



101

1. OPEN QUESTIONS

What?

Ask questions that start with How? Who? Where? When? (beware of Why-questions)

How?

- Make eye contact + lean towards the person talking
- Confirm non-verbally - nod your head
- Give verbal and non-verbal signals to indicate clearly to the other person that he/she can speak freely. Encourage the other person to tell you more, e.g. « and what else happened? »

102

THE POWER OF OPEN QUESTIONS

*“I know six honest serving men
They aid me right and true
Their names are **what** and **when** and **how**
And **where** and **why** and **who**.”*

Rudyard Kipling
(1865-1936)



103

2. CLARIFYING

What?

Ask more questions so that (the scope of) the problem becomes clear.

How?

- ‘Is that what you’re referring to...?’
- ‘Does it mean that ...?’
- ‘Can you give an example?’
- ‘Can you tel me more about ...’
- ‘And what happend then?’



104

3. ASSESSING INTERESTS

Position:

What you say you want

- The 'only' solution
- Often specific and tangible
- A stubbornly sustained point of view
- The "bottom-line"
- A demand



Interest:

Reason for a position

- Often not tangible
- The answer to the question 'why?' / 'to what purpose?'
- The source of the other's motivation
- Your key to a creative solution



TO FIND OUT WHAT'S IMPORTANT

- Would it make a difference if we ... ?
- If I've understood you correctly, the most important thing for you is that ...
- Have I misunderstood your concerns? What have I missed?
- What are your primary concerns?
- Help me to understand why this is really so important to you ...
- You said Can you tell me more about this?
- ...



4. SHOW UNDERSTANDING

What?

Make it clear to the other person that his/her reactions are normal

How?

- “I understand what made you do that.”
- “Of course you think that!”



107

TO SHOW UNDERSTANDING: ALSO PAY ATTENTION TO EMOTIONS

What?

Together, think about which emotions were present

How?

- “And what did you feel when that happened?”
- “That must have annoyed/pleased you!”

Do not give an opinion about the emotions, consider them as part of the story

Remember: **EMOTIONS ARE FACTS**



108

5. PARAPHRASING AND SUMMARISING

What?

Repeat in your own words what you have just heard and check the accuracy with the other person. Summarize the conversation: the goal and way of obtaining it.

How?

- So, if I follow you correctly, ... is that right?”
- “What you means is ... correct?”
- Allow me to recap what we've been talking about ... ”
- “So, in order to ... you are planning this: ...”
- You my interrupt the other person to paraphrase



6. TRIGGER

What?

Question why the chosen approach would solve the problem.
(Question different options).

Question apparent oppositions/dilemma's.

How?

- ‘How will that help you?’
- ‘How will that solve the problem?’
- ‘I’m a bit confused now. I though you just said 5 minutes ago that...’



7. SOFTENERS

Softeners allow you to ask about anything.



E.g. “this might seem a strange question, however ...”



111

8. POINTERS (TO CHALLENGE LIMITATIONS)

The other person says:

- **Generalisations:** always, never, everyone, they ...
- **Regulations:** must, may not, should
- **Abstractions:** help, manage, take responsibility, management, people, ...
- **Unclear comparisons:** that's not fast enough, too expensive, ...

You question the statement:

- Never? / everyone? / then who? ...
- And what would happen if we didn't ... ? (question the regulations) ...
- What exactly, who precise, and then how? etc.
- In comparison to what?



112