

The Art and Science of Asking Questions

Inquiry is one way of revising our assumptions. You can also use these questions to familiarise participants with their own assumptions. The first step to revisiting assumptions is understanding the context. When confronting an event or a challenge, we need to understand the values and issues related to it. To gain this understanding we need to know more about the context and become aware of our own position in relation to the circumstance.

Becoming conscious

Asking the below questions guides us in the process of becoming more conscious:

1. What factors are involved in this circumstance?
2. What factors influence my behaviour or the behaviour of others in this situation?
3. What other events might simultaneously be affecting this situation?
4. Have I ever been in a similar situation? What differences and similarities did it have with the current situation?
5. What can improve the outcome of this situation?
6. In this situation what things are of higher priority and which are of less priority?

Approaching It Differently

The second step is looking at the issue from a different angle. Our aim, here, is to have a new perspective on the issue or event. To this end, we ask ourselves:

1. What other views might there be on this issue other than my perspective?
2. In what other ways can I learn more about this issue and not simply be content with my own knowledge?
3. Are there resources or people from whom I can ask for help?
4. What might someone from a different culture, age group, or gender or other group think about this issue and how might this help me gain perspective?

The Root of Assumption

The third step is searching for the roots of assumptions. We must gain an in-depth understanding of our beliefs. For this purpose, you can use the following questions:

1. What values or beliefs instilled this assumption in me?
2. Is there a logical or substantiated reason for this assumption?
3. How do I know this assumption is accurate?
4. Am I willing to imagine that my beliefs about a situation might not be correct or at least might not be the only ones?
5. How would the a conversation be different if you didn't have a guide, and asked only open-ended questions?

