define the passionate purpose driving the work, co-create and collaboratively implement the change process. The group learned about the 4 phases of the work that they would be doing which included:

Discovery phase Dream phase Design phase Destiny or delivery phase

The team met monthly over 7 months moving through each of the phases. They refined the passionate purpose and conducted an inquiry gathering the voices of the entire inpatient unit. Using the feedback of the collective, the core team designed unit team norms including definitions of each of the norms. The design was shared with the full inpatient team to gain feedback and guide refinement of the team norms prior to implementation.

Results

Results of the working group member survey revealed the following:

What did you find most valuable about the application of the Appreciative Inquiry Model?

‘It brought various members of the team together in person, to have insightful conversation as a group.’

‘It really felt like the team led this process.’

‘The opportunity for collaboration, discussion and sharing of ideas.’

What was different about the use of this model in guiding the work of the team?

‘Inclusion of all members of the team.’

‘It was an iterative process and it involved multiple check-ins and sessions to work together.’

‘Instead of being given the answers or guidance, we were tasked with guiding ourselves.’

‘Very collaborative.’

How did the use of the Appreciative Inquiry Model impact engagement of the team?			
It had NO impact	It had SOME impact	It had SIGNIFICANT impact	I’m not sure
0%	20%	80%	0%

Discussion

Overall, application of the Appreciative Inquiry model was a novel approach for our team which provided greater opportunities for reflection, engagement, participation of the whole team, and collective decision making.

Future Directions

Moving forward, we will continue to implement this change leadership approach to ensure that we are consistently engaging the system in co-creating meaningful and sustainable change that builds on our strengths.