

Open, Honest Questions



A Key Practice of Courage & Renewal

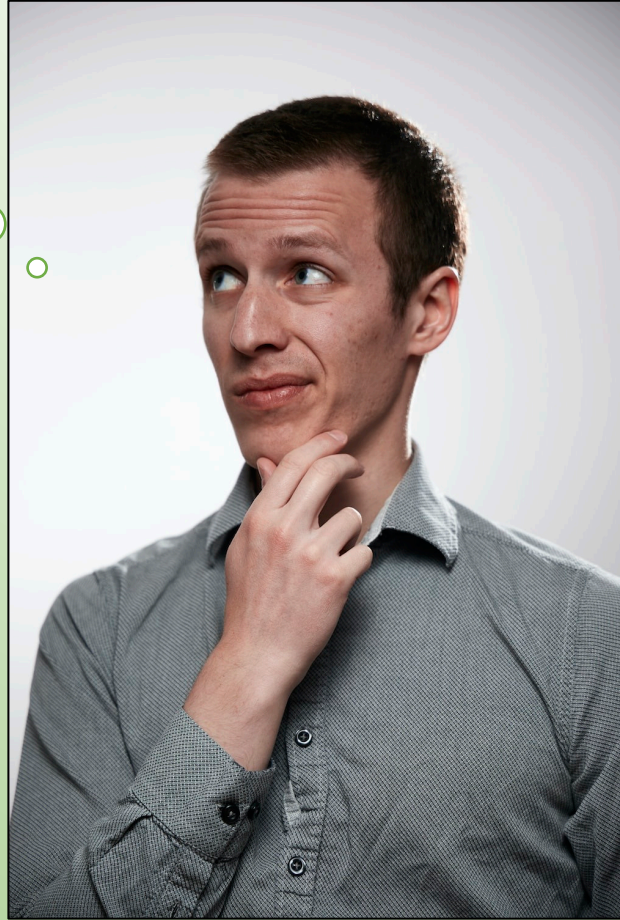
Principles of the Circle
of Trust Approach
Inner Teacher
Solitude/Community
Invitation
Hidden Wholeness

Core Values
Integrity/Wholeness
Authenticity
Community
Courage
Love

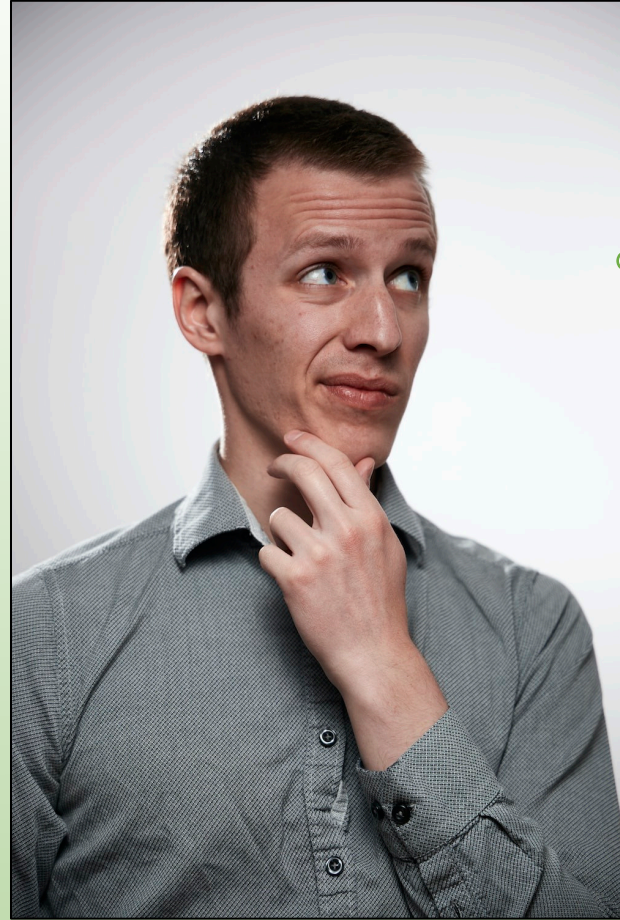
Open, Honest Questions

Touchstones
Presence
Invitation
Respect
No Fixing
OHQ
Wonder
Silence
Possibility

*Aren't all
questions open
& honest?*



*Don't we
want to be
fixed?*



It is ***open***, in the sense that it is designed to open doors for the person, not to close them, or to direct them in a way that the questioner has predetermined.

Open, honest examples: How does this situation make you feel? What words (or images) would you choose to describe your feelings (or fears, hopes, expectations, etc.) about this situation?

Leading examples: Does this situation make you feel hostile and resentful? Are you afraid you will lose your job? Don't you think it's just a question of having faith?



It is ***honest*** in the sense that it is actually a question, and not a homily or a piece of advice masquerading as a question.

Open, honest examples: How do your family relationships relate to this situation? Where will you find support as you try to deal with this situation?

Leading examples: Do you think this problem stems from your relationship with your mother? Have you considered attending counseling? Have you tried going to church more often?



Open, honest questions offered as a support to another person are not driven by personal curiosity, or a misguided attempt to provide analysis or therapy.

Open, honest questions are offered to a person so that, *if they choose*, they may go deeper into their own experience, and see and understand that experience with more clarity.



An open honest question...

... is one to which the questioner could not possibly anticipate the answer

... is brief and to the point

... is not larded up with background considerations and rationale

... does not paraphrase what has been said, and instead uses the other's words as much as possible

... asks about feelings as well as facts

... can be intuitive; intuition is to be trusted, even if your instinct seems “off the wall”

... is not about you, so don't include your storytelling or behaviors that draw attention to yourself

... is simple, open and straightforward. It doesn't have a yes-no, right-wrong answer

... often begins with what, when, where, who or how – not why

Imagine that a friend asks for you to support their discernment by offering open, honest questions. Here is what she shares with you. Consider which open honest questions you could offer?

