

## What is the Appreciative Pause?

**Appreciative Pause** is a discussion technique that encourages contribution to a discussion by providing affirmative feedback to those participating in the discussion. Discussions give way to the exchange of ideas that are likely to vary among individuals due to experience, background, and overall perspectives. Instructors should assume that students experience various levels of comfort in participating in a discussion. Some students can face pressures during discussions, such as performance anxiety due to the anticipation of having to engage in impromptu speaking and/or articulate a cohesive thought. This can be emotionally exhausting and cause students to shy away from contributing to the discussion. **Appreciative Pause** is a transformative technique that can yield an emboldening discussion environment and set the standard for future discussion.

One of the least practiced behaviors in discussion is to show appreciation for how someone has contributed to our learning. The **Appreciation Pause** focuses deliberately on showing that appreciation to the contributor.

***"Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well."*** - Voltaire



<https://storify.com/ALTALOMAN/appreciation-bostonian-style>

### Taking a break, to appreciate!

At some point during the discussion, the instructor or facilitator will call for a short break (1-3 minutes), an **Appreciative Pause**, from topic exchanges. During the break, the discussion participants will be asked to comment on something that someone else said during the discussion and how it has contributed to their learning. Participants will focus on rendering acknowledgement to those that provided new insight.

Appreciative comments are commonly provided for the following:

- *A comment/question that was asked that suggested a whole new line of thinking*
- *A comment that clarified something that up to then was confusing*
- *A comment that provided helpful evidence*
- *A comment that helped identify an assumption*
- *A new idea that is intriguing and had not been considered before*
- *A comment showing the connection between two other ideas or contributions when that connection hadn't been clear*
- *A comment that identified a gap in reasoning that needed to be addressed*
- *An example that was provided that helped increase understanding of a difficult concept*

## Appreciative Pause in the Classroom

**Appreciative Pause** can help form a strong learning community in the classroom, encouraging participation in the discussion. Participants learn to value and acknowledge their peers in class. An individual's knowledge may help a peer expand his or her own understanding of a concept, increasing confidence and promoting cooperative and productive work amongst peers.

**Appreciative Pause** allows for a designated time to further assess the kind of contribution made by an individual. For example, a student might share how a contribution of their peer addressed inherent assumptions or caveats associated with the topic and enhanced their understanding of the topic.

Appreciative Pause is a form of respectful validation for an individual's contribution to the discussion. The role of the instructor/facilitator is to guide the students in discussion and establish an environment where individuals are welcomed to voice their thoughts and all answers and opinions are valued. Setting up the classroom in a way the physical space is conducive to discussion may also help enhance the discussion environment. For example, arranging circle or u-shape seating that makes instructor/facilitator accessible to all participants and where all participants can see each other can help facilitate an engaging and inclusive discussion.

## Reflection Questions

1. In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of this this teaching strategy?
2. In what ways might this discussion technique be combined with another strategy/technique or enhanced by a delivery method (e.g. videos, interactive technologies, etc.)?
3. Consider one or more contextual factors (e.g. class size, discipline-area, characteristics of learners, diversity among students) and discuss how the teaching strategy might be modified to address the(se) factor as effectively as possible?

For more information about reflection and critical thinking, visit the Center for Teaching Excellence at <http://cte.tamu.edu/>

## References

- Brookfield, Stephen, and Stephen Preskill. "Chapter 3 Using Discussion Methods." *Discussion as a Way of Teaching: Tools and Techniques for Democratic Classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2005. Print.
- Welty, William M. "Discussion Method Teaching." *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 21.4 (1989): 40-49. Web

