

ENHANCING THE MEAL EXPERIENCE

HOW TO CONDUCT an Appreciative Inquiry Session

IDENTIFY STAKEHOLDERS

The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) tool was created to **engage people in discussions** about the Patient Meal Experience. As the meal experience goes beyond Nutrition and Food Services (NFS), it is important to engage people from all areas within the facility who could have an impact on the meal experience; nutrition and food services, nursing, environmental services, lab services, diagnostic imaging, allied health etc.

The AI process is intended to be done in a **group setting** so that you can get a conversation going and make sure those participating understand what is being asked of them.

Note: Sending out the AI tool to individuals without explanation is discouraged as AI is all about getting the conversation started. However, if you choose to take this approach, it is recommended that it is followed by group discussion to reach consensus on current state.

SCHEDULING AI SESSION(S)

Before you begin scheduling sessions, you may want to introduce the idea of an AI session at a site manager meeting, letting them know why you are conducting AI sessions and how the results will be used. Let them know that they may be receiving invitations to participate in the near future.

Now that the word is out, go ahead and invite as many participants as space will allow to your AI Session. In our experience, these sessions can take 30-90 minutes so please plan accordingly.

Hint: Gathering a large group can be challenging but, should not be a barrier to getting started. These sessions can be done with smaller groups of 4-5 to get things started. Fellow managers, site leadership, nurse educators or allied health members may be able to schedule it into their day with advance notice.

GETTING STARTED

When your first session starts, remind participants why you are conducting AI sessions and how the results will be used. Explain that the end goal is an improved meal experience for patients and residents and that everyone has a role to play.

Using the AI Tool (below), explain that the group will be discussing the 8 **Best Practice** categories identified by NFS as key areas for exploration. Explain that the less desirable (left) and more desirable (right) states are based on professional judgement and experience.



→ BEST PRACTICE →				
Less Desirable	Institutional	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Comfortable	More Desirable
	Environment			
	Rigid, Compressed	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Flexible, Appropriate Spacing	
	Timing of Meals			
	Many Disruptions, Part of Care Day	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Food as Care Priority, Minimal Disruptions	
	Protected meal times			
	Drop and Run	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Patience and Assistance as required	
	Customer Service			
	Food Decisions for Patients	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Food Decisions with Patients	
	Choice			
Messy/Institutional	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Care Taken and Appealing		
Food Presentation/Appearance				
Slow to Respond to Menu Concerns/Requests	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Responsive to Patient Feedback/Proactive		
Food Quality/Menu Selections				
Food Service Only	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	All Caregivers/Staff involvement		
Point of Service Support				

1. **Define:** As a group (or in smaller groups if you have many participants), select one category to start with. Discuss what factors contribute to a less desirable state and what contributes to a more desirable state.

For example, let's start with ENVIRONMENT: Ask participants to brainstorm what factors make an environment **Institutional** or **Comfortable** in the environment in which you are in and record all responses.

Note: The example on the following page is specific to a Long Term Care facility; however the factors may be different when evaluating an Acute Care facility.

Step 1 Define

Environment; In a LTC setting, what makes an environment Institutional and what makes it Comfortable?

INSTITUTIONAL

- noisy dining room
- odours
- bare tables
- no attention paid to residents
- meds being administered
- resident is poorly positioned
- old, unmatched dishes

COMFORTABLE

- quiet dining rooms
- tables beautifully set
- residents sitting upright and dressed for meals
- Music playing
- Ventilated environment
- attractive dishware
- everything is focused on the resident

2. Now... it's time to **recognize what you do well:** As a group, discuss how well you are doing; how many of the "comfortable" factors you are getting right.

Step 2 Recognize the Positive

Consider your current environment and decide what you are doing well.

INSTITUTIONAL

- noisy dining room
- odours
- bare tables
- no attention paid to residents
- meds being administered
- resident is poorly positioned
- old, unmatched dishes

COMFORTABLE

- quiet dining rooms
- tables beautifully set ✓
- residents sitting upright and dressed for meals ✓
- soft music playing
- ventilated environment
- attractive dishware ✓
- focus on resident – no disruptions

3. After you have determined current state, you will want to **score that category**. Your site (or unit) can base the score on how well you are doing in that category. There is no right or wrong way to do this. As a group you can decide on a score you all agree with.

Step 3 Scoring

After some discussion to improve understanding of current state, you and your group have given yourselves a 5 for ENVIRONMENT.
You know you are doing some things well, yet recognize you can do more.

– BEST PRACTICE –		
Environment		
Institutional	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Comfortable

4. **Discuss & dream** what should be. As a group, brainstorm ways you can improve in this category.
 - a. What would it take to make the eating environment more comfortable
 - b. Who can help?
 - c. If success were completely guaranteed, what bold steps might you take?

5. **Design.** Once you have generated ideas, list all action items and begin to set priorities as a team.
 - a. What needs your immediate attention to go forward?
 - b. Are there any ‘quick wins’?
 - c. What other departments can help?
 - d. How can we tackle those ‘larger’ actions?

REPEAT PROCESS

As a group, repeat this process for each of the 8 categories.

Hint: If your time is limited, you may choose to tackle one or 2 categories per meeting until you get through them all.

OVERALL SCORE

Once you have completed all 8 categories, you can tally your site score out of 80. Don't get discouraged if it's lower than you hoped, get inspired! Small changes can significantly impact how you will score yourself in future AI sessions.

Hint: Each time you complete an AI session for the same area, you are assessing *current state*, not comparing it again previous state. Therefore, we do not recommend that you compare AI scores in an effort to assess improvement. I.e. if you scored 65/80 last year and 60/80 this year; it does not necessarily mean you have gotten worse. Factors, beyond your control, may have changed since you last did an AI session. As a group, it is up to you to figure recognize that and brainstorm ideas considering your current environment.