



# TEAM CONNECTIONS

## Appreciative Team Building Discussion Guide Facilitator's Guide

*Purpose:* Launch teams dialogue with a new frame resetting to a different dynamic due to the changing landscape.

*Objectives:*

- Introduce a new view of team development
- Review applicable appreciative inquiry concepts
- Facilitate appreciative team building questions

*Session Overview:* This conversation provides a selection of questions that will assist a manager to lead conversation meant to help build teamwork.

*Time Estimate:* 90 minutes for each question set.

*Supplies:* Copies of handout & pens (print only the topic being covered in the session), flip chart or whiteboard (on-site or virtual), markers if on-site.

**INTRODUCTION:** It is possible that this unprecedented happening may have caused a changing dynamic in our established teams. As we reacquaint our teams with shared purpose & goals, clarify roles & responsibilities, nurture empowering relationships, affirm expected & accepted norms, influence leadership, generate uplifting communication, focus on efficient yet agile productivity, and enhance team spirit (Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cherney, & Fry, 2004), a realization arises that perhaps, the traditional framing of team development may no longer suffice. Instead of forming, storming, norming, and performing (Tuckman, 1965), the time has come to consider a different and networked cycle of team development. When teams anticipate that there will be a stage in which conflict will occur, a self-fulfilling prophesy ensues. We can reset this expectation. An asset-based approach to the stages of team development are—forming, functioning, finishing (MakKie, 2016).

Language and framing are vital to effective communication and successful outcomes as we know from Appreciative Inquiry. Additionally, we are the authors of our own team narrative and what we deem important becomes the focus of our stories. Focusing on what is working, or the strengths inherent in the system, or the assets available creates the psychological safety to innovate and problem-solve from a unique angle. This strengths-based paradigm also demonstrates that questions are fateful and directional. So why not ask questions that will set us on the path towards our best outcomes?

### FACILITATOR STEPS:

1. Select one of the following topics of appreciative team building questions applicable to your situation.
2. Determine the partner pairs. The selected questions will be asked & answered in interview format by each partner.
3. Convene the meeting & explain why you have chosen the topic for exploration. Share points from the INTRODUCTION. Explain that everyone will participate in a research interview having an opportunity to play both the role of interviewer and interviewee. Interviewees should tell detailed stories. Interviewers should not respond with their own ideas but focus intently on the interviewee's story taking notes and asking for more detail as needed (5 minutes)
4. Break into partner groups. Remind partner groups that each interviewee role will have 15 mins before roles should switch. Cue the switch of roles. (30 mins)
5. Return all to large group, ask for observations about the experience. (5 mins)
6. Facilitate data sharing of most inspiring thing they heard and common themes in partner stories. (5 mins)
7. Compile a list of the team strengths or assets called the positive core. What is the team good at in terms of the stories shared? (10 mins)
8. Based on the current situation and with the themes & positive core in mind, what can the team do with this new information? (20 mins)
9. How will the team make this a reality? (15 mins)

The following questions have been adapted or used verbatim from Whitney, et. Al, 2004.)

#### SHARPENING GOALS

Tell me about a time when were on a team that worked through chaos and came out more focused and determined on the other side? What are the details, who was involved, what made the situation a success? What was the turning point which precipitated the shift? What strengths did you add to the outcome to make it a success?

Imagine it is a week from now. A team goal that had been surrounded with confusion and uncertainty has suddenly snapped into focus and energized the team with its clear direction. Tell me, what has been resolved and how? What role did you play in the outcome?

#### CHALLENGING GOALS, REMARKABLE RESULTS

Tell me the story of a team that you were a part of that achieved a truly remarkable, challenging, and maybe even surprising goal. It is a time that is looked back upon with great reverence for the team. What was the situation? Who designed the goal to begin with? What factors led to the teamwork paying off? How did everyone feel about the accomplishment? What were you able to do as a team after that amazing success that you may not have been able to do prior?

You have just awakened from a magical 5-year long nap to find the team intact. The team has just completed an incredibly challenging and multi-faceted goal that will impact the greater university in a positive way that was set back in 2020 after the return to face-to-face services. What would you hope that goal would be? How did the success happen?

#### FOR THE GREATER GOOD

Share a story about a time when you set aside your own personal agenda or plan for the good of the whole and looking back you feel incredibly grateful for having one so. What internal team dynamics encouraged your own and others' selfless dedication? What unintended gains did you acquire as a result of your decision?

What aspects of this team's mission or purpose inspires you to work with your teammates for the good of the whole? What factors would inspire you to work for the good of the whole even more frequently?

### STRENGTHS WORKING IN SYNERGY

Describe a time when you combined your talents with others to enhance everyone's effectiveness. What talents did you and others bring into the situation? What enabled you to build on one another's talents so effectively? What was it about you, your teammates, and the culture that encouraged this synergy? What did the team achieve that it could not have if those talents worked independently?

What does this experience teach you about complementing strengths and what fosters collaboration?

Think about a complex challenge your team faces today. How can you personally apply what you've just described to positively transform how your team is approaching this situation? How can you encourage other team members to complement strengths to build something bigger than the individuals?

### INTROVERSION & EXTRAVERSION IN BALANCE

Reflect on a time in the life of this team when optimal performance required an equal balance of introverted and extraverted behaviors. Maybe it required team members to balance these skills within themselves; or it may have required conscious balancing of different member's skills in service of the whole. What was the situation, who was involved? How did the different styles involved contribute to the success? What aspect of the team climate helped to support member's individual strengths while balancing their shortcomings?

What current project could benefit from this deliberate balancing of introversion and extraversion? How can we go about fostering this balance?

### TRUST

Think about all the teams that you have been a part of. Tell me about one that could be/can be described as having an environment of trust. What did/does that look like? How does the trust come about? How did you determine that an environment of trust was present?

What are the benefits of having an environment of trust...for the team members, the work that the team does, & the bigger organization?

What can we learn from this story that we could replicate for this team now to build stronger trust?

### SETBACK RECOVERY

Think back to a time when the team recovered rapidly from a disappointing setback. Who was involved, what happened? What internal & external factors allowed such a rapid recovery?

How can you now apply what learned from that situation? In particular, what first steps could you and the team take towards recovery from the current COVID-19 situation?

### TEAM TECHNOLOGY

What do you most value about the team's current use of technology? What are all the ways the technology has led to enhanced performance and quality of life?

If you could have three wishes granted to heighten the health and vitality of the team's relationship with technology, what would they be? Why those?



Contact Info: Dr. Michele Newhard [Michele.Newhard@colostate.edu](mailto:Michele.Newhard@colostate.edu)

