

Use the 'Master Adaptive Learner' and the 'Appreciative Inquiry' Models to Encourage Life-Long Learning

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Overview

Healthcare systems are constantly evolving, and medical professionals must be prepared to adapt, change, and be lifelong learners. Mentors and educational supervisors are uniquely positioned to help students and trainees foster the skills necessary to become Master Adaptive Learners, supporting them during their learning journey to develop lifelong learning strategies. This 'How To' guide introduces the Master Adaptive Learner model (Cutrer et al. 2017) and aims to describe how it can be used to help medical professionals become life-long learners using it alongside the Appreciative Inquiry Model (Sandars 2017).

The Master Adaptive Learner

Master Adaptive Learners are individuals who have both the ability to develop mastery in a particular field and have the adaptive expertise to continuously learn and grow throughout their careers (Cutrer et al. 2017). The Master Adaptive Learner model consists of four main components:

- **Planning:** This involves examining a knowledge gap, seeking to find out why that gap exists, and setting goals to understand what they are missing in their knowledge base. Healthcare professionals may consider where and how they can fill the learning gap (e.g., through carrying out their own research or speaking to peers and experts).
- **Learning:** This entails the critical appraisal of any resources compiled during the planning phase. It also encourages the use of effective learning strategies, such as spaced repetitious learning, rather than cramming techniques, which can be less effective for adaptive learning.
- **Assessment:** This step comprises practical implementation of the newly researched skill or knowledge and reflects upon and starts to use it in practice. The learner can then move onto the 'Adjusting' phase once they are comfortable and confident with what they have learnt.
- **Adjusting:** This is the use of the skill or knowledge within daily practice to manage patients. It will usually focus upon system-level change or learning rather than a purely individual change.

Encouraging learners to undertake these cycles continuously throughout their career, particularly when faced with new issues, topics, or problems, ensures that they are constantly striving to learn. In collaboration with the Master Adaptive Model, life-long learners may need to reflect upon their performance and validate their learning. Whilst there are several different ways for a mentor or an educational supervisor to support the learner with this, the Appreciative Inquiry Model is a comprehensive tool that can support such reflection.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is defined as a process that encourages deeper learning and creates positive change for individuals and organisations (Sanders and Murdoch-Eaton, 2017). The Appreciative Inquiry Model consists of five stages which are referred to as 'the 5 Ds' [Figure 1]. The model focuses on the positive elements of reflection, planning, and how the learner can create and implement a progressive change to the situation, creating a cycle of learning something new and using it within their daily work. It is an example of how educationalists can guide their learners to use AI, focusing on a positive outcome-based approach.

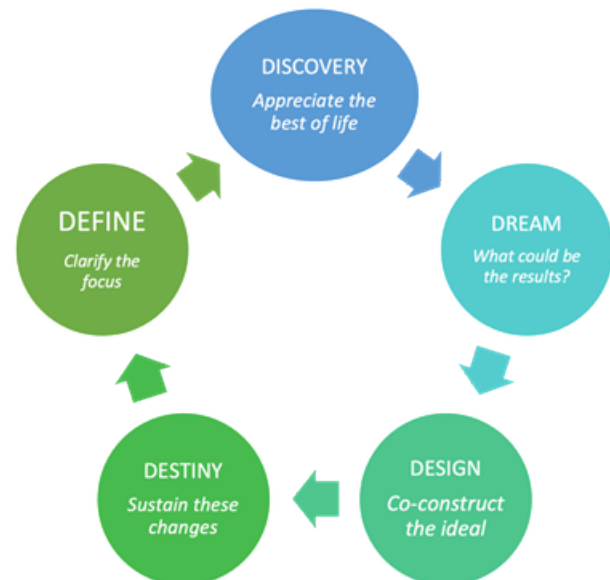


Figure 1. The Appreciative Inquiry Model

Applying AI to Support the Development of Life-Long Learning

Define - Clarify the focus: Whilst working as a supervisor, you meet with a medical student at an initial supervisory meeting. When discussing the importance of ongoing professional development, they define their goal of this placement as the need to improve their practical skills with regards to patient assessment and have identified specific areas to focus on. They voice their intention to enhance their abilities in these areas for comprehensive patient care, understanding how important these skills are for their future career working as a junior doctor.

