



Asking Good Questions

Creating a Culture of Appreciative Inquiry

Asking good questions is the appropriate posture for a learning community. Good questions are more helpful than statements when the issue is complex, and good questions can create a culture of appreciative inquiry that supports transformation, going deeper and changing patterns that lead to new possibilities.

So what makes a good question? There are many kinds of questions, but three types we want to highlight here: the poser question, the curiosity, and the in-service inquiry.

- **Poser Question**
This is a question that sounds like an inquiry because it ends with a question mark, but is actually a judgment or statement masquerading as a question. For example, What were you thinking? Who screwed that up? You're not doing it that way are you?
- **The Curious Query**
These questions serve the purpose of helping the listener better understand what the speaker is talking about. The question is in service to your own learning. For example, What do you mean by that? Can you say more about that? I don't understand. These questions enable the listener to truly hear the other person and put the listener in a posture of understanding and acceptance.
- **The In-Service Inquiry**
These questions serve the purpose of helping the speaker delve more deeply into his or her own learning and understanding. The person who poses the question cannot possibly know the answer because it opens something up for the other person the listener cannot know. For example: What color is it? Can you describe the feelings associated with this issue or option? What are you afraid of? What do you want?

Facilitation Instructions

1. Split participants into small groups of 4-5 people. Ask each person to quickly jot down an issue they would like help to address. Choose one person to go first.
2. Have participants share their issues with a bit of background.
 - Example 1: I can't get people to follow through on their commitments.
 - Example 2: I need to get my board to support the budget for this project.
3. Each person in the circle poses an in-service question to help with the issue – no responses allowed. A scribe records the questions so the person asking can just listen.
 - Example 1: Do you know what the gifts of your group are and what they enjoy doing?
 - Example 2: What part of the project does the Board need to understand to approve the budget?



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4. After hearing all the questions, the listener identifies one or two questions that helped open something up, and briefly shares why that question was helpful. The group can take a few minutes to explore their answers.
5. Switch to next person and repeat the process. There is generally time for three people to take turns in 30 minutes.
6. Debrief in the large group. What makes a good question?
 - Opens up possibility
 - No judgment
 - Asker doesn't presume to know the answer