

# Activity 4.6 Asking Questions to Promote Curiosity<sup>1</sup>

## Description

This activity focuses attention on the intentionality of asking questions. A good question can help promote a rich and meaningful discussion and goes beyond talking “on the surface.”

## Learning Goals

- Understand what makes questions “good questions”.
- Practice developing questions that will surface insights and perspectives that can be helpful when addressing issues.

## Practice (75 minutes)

<b>Step One</b>	<p>A key way to promote broad knowledge of an issue is to ask good questions. How do we know what good questions are?</p> <p>One way to start thinking about questions is to identify what you assume people think about an issue and then develop questions to explore whether or not that is the case.</p> <p><b>Introduce a complex problem.</b> In small groups, create a stakeholder chart <a href="#">[See Activity 5.2 Developing an Awareness of Stakeholders]</a> Think about how each stakeholder would define the issue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What do you think are their major concerns?</li></ul> <p><b>Think about and list sources that lead you to these perceptions</b> (such as media accounts, personal experience, knowledge you have gained in your education, others?). You can even turn to online news sources and the comment sections, blogs, nonprofit websites, etc. to help you think through this.</p>	<b>30 min</b>
-----------------	---	---------------

<sup>1</sup> **Citation for this activity:** Lori Britt (2023). Asking Questions to Promote Curiosity. In Hartman, Britt, & Byrd (Eds). *The Interactivity Foundation Collaborative Discussion Toolkit*. Retrieved from <https://www.collaborativediscussionproject.com/module-4-culturally-responsive-collaboration>

<b>Step Two</b>	Next, <b>think about what questions you can ask to each group of stakeholders</b> that would help to unearth what concerns they have and what hopes they have regarding this issue. One thing we need to avoid is assuming we know what people value, care about, and fear because someone else tells us this is the case. Identify which stakeholders it would be very important to try and communicate with directly regarding this issue.	<b>20 min</b>
<b>Step Three</b>	With this background knowledge, your task now is to <b>write good questions</b> . A good question offers you a perspective and helps you understand how a participant makes sense of the issue. In the ways people respond to questions we gain insight in what they tell us, how they tell us, and why they chose to tell us what they did. Asking good questions can help open up someone's world to us.  See <a href="#">Question Chart</a> for a few types of questions that can help support collaborative learning about an issue from stakeholders. Examples oriented around the problem of healthcare are offered to show you how you might write each type of question for a particular issue.	<b>5 min</b>
<b>Step Four</b>	In your small group, <b>write 3-4 questions directed at your assigned stakeholder group that are grounded in a spirit of curiosity</b> , of wanting to understand a person's perspective deeply.  Even if you are not able to ask these questions to stakeholders, the process of writing these questions is a valuable one and is a good habit to habituate.	<b>20 min</b>

## Reflection

- Which types of questions do you think are most important when learning about others?
- What types of questions should be avoided or more carefully crafted when learning about stakeholders or community members?
- How can we ask questions of others different from ourselves in ways that are respectful and authentic?
- Is it better to ask questions or to express your own vulnerability and positionality within an issue?

## Practice Journal

This week, arrange to talk with someone that you know but do not know especially well. This could be an acquaintance, colleague, or stakeholder in your community. Prepare a list of questions to ask this person. Be mindful of the type of questions that you might ask (refer to question chart). During your conversation with this person, do not use or refer to your list. Rather, engage in a casual conversation but try to incorporate some of your questions that you prepared. Reflect on the importance of your preparation work. How did it affect your conversation? What types of questions worked best for you?

## Dive Deeper: Additional Resources

- Jack Byrd, [“Ask Follow-Up Questions-and Listen”](#) (2 minutes) A short blog post that identifies an underused communication practice in asking follow up questions to develop a fuller understanding of the reasoning behind statements and ideas.