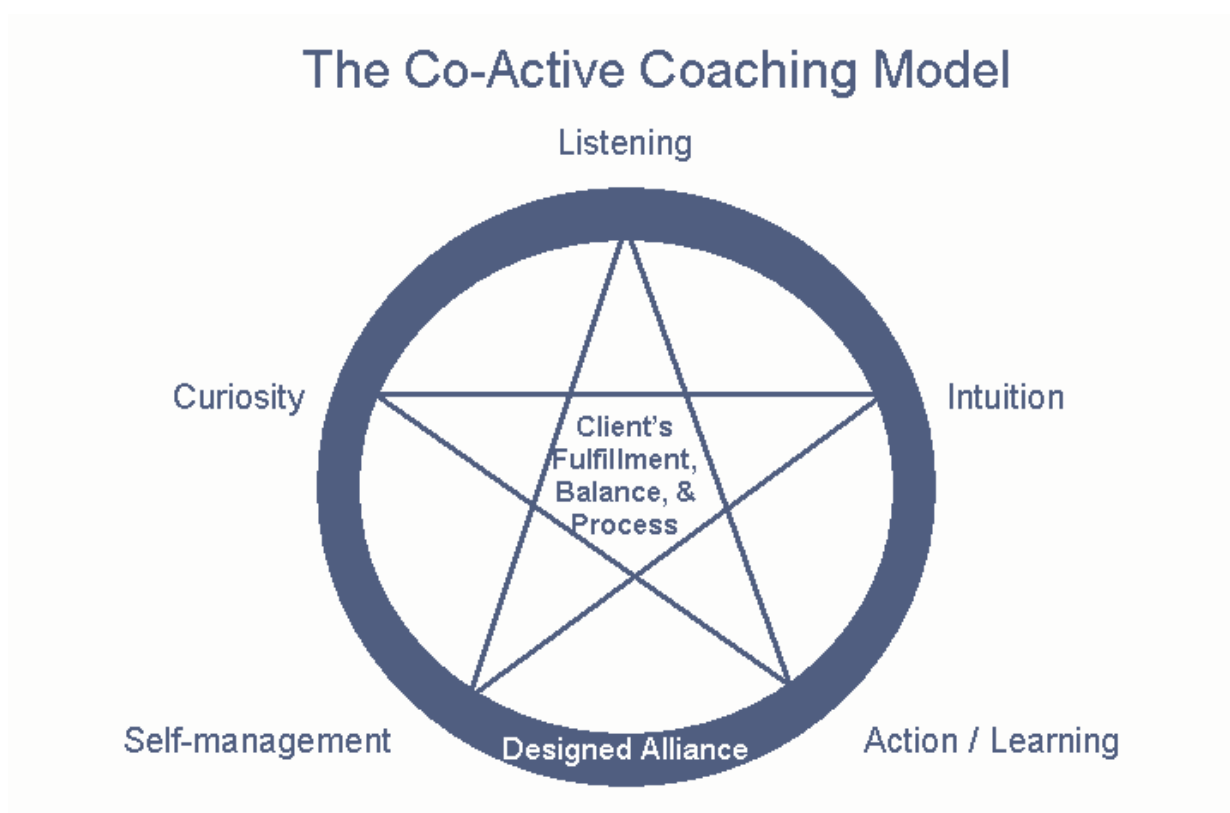


Appreciative Inquiry and Co-Active Coaching

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This article explores the Co-Active Coaching Model through the lens of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). From a process perspective, we compare Co-Active coaching with the Five-D cycle of AI. From a philosophical perspective, we compare Co-Active coaching with the Five Core Principles of AI. Finally, how AI and Co-Active Coaching enhance each other is briefly discussed.



The Five-D Cycle of AI and the Co-Active Model

- **The Define Phase:** The Co-Active Model begins with the designed alliance where the coach clarifies the coaching agenda and co-designs the way of working with the client. Two cornerstones of the Co-Active Model are "coaching is about the client's whole life" and "the agenda comes from the client". The Big "A" agenda is who the client is becoming and the small "a" agendas are the specific circumstances and objectives that the client comes to coaching for. The coach or the client can redesign the alliance at any time.
- **The Discovery Phase:** After designing the alliance, the coach inquires into the client's peak experience to discover her values and passions. A future-self visualization can be used to tap into the client's highest ideals and aspirations for herself. The coach references the client's positive core throughout the coaching process.

