Contracting
There are 3 levels of contracting that Transactional Analysis recognises as important:

- **Administrative contract** – This is the agreement on the administrative aspects of the process eg When will we meet? Who shall attend? Time of meeting. Payment. Groundrules. This aspect of contracting is social and explicit.
- **Professional contract** – This refers to the aim of the work. It will cover the purpose of the work/meeting, what the roles of all the parties are, the competence of all the parties to play their part, whether facilitating or participating. This aspect of contracting is implied.
- **Psychological contract** – This deals with the possible underlying issues – attitudes, expectations, hidden agendas. If this aspect is not discussed openly, it can jeopardize the task – the contract should be ‘clean.’ There must be an agreement around mutual respect and trust. This aspect of contracting is hidden.

The administrative contract is usually done well, the professional level might leave some aspects rather vague as assumptions, and the psychological level is often not addressed at all, and yet the outcome of a project will depend most on this level

I decided to perform a mini Appreciative Inquiry as a means of exploring the professional and psychological levels of the contract for a TA Foundation Year Training group in Cape Town. The training took place over 10 weekends throughout the year and the group was a closed group.

Appreciative Inquiry
AI uses the TA philosophy of “what you stroke, develops”
It also believes that we can create a new life-giving script

- AI searches continuously for what gives life to human systems when they are most alive, free, meaningful and creative in their ventures, and connected in healthy ways to their communities.
- Although it is a method/process, it’s most fundamentally about a change in attitude – a paradigm shift – a new way of seeing and being in the world.
- It is shift from a deficit-based, problem analysis (what’s wrong, broken, needs fixing) to a strengths-based, solution focused (focus on what’s right, life-giving, the positive core)
- It’s a shift from the world of the known and linear to a more vibrant chaotic world of possibilities, health, mystery and relationships.
- It’s based on the following theories:
  - **Image theory** –the power of positive images and the link with image and action - +ve images lead to +ve action. In medicine we know of the placebo effect – the power of our own image on ourselves, and in learning we know of the Pygmalion Effect – the impact of another’s image of us.
  - **Social constructivism** - This model suggests that we create the world by the language we use to describe it and we experience the world in line with the images we hold about it. Through language and social discourse, we are constantly evolving and creating new realities. Conversations, especially inquiry, continuously create new images that in turn lead to new action which in turn create new realities. AI provides a human system a way of inquiring into the past and present, finding those things that are life-giving and affirming as a basis for creating images of a positive and creative future.
Quantum physics – the interconnectedness of all things and the power to co-create our reality. Classical physics describes complex things in terms of their component parts – the “what is”. Quantum physics describes the phenomena of new possibilities that come from the relationships of simple things – possibility is the key.

Chaos theory – nothing is predictable and sure.

- Human beings and groups move in the direction of what we study and ask questions about. I am not the same person when I am in a discovery mode asking questions about what leads to joy, inspiration and hope, as when I do an analysis of what is wrong. Simply asking the +ve questions moves us towards the direction we seek. Appreciative questions are fateful questions.
- AI emphasizes the value of relationships. Groups / organisations are primarily centres of human relatedness, and relationships thrive when there is an appreciative eye – when people see the best in each other and themselves.

AI is about the liberation of capacity. It’s about everyone having a voice, of sharing dreams. Co-inquiry into the true, the good and the possible will lead to faster, more energized change.

Core principles of Appreciative Inquiry

1. **Words Create Worlds** (Constructionist Principle): The words we use to think and talk about a subject, determine our experience of it.

2. **Inquiry Creates Change** (Simultaneity Principle): The moment we ask a question, we begin to create change.

3. **We Can Choose What We Investigate** (Poetic Principle): What we choose to pay attention to, determines our findings.

4. **Image Inspires Action** (Anticipatory Principle): Human systems move in the direction of their images of the future. The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present-day action.

5. **Positive Questions Lead to Positive Change** (Positive Principle): Momentum for change requires large amounts of positive feelings and social togetherness. This momentum is best generated through positive questions that strengthen our shared positive values.

6. **Wholeness Brings out the Best** (Wholeness Principle): Wholeness brings out the best in people and organizations. Bringing all stakeholders together in large group forums stimulates creativity and builds collective capacity.

7. **Acting “As If” is Self-Fulfilling** (Enactment Principle): To really make a change, we must “be the change we want to see”. Positive change occurs when the process used to create the change is a living model of the ideal future.

8. **Free Choice Liberates Power** (Free Choice Principle): People perform better and are more committed when they have the freedom to choose how and what they contribute. Free choice stimulates organizational excellence and positive change.
THE FIVE CORE PROCESSES OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY
Watkins and Mohr (2001)

1: DEFINITION
Choose the positive as the focus of inquiry

2a: DISCOVERY
Inquire into exceptionally positive moments

2b: DISCOVERY
Locate themes and identify life-giving forces

3: DREAM
Create shared images of a preferred future

4: DESIGN & DESTINY
Innovate & improvise ways to create that future
THE FOUR APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY QUESTIONS

1) BEST EXPERIENCE: Tell me a story about the best experience of growth and learning you have ever had – an experience that changed the way you see the world or who you are as a person. The experience was a time when you were most alive, most involved and most excited.
   Who was there?
   What made it so exceptional?
   What factors supported this process?
   What was your part in this process?

