

Get Curious!

by Lori Frank

In our every day conversations we ask others a lot of “closed” questions. Closed questions are ones that only require a “yes” or “no” answer. Yes or no really doesn’t give us much information and we’re often missing out on crucial pieces of info that could help us to resolve something.

Open-ended questions, on the other hand, require the other person to give you more information than just yes or no. This information can be gold! It can let you know so much more about a situation and can really help you get to the heart of a matter.



In a recent live stream I did with Mediate BC about parent/teen conflict I used the example of a parent wanting to know if homework was getting done or not. In a closed question you would ask “Is your homework done?” And the answer would be yes or no. If it’s yes, great, you can move on with your night. If it’s no, you might start to make some assumptions about why it’s not done and this may lead to conflict.

So let’s try that with an open-ended question. “What’s your plan for getting your homework done tonight?” This question will give you way more information. Your teen can tell you about their schedule for the evening and how they plan to work in enough time for homework.

You can start to see how this can begin to open up communication with everyone in your life such as your spouse, co-workers and friends. You can probably also start to see how it can help to prevent conflict but less assumptions and misunderstandings happen.

So, I have a challenge for you! Pick one day this week and try to ask everyone you interact with an open question. It takes practice. At first it will feel awkward. But over time, the rewards will be worth the effort.

To help you get started here is a list of some open-ended questions you can try out.

You can also download them [HERE](#) for easy future reference.

What's important to you about that?

What do you mean by...?

How did you arrive at that conclusion?

How does that impact you?

What are the benefits of doing it that way?

How do you feel about that?

What are some examples of...?

What is your understanding of...?

What is it like for you to hear him/her say that?

What expectations did you have?

What has worked for you in the past?

What will happen if you can't reach a resolution of this issue?

What do you want to address first?

What is your priority?

What is your hope for...?

How can you feel more supported?

When do you see this happening?

Where could we find that information?

What else do we need to know to make this decision?

How will we know this is working?

How will we measure our success?

What would you do if?

What should we do if our plan doesn't work?

And here's the cheater! If you are having trouble thinking of an open question try this statement instead because it usually has the same effect as an open question.

Tell me more about that...

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