

Thriving Women Thriving World

**AN INVITATION TO DIALOGUE,
HEALING, AND INSPIRED ACTIONS**

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ADVANCE PRAISE AND READER ENDORSEMENTS

“As I read this book, in one sitting, I thought of all the people I wanted to give a copy to: my daughter, my sons, my sisters, my friends, my clients...I could just see how their lives would be enriched, as mine was almost instantaneously, through this beautiful collection of stories and questions. I felt a sense of sisterly pride and gratitude, since several of the authors are my friends and colleagues. I have personally experienced the power of their support, and I know how their ways of being in relationships, full of curiosity and appreciation, can discover possibilities that were undreamt of before. I am excited in anticipation of how the combined brilliance, generosity and skills of the authors of *Thriving Women Thriving World* will help many people have fuller lives and greater well-being, all over the world.”

—Margarita Tarragona, Ph.D. President, Mexican Positive Psychology Society
Co-founder, Grupo Campos Elíseos

“This masterful guide provides an honest yet positive path forward for women who have suffered and those who love them. Its adept appreciative inquiry questions invite learning, compassion and world changing actions. Prophetic in voice, compassionate in tone, it is a true treasure. The world needs this book.”

—Amanda Trosten-Bloom, Principal, Corporation for Positive Change
Author, *The Power of Appreciative Inquiry*

“What an amazing and inspiring resource Diana Whitney, co-authors, and contributors have created! Talking about what bothers us is easy. We do it all the time. Rarely do we stop and ask ourselves what we would *like* to see in our relationships and ourselves – what would bring joy and connection. This book is jam-packed with creative resources that invite us to reflect on what we value, what we want more of, and how we can engage with others to create these thriving spaces.”

—Sheila McNamee, Ph.D. Vice President, Taos Institute
Professor of Communication, University of New Hampshire

“Filled with questions that represent a wise and generative call to action for empowering thriving women for a thriving world. A book for our times and essential reading for us all!”

—Marilee Adams, Ph.D. Author, *Change Your Questions, Change Your Life*

Thriving Women Thriving World unfolds virtually all areas within the female and female-identifying perspective, encouraging explorative dialogue into what was, what is, and what could be in this critical stage of the feminist movement. Diana Whitney and her coauthors share historical background, and then a treasure-trove of carefully designed Appreciative Inquiry questions around these

topics, enabling groups of people to enter into critical dialogue in any number of settings, such as social clubs, advocacy groups, professional gatherings, and so many others....in order to unwrap and explore these sometimes sensitive subjects, share stories, and together design new possibilities for moving forward. I was awestruck as to the myriad of applications for this work and inspired to run out and gather a group to get started!

–Fran Lyon-Dugin, Ph.D. Faculty, Augsburg University
and Taos Institute Associate

Thriving Women Thriving World is a treasure chest of stories and artistry to raise-up conversations around women's empowerment. It is an important resource to bring more self-love, connection and wisdom to women's lives, creating a positive ripple on our world.

–Kami Guildner, Business Coach for Women, Author, *Firedancer*
Founder and Host, *Extraordinary Women Radio*

“In this provocative book, *Thriving Women Thriving World*, Diana Whitney and co-authors invite us to tell our own stories – new stories, infused with hope and positive possibilities. Using the positively deviant practice of Appreciative Inquiry, Diana and company nudge us to turn the #MeToo movement inside out to catalyze inspiring dialogue and much-needed change. If you're looking to find new energy to solve age-old and often tiresome problems surrounding gender inequality, this book stands to be an excellent guide.”

–Barbara L. Fredrickson, Ph.D. Author of *Positivity* and *Love 2.0*
Kenan Distinguished Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

As Mary Gergen notes in the foreword, Diana Whitney and her colleagues put forth a refreshing and challenging approach to gender issues: *appreciation rather than aggression*. They speak to the remarkable potential for new understandings and ways of living ‘gender issues’ that an appreciative perspective and action offer – with enormous benefit for all.

–Harlene Anderson, Ph.D. Co-founder, Houston Galveston Institute
and Taos Institute

This book explores the notion of a world where women thrive. It provides an opportunity to take part in creating that world. A wide range of topics are explored with insightful questions that the reader can employ to engender meaningful conversations. The vignettes spoke to me of a world of thriving women that already exists, forming the foundation of a future where all of us, regardless of gender, will thrive.

–Bonnie Milne, Ph.D.

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THE ARTS OF THRIVING

*By practicing the arts of thriving, women accomplish their goals
and grow into the people they dream of being.*

Writing this book has been a journey of profound wonder, connection, and collaboration. Shifting from #MeToo to Thriving Women, Thriving World taught us much about ourselves, about each other, and about the worlds we inhabit. Coming to understand thriving as a unique blend of success and developing well, we realized that we are all thriving women, each in our own gloriously different way. Remembering how significant education, self-sovereignty, and financial savvy are for women's success, we shared gratitude for our educations, our teachers, our parents, and our many learning partners. Writing reaffirmed our belief that the world thrives as women thrive. It reassured us that social transformation is possible, especially when women support women and when men support women leading positive change.