- **The Dream Phase:** In Co-Active coaching, we believe that the client is always moving toward greater fulfillment, balance and aliveness. The simple act of choosing to honor one's values and going for what one truly wants is in itself fulfilling. Like the use of visual image of the desired future and provocative proposition in AI, the use of the whole person, metaphors and emotions are emphasized. The coach uses her curiosity and intuition to dance in the moment with the client.
- **The Design Phase:** When the client is committed to a desired change, then an action plan is developed by asking her questions like: "What will you do?"; "What do you say YES to?"; and "What do say NO to?" Each coaching session ends with a request for actions and/or an inquiry for further reflection. The coach supports the client by holding her accountable for the agreed-upon actions or inquiry.
- **The Destiny Phase:** "Deepening the learning" and "forwarding the action" are two sides of the same coin. There can be no learning without actions and vice versa. A client who is stuck usually requires some learning about her assumptions, attitudes or beliefs that are preventing her from getting the results she wants. In deepening the learning, the work is more in the inner world of the client. Armed with new insights, the client then needs to take actions in order to test her new assumptions, attitudes and beliefs; to get a reality check; and to get feedback from her environment. In forwarding the action, the work is more in the outer world of the client. Based on this feedback, the client can then gain new insights and can redesign new actions. Hence, the cycle of deepening the learning and of forwarding the actions continues.

The Five Core Principles of AI and the Co-Active Model

- **The Constructionist Principle:** The principle of Balance in the Co-Active Model is used when a client is trapped in a disempowering perspective ("the way it is" or "this is how it must be"). Using the perspective wheel, the coach helps the client imagine, discover and explore different perspectives. The client is then empowered to choose compellingly from a stance of possibility and abundance.
- **The Poetic Principle:** In Co-Active Coaching the coach encourages the client to be brief. The coach gets to the heart of the matter by listening with all her senses, using her intuition and articulating what is going on. She is listening for both resonance and dissonance in the client: what is said, what is left unsaid, and the expressed and unexpressed emotions. The use of metaphors and of all the senses of the client to explore emotions, to deepen the personal experience, to visualize possibilities and to plan future actions is indeed poetic.
- **The Positive Principle:** Another cornerstone of the Co-Active Model is that the client is naturally creative, resourceful and whole. The coach holds the client in an unconditionally positive regard. The client has the answers and can find the answers. The client has no dysfunctions and does not need to be fixed in any way.
- **The Simultaneity Principle:** In Co-Active coaching, powerful questions are open, exploratory and from a place of curiosity. They challenge the client's thinking, enabling her to discover new answers, new perspectives and new insights.
- **The Anticipatory Principle:** When a client is paralyzed by fear and self-doubt, the

challenge is to turn down the voice of her saboteurs as well as to reconnect the client with her positive core and her vision of the desired future. To call forth a client is to let her feel known and seen; to invite her to own and live her magnificence; and to encourage her to feel the fear and take action anyway. The three Co-Active coaching skills used to call forth the client are: (1) acknowledging who the client is being or becoming; (2) challenging the client with an unreasonable request to breakthrough limiting beliefs; and (3) championing by the coach's absolute belief in the client.

Experience from the field

Both AI and Co-Active coaching emphasize the "being" part of the coach. They are both philosophies to live by as well as processes and skills that blend well together. They both provide the framework for coaching and leave space for improvisation.

The Dream Phase and the Constructionist Principle of AI strengthen the Co-Active model. The Co-Active Coaching principles and skills make space for the inclusion of the messy and unpleasant parts of the client's life as well the easy and pleasant parts. They offer effective tools for breaking through difficulties and negative emotions. AI and Co-Active coaching, when used together, create a formidable strategy for enhancing coaching efficacy.

For example, a client came to coaching because he was in a job that gave him tremendous traditional success on the outside but left him deeply empty and unhappy on the inside. We began our coaching by discovering his strengths and values, and by dreaming about a brand-new career completely unrelated to his current profession. When it became apparent that the client was unable to take actions to create the desired change, we began to explore his revenge fantasies, his inner saboteurs, his need for a compelling end to his story and the fact that he was the author of his own stories. It was not sufficient for the client to be dissatisfied with the status quo, have a clear vision of the future and a plan to get there. He also had to take the time to grieve his losses or disappointments and to heal from any negative emotions.

Learning AI and Co-Active coaching has been a transformative experience on my continuing journey of self-as-instrument. The corollary of holding my clients naturally creative, resourceful and whole is to hold myself the same as a coach. The corollary of living appreciatively out there is to live appreciatively in here. My vision is to continue to integrate AI and Co-Activity into my work and my life.