

## Activity 2.05 The Power of Questions (The Arts)

### Module: 2. Intercultural Dialogue

Duration: 30 Minutes

**Social Development Themes:** Arts, Conflict Resolution

#### Summary

Introduces the skill of questioning as a tool for identifying a need for change. Encourages people to be curious and apply questioning skills in their work.

#### Learning Outcomes:

Value different perspectives

Ability to support, learn and share through, dialogue

#### Approach:

1. Ask participants to think of a question that will make another person smile. Ask participants to move around the room and ask people this question.
2. After three minutes, ask participants to change the question to a question that will make the people they ask feel proud. Repeat the process two or three times; each time participants should think of a question to trigger a particular emotion or reaction: make the other person think or feel motivated to take action.
3. Now ask the group if there were any powerful questions expressed. You might want to write them down.
4. Ask participants what they understand by the term 'powerful question'. For example, a question that makes me think deeply or differently or which triggers an emotional response.
5. Give the participants one or two minutes to think individually about a powerful question they've been asked and which they're willing to share.
6. Ask participants to work in pairs to share this powerful question and what they think made it powerful.

Facilitators could demonstrate two simple role-plays of an interviewer asking a celebrity/politician some questions. In the first role-play we see open, supportive questioning from somebody who is curious and interested in what's happening. In the second, the questions are closed, or not particularly useful, and the interviewer seems disinterested. In plenary, explore the differences between the two role-plays and the potential impact/result.

Alternate Approach:

1. 'An important object'. This short activity can be used before The Power of Questions to get participants thinking, or afterwards as a way to reinforce the learning.
2. As a facilitator you will need to prepare by choosing an object that means something to you and that you are comfortable being questioned about.
3. The aim of the activity is to stimulate deeper questioning from the group, moving from simple questions such as what is it? Where is it from? What do you use it for?, to questions such as What does it mean to you? Why have you brought it to show us?, which will help reveal things about you. Some questions will 'unlock' deeper understanding.
4. Arrange everyone into a circle and place the object in the middle of the circle.
5. Encourage participants to ask questions to learn as much as possible from this object.
6. Only respond directly to the questions. Do not reveal any more information than is asked. Listen for good questions that reveal more and lead to deeper learning and insight.
7. Hopefully, you will share more personal stories and information through the questions. Be aware that not everyone will feel comfortable sharing personal stories. If it's a mixed group, it might be more productive to conduct this activity with single-sex groups first before coming together as a group.

8. Stop after a few minutes. Ask the group to think about what kind of questions were powerful, and led to deeper learning? Which were they, and why were they powerful?

This activity links well with Appreciative Inquiry.

Asking powerful questions is core to Appreciative Inquiry and to continue the conversations started in this activity's debrief you could move on to that activity. See activity 2.16.

**Debrief:**

- In plenary, ask the group their thoughts and insights about the power of the questions?
- Can a question change the way we think about something?
- What makes you want to ask questions? For example: curiosity, study, need and so on. Continue the conversation by asking what drives their curiosity and what it means to be curious.
- If we recognise that questions are powerful, then to change ourselves or our communities we can begin with the questions we ask.