In the process of writing, talking, and sharing we uncovered five ways that women actively practice thriving. We call them the Arts of Thriving. Each one contributes to our abilities to both succeed and develop well, to achieve our goals while maintaining what Buddhists call “right relationship,” and to use our life experiences to grow into the best versions of our unique selves.

Our best self is the greatest gift we can give the world.

CURATING LIFE-AFFIRMING STORIES

Thriving women practice the art curating life-affirming stories. They invite, share and celebrate stories. In the way water surrounds fish and is essential to their lives, we live and become in stories.

We are born into the stories of our families, our cultures, and our ancestors. We live into these inherited narratives, we adopt some, we fight with some, and we outright reject others. We pass on stories to help others learn and to share what we know. We are held and remembered in stories.

Stories grant meaning to our lives, our relationships, and our work. They can enable us or disable us, lift us up or pull us down, include us or exclude us, give us power or give it to others. We live and become in the spaces and potentials stories offer us.

For these reasons, thriving women don't surround themselves with just any stories. We wrap ourselves and others with positive life-affirming stories, with stories aligned with our values, dreams, and goals, and with noble stories of successful people creating a thriving world.

CREATING MEANINGFUL DISRUPTIONS

Thriving women practice the art of meaningful disruption. Social change requires disruption in the norms, social patterns, and relational realities of the prevailing cultures into which we are born and expected to take our places. Thriving is an invitation to be a social pioneer, a pattern breaker. It is a call to live in ways that make the world a better place now and for future generations. It is a summons to create meaningful disruptions that align our ways of living and working with core values and preferred futures, to liberate women and girls from oppression and exploitation, and to create positive ripples of social change for years to come.

The potential for disruption signals us. When interrupted as we talk, when touched inappropriately, when we hear mean or belittling comments about women, we pause. In these moments invisible social grids awaken us, and opportunities for disruption appear. In these moments we have a choice, to ignore what we see, or to name it, point out injustice, and make change even at a great cost because the value of change is much greater than the cost.

Meaningful disruptions become the times we look back upon and say ‘I did it,’ ‘We did it,’ ‘We made a difference’. No matter how small or large, meaningful disruptions can soothe relational wounds, uplift new possibilities, and restore dignity to those from whom it has been taken. As thriving women, we give voice to our values and speak up for social justice. By working toward harmony in place of divisiveness, we create conditions for love and respect to prevail and sustain us all.

CARETAKING GENERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Thriving women balance caring for others with caring for themselves. In most cultures, it has been, and still is, a woman’s role to take care of others. The front-line roles of caretaking others in education, healthcare, nonprofit, and social services are still predominantly occupied by women. Although this may be a lamentable snapshot of inequality, it also invites us to consider women as purveyors of a relational savvy of great social value. Women in our thriving moments leverage this aptitude to take care of ourselves and others in healthy ways. The people around us form precious memories of being taken care of when it mattered most.

As we seek to bring balance and harmony into our lives, we learn to discern and say no to unhealthy relationships: those with people that take more than they give, drain our energy, deny our presence, or harm us in any way. At the same time, we seek out and support healthy relationships: those with people who bring out our best, encourage us to live and lead from our hearts and minds, and provide support and caretaking in return. Thriving women are caretakers of generative relationships in partnership with allies who uplift and energize us to lead the way.

CELEBRATING STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES

Thriving is a lifelong dedication, a choice to live and work in ways that energize, embody, and uplift individual and collective best

selves. Thriving women celebrate their own and others' strengths and successes as they are discovered and made meaningful through dialogue. By celebrating our strengths and successes we locate ourselves in the center of our own unique and meaningful lives. Appreciation, recognition, and celebrations give definition to our best selves, remind us of our values, help us calibrate how well we are doing, and inspire us to keep going.

Thriving women recognize, enjoy, and celebrate differences among people. Most significantly, we acknowledge and appreciate thriving. We support and applaud other women who are successfully doing what is in the best interest of people and the environment. We cheer on women doing something they have never done before. We share stories and best practices of how we take care of ourselves when we come face to face with oppressions, injustice, or relational abuse. We celebrate women and men who chart new pathways of gender equality at home and at work. By remembering and celebrating thriving moments, we create the bedrock upon which a thriving world is built.

CULTIVATING CONDITIONS FOR THRIVING

Thriving happens in part by chance, in part by choice, and in part by conditions that foster well-being and bring out the best of people. Conditions such as leadership, laws, regulations, access to time, money, and resources, organization cultures, and relationship norms can all contribute to oppressive, exploitive, and unjust environments, or they can contribute to a fertile milieu for thriving.

As Winston Churchill reminded us, "First we design our structures and then they design us." Thriving women give form and transform the conditions of our lives. We design laws, communities, and economic policies, so that thriving is inevitable. Much like gardening, thriving women sow the seeds of inclusion, equality, and collaboration and weed out injustice and abuse, cultivating a social environment of equality, peace, and harmony.