I am having great difficulty with another staff member in my school. We both teach grade eight. I believe strongly that teachers should collaborate with one another, and plan lessons together. This ensures that there is equity between the classrooms for the students. I am feeling pressure from parents of students in my class, who feel that my class expectations are “harder” than my colleague’s and that their children are not being treated fairly. I have approached my colleague on several occasions to set a time to meet together to discuss our classes and to plan together. He has agreed twice, but then he cancelled at the last minute. I am losing patience with this colleague, and feel pressure to find a way to solve this problem.

Jot down a few questions that you might offer as open and honest questions to support her.

Open, Honest OR Leading??

If Leading, how might we make them Open & Honest??

What does “collaboration” mean to you?

Have you considered changing the grade you teach, or changing schools?

When you do meet with your colleague, what do you hope will happen?

Do you think your colleague is incompetent?

How would you describe your expectations for your students?

How would you describe your relationship with the parents of your students?

Have you considered lowering your expectations so the parents won't complain?

Are you hard to get along with as a professional?

Open, Honest OR Leading??

If Leading, how might we make them Open & Honest??

If you could have a conversation with your colleague about this situation, what would you say to him? What do you think he would say to you?

Have you considered complaining to the principal?

Do you think your school's curricular expectations are fair and reasonable?

What is your greatest strength as a teacher? What are your areas for growth?

Where do you see yourself as a teacher in five years' time?

What is your greatest fear about this situation?

Aren't you really angry about the way you are being treated?

What is the best possible outcome for this situation?

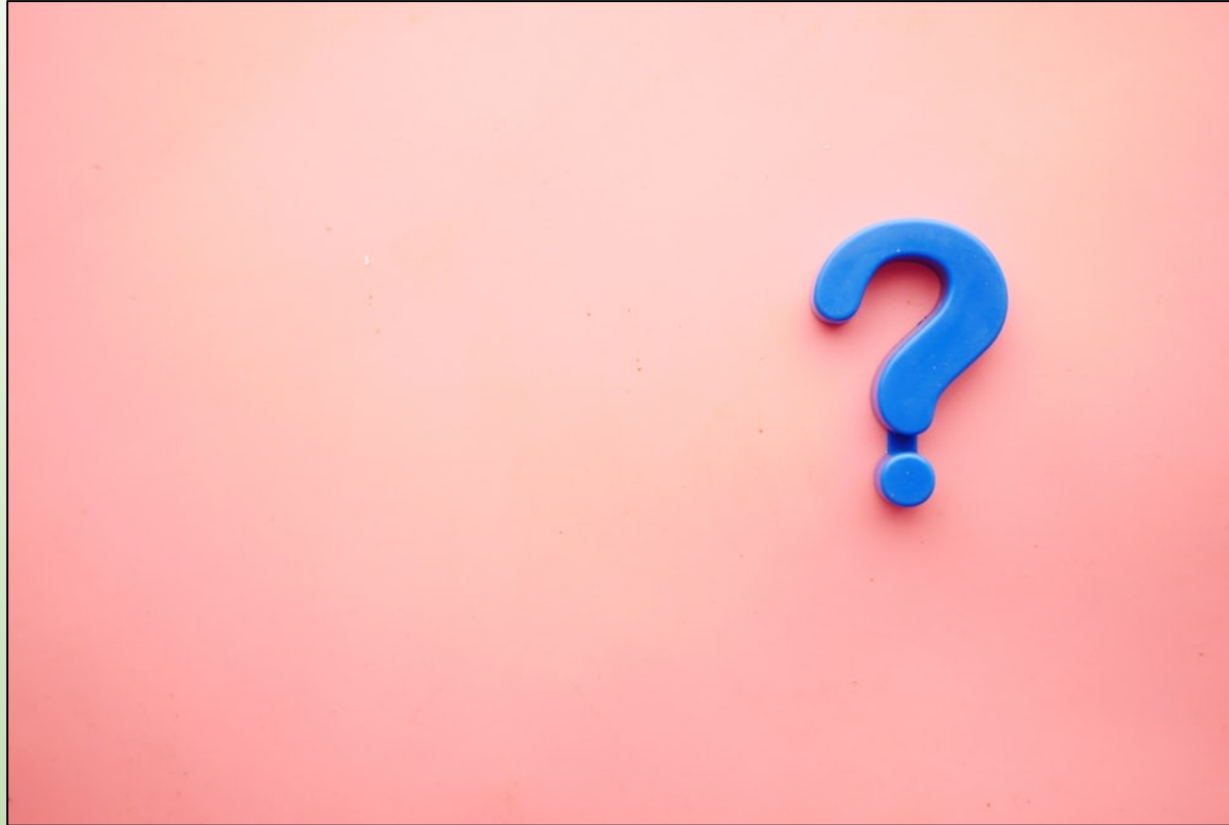
What is your gut/intuition telling you about this dilemma?

Open, Honest Questions



Others??

What do you observe about using OHQs?



Open, honest questions are an incredible gift we can offer to one another, and an important tool for building and affirming trust in a community. By not presuming to always have the answers for everyone else, we respect and honour the wisdom that resides within each one of us.

A Gift

Denise Levertov, Sands of the Well

Just when you seem to yourself
nothing but a flimsy web
of questions, you are given
the questions of others to hold
in the emptiness of your hands,
songbird eggs that can still hatch
if you keep them warm,
butterflies opening and closing themselves
in your cupped palms, trusting you not to
injure
their scintillant fur, their dust.
You are given the questions of others
as if they were answers
to all you ask. Yes, perhaps
this gift is your answer.