

Open Honest Questions

An open honest question...

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

... assists a person to explore their concern rather than satisfying your curiosity

... 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

Learning to ask brief, open, honest questions is challenging. We may slip occasionally into old "fixing" habits and need forgiveness from others and ourselves. As the old saw goes, "Forgive and remember!" and try not to make that particular mistake again. It helps to continually remind ourselves that our purpose in this exercise is not to show what good problem-solvers we are, but simply to support another person in listening to his or her inner wisdom.

"An open question is one that expands rather than restricts your arena of exploration, one that does not push or even nudge you toward a particular way of framing the situation." Parker J. Palmer

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