

The Art of Open Ended Questions

Open ended questions are “high value questions” that invite participation, build relationship, and create opportunities for learning. Asking open ended questions helps you to:

- Make connections and establish trust
- Uncover motivations, thought patterns, and assumptions
- Reveal contributing factors to a situation

Open ended questions often start with “How”, “What”, or “Who”. Follow up questions may begin with “So”, “Did” or “Which”. Below are some open ended question prompts to get you started.

Avoid asking closed questions: questions that require a Yes/No answer, are leading statements or ask “Why,” which may put the speaker on the defensive.

Issue Identification	Further Information
What can you tell me about...? What seems to be the issue? What do you make of...? What thoughts do you have about...? What does this look like to you? How do you feel about...? What concerns you most about...? What challenges you most about...? What is holding you back from...? What do you think about doing X this way?	Can you tell me more about...? Can you give us an example of...? What do you mean by...? What else? What did you try so far? What do you need in order to do X? How would you approach...? How does this situation affect/impact...? What are we assuming here? How did you arrive at your view?
Outcomes	Taking Action
How do you want X to turn out? What do you propose? What is your plan? If you do this, how will it affect...? What else do you need to consider?	What will you do? When will you do it? What are your next steps? How will we know when...? If you could do this differently, how would you...?

A critical part of the art of effective questioning is **Active Listening**:

- **Articulate:** “What I hear you saying is...”
- **Clarify:** “Here is what I heard... Is that right?”
- **Get Curious:** “That is interesting. Tell me more about...”
- **Create Space:** Be silent and give the speaker time to process and respond.

Be engaged. Focus on the present. Listen more than talk. Invite further conversation.