Discovery - Appreciate the best in life: They begin to explore their strengths and positive experiences in patient assessment, seeking input from their mentors, faculty, or peers and reflecting upon formal examination performances and time already spent with patients on previous clinical placements.

Dream - What could be the results? They begin to dream of their future after they have enhanced their patient assessment skills. They want to perform thorough and efficient assessments, effectively communicate with patients, and accurately identify key findings, and they understand that only through continually learning can they achieve this.

Design – Co-construct the ideal: The student designs a plan to bridge the gap between current and envisioned skills, considering strategies, resources, and learning opportunities. They set realistic goals and break them into actionable steps whilst considering obstacles, seeking support from their supervisor when needed.

Destiny – Sustain these changes: They consider where they can continue their learning of this topic and identify their next opportunities to learn. They recognise that this model can be applied to all learning in a simple and sequential manner to become comprehensive and life-long learners.

Whilst considering how best to support their learners, a supervisor may consider what prompts and questions to ask students to facilitate movement through the 5 Ds [Table 1].

Phase	Examples
Define	<p>It is important to ask the learner to define their aim, giving them example statements about what they want to achieve and why:</p> <p><i>Example statement:</i> <i>"I want to enhance my patient assessment skills by improving my history taking, physical examination techniques, and communication skills to ensure accurate diagnoses and patient-centred care."</i></p>
Discovery	<p>The supervisor's role is to then prompt the student to focus on their prior performance, considering discovery:</p> <p><i>Example Questions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Can you recall a time when you received positive feedback on your patient assessment skills?"</i> • <i>"What specific strengths do you possess in history taking, physical examination, or communication?"</i> • <i>"How have your strengths in patient assessment positively impacted patient outcomes or experiences?"</i>
Dream	<p>Here it would be useful to ask them what they envisage will happen and some possible reflective responses:</p> <p><i>Example Question:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What specifically would you want to happen or hope to achieve?</i> <p><i>Example responses:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"I envisage myself confidently conducting comprehensive patient assessments and accurately identifying crucial findings."</i> • <i>"I imagine building strong rapport with patients through effective communication during assessments."</i> • <i>"I dream of providing exceptional patient-centred care by integrating my enhanced skills into clinical practice."</i>

Design	<p>A supervisor can support the learner by suggesting achievable and feasible practices:</p> <p><i>Example suggestions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>For them to enrol in a specialised patient assessment course or workshop to acquire advanced techniques and knowledge.</i> • <i>To regularly seek mentorship or shadow experienced clinicians known for their exceptional patient assessment skills.</i> • <i>Considering how to regularly practice patient assessment skills through simulated patient encounters or role-playing exercises with peers.</i> • <i>To gain feedback from mentors, faculty, or standardised patients to gain insights for improvement.</i>
Destiny	<p>The learner's progress can then be reviewed and monitored in several ways:</p> <p><i>Examples of monitoring:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reviewing the feedback from any patient assessment courses or workshops in which they actively participate in learning activities.</i> • <i>Considering their engagement within clinical rotations and how they seek opportunities to practice patient assessment skills.</i> • <i>Continuously reading their personal reflections regarding their experiences and how they have sought feedback from mentors, faculty, and peers.</i> • <i>Recognising their achievements and milestones reached along the journey of skill development.</i>

Conclusion

Healthcare professionals must strive to keep learning throughout their career, and this guide has highlighted how the two models 'Master Adaptive Learner', and 'Appreciative Inquiry' can support this. This bespoke approach for the student and willingness to help them to use the AI model aims to create a good foundation and supportive relationship with ongoing learning. The use of both the Appreciative Inquiry Model and the Master Adaptive Learning Model helps to support learners to continually tackle new problems and improve their own practice. Both supervisors and learners should consider sustainable and life-long learning and how this can take place in medical education, and the examples within this guide could help both the learner and educator to engage in this.

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