

Activity 4.6 Asking Questions to Promote Curiosity

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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 constitutes “good questions”.
- Practice developing questions that will surface new insights and perspectives.

Instructions (55 minutes)

Set Up	Prepare for the Activity Select a complex problem that is important to the group. Share the Identifying Stakeholders Worksheet as handouts or create copies of the file for each group. Organize participants into pairs or small groups (3-4 ppl). Begin by introducing the learning goals of this activity.	
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¹ **Citation for this activity:** Lori Britt (2023). Asking Questions to Promote Curiosity. In Hartman and Byrd (Eds), The Interactivity Foundation Collaborative Discussion Toolkit. Retrieved from <https://www.collaborativediscussionproject.com/activities/module-4>

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<p>Step One</p>	<p>List Stakeholders for a Complex Problem</p> <p>A key way to promote broad knowledge of an issue is to ask good questions. How do we know what good questions are? 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>Share the complex problem and invite each small group to first create a stakeholder chart for this issue using the worksheet.</p> <p>Then ask them to answer the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think each stakeholder defines the issue? • What do you think are their major concerns? <p>Ask them to also think about and list sources that led them to these perceptions (such as media accounts, personal experience, knowledge they have gained in their education, others).</p>	<p>15 min</p>
<p>Step Two</p>	<p>Identify Key Stakeholders</p> <p>Invite each group to think about what questions they can ask each group of stakeholders to help unearth the concerns and hopes they have regarding this issue.</p> <p>Then, ask them to identify which stakeholders it would be very important to try and communicate with directly regarding this issue. Have each small group write their top 5 stakeholders on a whiteboard, shared screen, or other surface visible to everyone.</p> <p>Facilitator Tip: Advise the groups to avoid assuming that they know what people value, care about, and fear because someone else tells us this is the case.</p>	<p>10 min</p>
<p>Step Three</p>	<p>Craft Specific Questions for Specific Stakeholders</p> <p>Select a few of the different stakeholders listed and assign each small group one of these stakeholders.</p> <p>Each group is tasked with writing good questions tailored for their specific stakeholder. Highlight that a good question offers insight into the stakeholder's perspective and helps us to understand how they make sense of the issue.</p> <p>Share the Question Chart showing 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 how participants might write each type of question for a particular issue.</p>	<p>20 min</p>

Step Four	<p>Debrief as a Full Group</p> <p>Invite each group to share some of their stakeholder questions. Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Which type of question was most commonly used? Why is this? • Which question stands out? What caught your attention? What does this question do or make possible? • How would you revise one of these questions to go deeper? • What concerns do you have about asking specific stakeholder questions? 	10 min
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Reflection Journal

- 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 the 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

- [Ask Follow-Up Questions—and Listen](https://www.interactivityfoundation.org/ask-follow-up-questions-and-listen/): Byrd, Jack. “Ask Follow-Up Questions—and Listen.” *Interactivity Foundation*, 13 May 2020, www.interactivityfoundation.org/ask-follow-up-questions-and-listen/. Accessed 7 Sep. 2023. 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.

Activity Cluster

[5.2 Developing an Awareness of Stakeholders](#)

4.6 Asking Questions to Promote Curiosity