2) VALUES: Lets speak for a moment about some things you value deeply; specifically the things you value about yourself, about growth and learning.

   2.1 Without being humble, what do you value most about yourself – as a person and as a member of a learning group?
   2.2 When you are feeling best about growth and learning, what about the task itself do you value?
   2.3 What do you value most about your learning group?
   2.4 What is the single most important thing that a learning community (i.e., the participants in this group) can contribute to your learning?

3) CORE VALUE: What do you see as the core value of this learning group? How will you help the group to develop this core value?

4) THREE WISHES: What three wishes would you make for this learning group so that it will both support and challenge you in your growth and learning?

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY SUMMARY SHEET

1. What was the most quotable quote that came out of this interview?
2. What was the most compelling story that came out of this interview?
3. What were the 1 – 3 themes that stood out the most for you during the interview?
There are 4 phases:
Define, Discovery, Dream, Design

A: DEFINE
Focus of the inquiry: A transformational learning group

B: DISCOVERY
✓ Get together with the person most different to you – someone you don’t know. Each gets a turn to answer the questions and the other listens. The listener can ask questions like: Tell me more about that? Why was that important to you? How did that affect you? How has it changed you? What was it that made that such a good experience? [Use the Four Appreciative Inquiry questions]
✓ Listen carefully and fill in the Appreciative Inquiry Summary Sheet to help you remember the essence of the story

SHARE STORIES: In the big group, (or if it is very large, in subgroups of fours), each person briefly shares their partner’s story, using the summary sheet Everyone listens to identify the themes that emerge
Discuss and agree on 3-5 “life giving forces” ie what most people want more of to make this the best learning group.

SCATTERGRAM: Write up the 3-5 themes
Participants locate the positive core – where most of the energy is.
Each person has 3 stickers to put where they choose

C: DREAM
The group identifies the “life-giving force” that they most want to create more of.
   a) They represent this visually using a metaphor (drama, music, poster, poetry etc)
   b) They create a provocative proposition – a bold, present tense affirmative statement.
      It will bridge the best of what is with your own speculation of what might be.

D: DESIGN
How are we going to make this happen? Be creative and innovative. What can you as an individual do? What can the group do? What will you commit to?
What emerged from the TA training group

1) Best experiences of previous learning
   ✓ face challenges
   ✓ OKness
   ✓ relevant information
   ✓ expanding
   ✓ challenge status quo and self
   ✓ discomfort is OK
   ✓ participation
   ✓ honesty
   ✓ insight
   ✓ acceptance of others and self
   ✓ uniqueness
   ✓ social change
   ✓ community
   ✓ dynamic
   ✓ relationship
   ✓ bigger picture
   ✓ sharing
   ✓ moving forward
   ✓ permissions
   ✓ appreciation
   ✓ enjoyment and fun
   ✓ generosity
   ✓ risking and being brave to explore
   ✓ lifelong learning
   ✓ own needs validated
   ✓ equality
   ✓ diversity
   ✓ meaning making
   ✓ safe learning environment
   ✓ self tranquillity

2) Themes identified
   ✓ fun / play
   ✓ respect
   ✓ adventure
   ✓ appropriate challenge
   ✓ permission to learn
   ✓ acceptance
   ✓ relationships
   ✓ authenticity
   ✓ invitation / gift
   ✓ sharing
3) Life giving forces and scattergram
✓ invitation to adventure (7 votes)
✓ sharing authentic relationships (10 votes)
✓ permission to learn (5 votes)
✓ acceptance (4 votes)

4) Dream :
   a) Creative portrayal of the life giving forces:
      Group 1 portrayed adventure by one of the pilots leading in his crew on the Starship Enterprise and saying their slogan: “Going boldly where no man has gone before!”
      Group 2 portrayed authenticity by creating masks for themselves and then slowly dropping them.

   b) Provocative Proposition
      “We are a TA-focussed group engaged in learning, generously sharing authentic relationships and working to enhance personal growth through adventure and fun”

5) Design:
The contract grew out of this process

Review of group process half way through the year

I used the same appreciative approach to review how we were doing. In pairs they spoke about what their best experience of learning and growth had been in the group, and what enabled this to happen. The conditions that enabled this to happen were shared in the group:

✓ Diversity
✓ Celebrating successes
✓ Respectful listening
✓ Openness to be vulnerable
✓ Acceptance of self and others
✓ Different levels of experience and knowledge
✓ Safety and trust
✓ A sense of the wider TA community through the facilitator and her links
✓ A supportive group
✓ Hope
✓ Making a difference
✓ Taking risks
✓ Fun, humour and quirkiness
✓ Personal readiness for change
✓ Flexibility within a structure
✓ Generosity of spirit and resources
✓ Ownership and belonging
✓ Everyone valued
✓ Commitment
✓ TA workshops from other facilitators to support and increase the experience
Trainees had the opportunity to say what they wanted more of, or if there was something that they wanted less of, to reframe that in a +ve way. Everyone committed to more of what was already present in the group. Additional wants were for the group to organise their own supportive link-up between modules, and for a list of therapists for them to consult for deeper personal work.

There is a great sense of camaraderie and fun, and authentic work being done. I do believe that using an appreciative approach as a way of contracting at the beginning of the year, as well as functioning from an appreciative paradigm all the way through, has provided the space for this to happen.

Bibliography:

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