



## Exercise: Open Questioning

### Goals

Enhancing effective listening in a mentoring conversation.

### *Conditions*

The learning group has had some experiences together and is acquainted with each other.

Open questioning is a pre-exercise for role playing and deepens the insight of what listening is about.

### *Process*

- 10 minutes: Theory of open questioning.

Introduce the art of open questioning by naming the characteristics of good questioning.

Open questioning starts with what, when, how, where, can you give an example, tell me more, and then...? Question with a suggestion or an opinion or an advice are closed questions and they do not lead to reflection.

The Why question is often posed but has the disadvantage that it evokes guilty feelings and it can also presume a direct causal relationship, which does not have to be so.

- 10 minutes: Explaining the exercise.

Explain to the group that groups of three, A, B, and C, are working together in a carousel. In the first round A and B take their turn to do the exercise. A chooses a theme from personal life [a hobby, or special interest] and tells about it, keeping space for the interventions [open questioning] of B.

Person C is the observer and makes notes of good open questions of B.

A short demonstration with a participant can be fruitful.

Tell them that the observer watches the process and interferes if the exercise changes in a normal conversation without the open questioning. One round with A and B with the story of A lasts 4 minutes, then the group evaluates shortly, lead by the observer. Next turn B. chooses a subject and is interviewed with open questioning by C. for 4 minutes etc.

After three rounds a plenary evaluation will take place.

- 30 minutes: Exercise takes place in three rounds.

Trainer walks around and listens how the exercises proceed. Intervene now and then in the groups and help with good open questions if necessary.

- 10 minutes: Plenary evaluation.

Ask in the plenary the following questions:

- What is difficult about good open questioning? [foreseen answers are “Good uncoloured and open questioning is difficult when you have an ideas in your head or if you have a opinion on the theme”.

“It is difficult to listen carefully because you are already busy with what you yourself are going ask in the next moment”.

- What did you learn about yourself according to open questioning?

As a trainer you can skip the remark: “It is unnatural to do all this open questioning, it is not a normal conversation” by saying that this is indeed a fact and that the purpose is not to have a good conversation but to do a exercise to learn about open questioning.

### ***Material***

Information about open questioning, what is it, what criteria, etc. on sheet, power point or flipchart.

## Open questioning

- what?
- when?
- how?
- where?
- can you give an example...?
- tell me more...
- and then....?

[the 'why' question can be open  
but can also evoke guilty feelings ]

## closed questioning

- question with a suggestion  
or own opinion
- question assuming the answer.
- multiple choice question
- only yes or no reaction possible.