

How to Have Difficult Conversations

Positive
Working Together

Supporting Handouts for Workshop: #3 Questions



Using different types of questions can be helpful when facilitating difficult conversations, as well as when having a difficult conversation with another person. They can be used in many ways; to change the pace of the conversation, to bring others into the conversation and to move the conversation to a different place.

QUESTION TYPE	EXAMPLE	WHY IT IS USEFUL
Open	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Why do you think removing the church pews would be a great idea? * What reasons can you think of for keeping the pews? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Non-threatening * To exchange information and get a conversation going * Encourages answers with more information than 'yes' or 'no' or 'maybe' * Information and understanding is built upon
Closed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Can the Church afford to buy a mini-bus? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To check specific facts with 'yes' or 'no' responses
Reflecting back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Rob, am I right that you are saying you think the youth work might suffer if the worker is given a wider brief? And that, in your view, this is because it is difficult to recruit volunteers as the work is very specialist and needs people who are both trained and have gifts in this area? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * To check that everyone is hearing and understanding the same thing. * Not the same as agreeing with what is being said

Probing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Linda, if the church agrees to maintain the paid worker to engage only with the young people, how might the church consider developing its work with children and families? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Testing an option that is being considered * To gain more understanding
Hypothetical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Assume for a moment that we have decided to sell the church building and rent a shop in the town centre. What might be the impact in five years' time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Considering different options without committing to them * Focussing on different outcomes: how a party would feel about them and what the perceived benefits and disadvantages might be
Future-focussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Where do you want/do you feel God would like this church community to be in five years' time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Keeping a focus on resolving the dispute/conflict
Appreciative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Describe a time when you felt empowered in your work? * What is the biggest success story of the social action project? What enabled you to achieve this? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Discovering when an individual or group felt alive and achieving * Focussing on 'what works'? * Using the positive energy in a group or individual

Inspired by Boulle & Nestic, 2010, *Mediator Skills and Techniques: Triangle of Influence*