



Diane Rheos

Living Communication

Asking Reflective Questions Exercise

Process:

- Set the context about why we should know how to ask reflective questions during an authentic conversation.
- Choose, or self-select a speaker. This will be the person answering all of the questions.
- Give the examples of how to ask a great question.
- Give the listeners the instructions.
- Give all listeners paper and pen.
- Have the speaker give their statement.
- Divide the listeners into small groups of 3 to 5 people.
- Give them 15 to 30 minutes to craft their questions.
- Call the groups back and invite them to ask their questions.
- Facilitate the questions. This means that if a question has any threatening edge to it offer a suggestion. Or call for a suggestion from the group. Monitor the person answering the questions and be willing to step in if needed.

Instructions for the facilitator:

Before the exercise invite a participant to self-select to be the person being questioned. A few things to keep in mind. This person must be comfortable being asked questions. Don't let someone volunteer who will find being asked many questions threatening. Ask the volunteer to prepare a short statement about something that they actually believe, and think is important. Their statement can take a few minutes to give. It should be relevant to the group and not overly inflammatory. For practice purposes, making up something that no one cares about, or pushes hot-buttons, will not give a good teaching exercise.

Context Conversation:

In an authentic conversation we ask questions because we want to understand each other. We want to honor and respect each other. Before doing this exercise talk about the reasons for learning to ask questions. Ask for stories about how questions can be misused, such as when they are used to attack the speaker. Share about how a speaker can be misunderstood and the conversation go sideways when someone misinterprets the meaning.



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Why we learn to ask reflective questions:

- We ask questions so that we began to hear what the speaker actually means and not what we assume they mean.
- When we can tell that something is important to you, then we want to deeply understand why.
- We each want to be validated for our unique selves and being asked a question shows care and interest.
- When we slow down to ask questions we not only understand what someone is saying better but we are also helping them understand what they mean.
- Make sure that the context of your group includes the understanding that questions will be used to honor each other.

Instructions for the listeners:

Do not interrupt the speaker.

As you listen make notes of the following:

- What catches your interest and makes you want to know more?
- What comment triggers you or when did you have an emotional reaction?
- When did you want to jump in and comment?

You know it's time to stop and ask a question:

- When your first thought is how much you disagree with what someone has said.
- When the person speaking has a noticeable emotion when they are speaking.
- When you notice that you are making a judgement about what the person is saying.
- As a conversation participant, be willing to step in and invite a time for questions. Often a person outside of the conversation realizes that two people are arguing about two different things, or they can tell when a conversation is going off track.

Examples of reflective questions:

- Tell me more about....
- I was so interested when you said.....
- Give me an example of
- I think I heard you say..... was that correct?
- If the plan or idea worked, what would it look like?
- You offered a suggestion that I would not have thought of. Can you tell me more about how we might implement your idea?



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- If you are being triggered you might begin by sharing this fact. Your emotions will show up in how you ask a question. “This subject really means a lot to me too and I want to understand what you mean when you said.....” “I have been trying to figure out what I think about this issue too so I am asking this question because I don’t know the answer either....”

Poor question formats:

- Why did you say....?
- That makes no sense, what did you mean....?
- Can you back that comment up with facts?
- How could you believe...?
- What were you thinking....?
- Any form of question that challenges.
- Any expression of judgement.
- Not actually asking a question, just making a comment.
- Any long comment about what you believe and then ask them to respond. First make sure you understand what they believe.

Examples:

Mimi has been explaining how important it is to her for the church to take a specific action.

- Mimi, it sounds like this is really important to you. Can you tell us more about your own history or why this subject pulls at your heart?
- Can you tell us more about why you are passionate about this?
- I was so curious when you said that your past church did this. Can you give an example of how it impacted them?
- Is it right that you are recommending that we start a new committee? Or do you think that our current committee might want to do this?
- Can you tell us more about how you can see us implementing this action?
- What are the specific steps you think we need to take?

Warning: Only use this exercise with a group which is not already in conflict. If you are unsure how this exercise would work with your group, talk to one or two others who know the group participants to help you discern if this would be a good exercise for them.