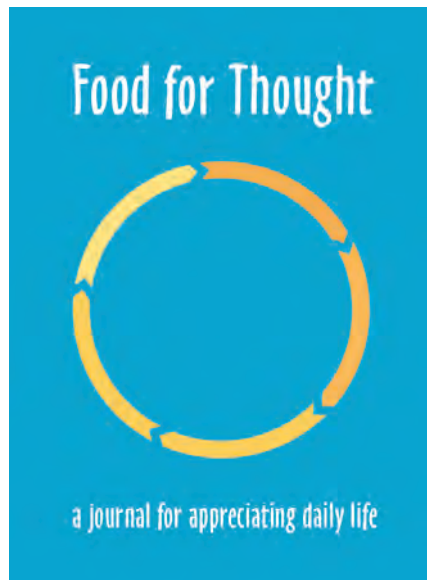


What is 'appreciative journaling?'

Getting the most benefit from *Food for Thought*



‘When I got beyond the cover and started to do the tasks I began to get it’

That comment’s from a participant on an AP Appreciative Inquiry training course, where we use **Food for Thought** as an assignment to help embed AI learning. Journaling is about reflection – seeing the world differently, noticing things, your relationship with self, enjoying you and thinking differently.

Food for Thought was developed from our practical experience encouraging journaling in a variety of AI projects, using notebooks with a few written guidelines. Experience suggested this was an effective way of encouraging learning and reflection, and we decided to develop an accessible resource to support it – **Food for Thought** was created.

How does it work?

Food for Thought is a workbook, and begins with examples of journaling, simple guidelines exercises and tasks, and inspirational quotes. They’re followed by blank pages for writing, doodling, and sketches – whatever works for you.

The exercises can be used in any way that suits the learner, they include some to periodically encourage reflection as you progress. Others in the guidance can also provide useful ‘icebreaker exercises’ for groups.

What do I use it for?

- Help build your appreciative muscle, support your wellbeing and build resilience
- Help you focus on life's positives – rather than its pitfalls – and notice the good things in life
- Embed your learning on our AI training courses
- It also supports learning about Positive Psychology, which has many examples of the benefits of journaling

‘This journal is deceptively simple... a few questions, some guidelines and a little background. Yet as it becomes a living document, it becomes a profound piece of learning.’

Anne Radford , Editor of **AI Practitioner**

The happiness advantage

The happiness advantage says that if we can be happy in the moment (rather than deferring it until we are 'successful') then the brain experiences a happiness advantage: it performs better – intelligence rises, creativity and energy rises. The brain is 31% more effective – 37% better at sales; doctors are 19% better at correct diagnoses. Quite a boost!

If you spend just two minutes a day for 21 days in a row, the brain can be rewired to work more optimistically and more successfully – just by writing down three new things each day that you appreciate. Journaling about one positive experience over the past 24hours allows your brain to relive it and receive the benefits. There’s a great TED talk on it, which you can see at:

www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/shawn_achor_the_happy_secret_to_better_work.html

The feedback

In the last three months we've had feedback from more than 50 people who've used the journal on our AI training courses. After two weeks, participants on our courses are asked to carry out an Appreciative Conversation to help them reflect on the process. Here's some of the feedback from an NHS team on one of our courses.

‘I can think of no more powerful activity for changing your life for the better, than to spend a little time each day with this appreciative journal, finding what’s right in your life. This deceptively simple and enjoyable process will transform your life in many ways you can’t begin to imagine.’

Jackie Kelm, author of **Appreciative Living**, from whose work we drew much inspiration for the journal's guidelines

Current plans include producing versions of the journal tailored to specific groups we're working with.

We've also developed a protocol to evaluate and support reflective learning. If you're a trainer and want to use the journal in your workshops, email us at hello@appreciatingpeople.co.uk and we'll send you the protocol.

For more information about the journal and how to order, please go to: www.aiessentials.co.uk.

About Appreciating People

Appreciating People help make positive change happen, in organisations, communities, businesses, charities and individually. We use a variety of 'strength-based' approaches, which focus on your strengths, and areas you're good at, rather than weaknesses.

We work regionally, nationally and internationally from our base in Liverpool. Appreciative Inquiry (AI) lies at the heart of all our work, which helps businesses, communities and the people within them become more resilient, effective and creative.

For more information, have a look at www.appreciatingpeople.co.uk or call us on 0151 427 1146.

- It gave me an opportunity to reword thoughts and feelings. A chance to reflect and a good reference point
- I enjoyed having space to reflect since life can otherwise seem fast
- It kick-started me creatively which is really important on a personal level and helps with work practice. Creativity gives me confidence in my ability to think outside the box. I enjoyed allowing myself time to appreciate the little things in life which are around me
- Writing something down makes it more real and valid
- I like the opportunity of writing – it's quite cathartic. Journaling gives me space to express feelings. Have been a lot more positive and reflective in situations.
- I'm more able to see the positives in situations i.e. I could be negative about a decision, but feel more able to look at outcomes differently/ positively.
- It puts things in perspective daily. Great visual prompt to list things that are enjoyable
- It allows reflective space before reacting. Reflecting on positive helps shift your perspective. Can be applied in all life situations

‘After today I’ll make time for a reflective journal. I’ve had many diaries, but most are full of dates of meetings or tasks to carry out. This realisation came from the reflective mode the workshop allowed. Discussions with other members of the group were like a voice of reason without being judgmental or negative. This was helpful, as I can be a little negative myself, highlighting the flaws or risks involved in my plan.’

Michelle, a participant on one of our **Positive Transitions** courses