

Activity 2.1 Promoting Curiosity¹

“What I have is a malevolent curiosity. That’s what drives my need to write and what probably leads me to look at things a little askew. I do tend to take a different perspective from most people.” –David Bowie

Description

This activity illustrates how curiosity can be enhanced by the use of prompts to exercise the mind. These prompts are designed to explore dimensions of an issue which may not be evident upon initial examination.

Learning Goals

- Participants will be able to examine an issue and suggest questions for deeper understanding of the issue.
- Participants will understand the value of reshaping the narratives of problems into narratives of possibility.

Practice (60 minutes)

Step One	Developing curiosity requires a mental workout similar to the physical workout that many people follow. The practice of being curious is a daily activity. The basic building blocks to becoming curious are to keep these 4 prompts in mind at all times and use them in thinking about everything you encounter each day: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What if...• Think about...• Can we imagine...• Why is that true? In small groups (3-5 participants), try out these prompts on a familiar topic. This may be a topic relevant to your class or community. Each group reviews an article or headline (or, ideally, in advance of the session) and then explores the first curiosity prompt . When	10 min

¹ **Citation for this activity:** Jack Byrd (2023). Promoting Curiosity. In Hartman, Britt, & Byrd (Eds). *The Interactivity Foundation Collaborative Discussion Toolkit*. Retrieved from <https://www.collaborativediscussionproject.com/module-2-creative-collaboration>

	<p>considering the topic, make a bulleted list of “What if…” possibilities.</p> <p>Tip: The list should be exploratory only. There should be no critical evaluation of any item on the list at this time. Be bold and imaginative. Try not to censor or self-censor responses.</p>	
Step Two	<p>Next, develop similar bulleted lists for the other three curiosity prompts. Again, suspend critical judgment. If time is limited, select only one other curiosity prompt.</p>	20 min
Step Three	<p>Once the lists are complete, develop curiosity questions that combine similar items from each of the lists. The curiosity question would expand possibilities. It may begin with “Would it be possible to…” or “Wouldn’t it be amazing if…”</p> <p>Create 3 curiosity questions.</p> <p>Tip: Don’t try to answer the curiosity questions. The idea is to open possibilities and not be tied down by economic, political, or social realities.</p>	20 min
Step Four	<p>Share back and debrief. Reconvene as a large group and each small group shares at least 1 curiosity question. Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any common themes across our lists or questions? If so, what does that tell us about our society, our group, or our collective imagination? • Which curiosity prompt was most helpful in thinking about the issue in new ways? Why? • How might the group share these ideas with others? How do we seed our imaginative thinking? 	10 min

Reflection Assignment

- Where does curiosity come from? Are some people just naturally curious? What sort of experiences cultivate curiosity? What sort of individual traits encourage curiosity?
- How important are others in cultivating or encouraging curiosity around a topic? How might a group support curiosity? When or how does a group discourage curiosity?
- How do you know when you have cultivated or developed habitual curiosity as a way of being? How do you know you’ve arrived at being more curious?

Practice Journal

This week, practice using curiosity prompts in your daily routine. You may want to think about how you use it within your own internal dialogue and also how you can incorporate curiosity prompts in your group interactions. Reflect on what sort of impact, if any, these prompts had in your daily routines.

Dive Deeper: Additional Resources

- [*Curiosity: we're studying the brain to help you harness it*](#)