



THE ART OF ASKING GREAT EXPLORATIVE QUESTIONS

1. Create a safe space to be vulnerable, open up & share

- Do your own personal work that allows you to process your feelings, so you can talk to your children from a calm, centered and more grounded place. Without this, creating deep and open connection is difficult if not impossible.

- Share your own Scars, Secrets and Struggles to normalize sharing, and that you can relate in your own way (with tact, of course - don't burden them).

- Let go of your attachments to the outcome (or else they'll close down when they sense you are trying to get them to be different). You won't forget what you long for - it's hard-wired into your system. Rather, get to a place where you can truly explore with them to create understanding.

2. It's a thinking skill that gets developed with practice. Let it be consistent in your relationship.

- What is your kid NOT considering or taking into account?

- Where are they stuck in too small or too big a picture?

- Focuses on their *relationship* to an issue.

- It is not focused on fixing or reaching specific conclusions.

- Teachable moments – will exploring the side issues be beneficial, or detract from the flow for the conversation?

- Give less brilliant and insightful speeches and ask more brilliant and insightful questions!

3. Why is this so important?

- It Helps to Develop:

A. Critical Thinking: How they can reflect on observations and experiences.

B. Emotional Intelligence: What we feel, why we feel it, and how we address these feelings in a way that allows us to process them well.

C: Unconditional Self-Worth: Why are we enough even though we make mistakes and even though there are others who won't always or ever accept us. Why do we still deserve love?

D. Trust between you two: Let go of your judgments and see more deeply into the natural human process of unfolding who they really are.

E. Greater understanding of the actual core of the issues (for both of you)

- So then as a parent you can address actual issues, which are usually emotional in nature - ultimately just about everything we do is coming from a place of love, or it comes from a place that is crying out for love.

→ Let them ask you questions first, so you can create a space where it feels safe for them to answer the questions that you ask of them.

→ **Any question or issue is a starting point for deeper connection.** It is the first step in a journey towards greater understanding of oneself, as well as of each other.

→ For any question that's asked, keep following its source: Why do they think they act or react the way that they do? What are the motivations? What are the deeper feelings? What are the beliefs, perceptions and assumptions around the issue? What are the fears that may be part of this? What have been their past experiences? Where has there been pressure, challenges and pain regarding this?

→ Any question below is a starting point for MORE explorative questions. A way to transition into such curiosity would be by asking questions like:

- *Why is that?*
- *What is that like for you?*
- *What do you mean?*
- *How would it feel if it was/wasn't like that?*
- *What would you change if you could do it over?*
- *What bothers you about that?*
- *What does that matter to you?*
- *Is there more to it than this?*

...And remember:

This is as much about creating a stronger connection with each other as it is about gaining more insight and deeper understanding into the situation. Be mindful of how you are speaking, as well as reacting.

A few examples of the kinds of curiosity-fueled question-flow that Explorative Dialogue Creates.

(This is not meant for you to follow or memorize, because you won't be present with them or your own curiosity. It's a way to feel into how you can begin to stream questions more naturally.)

FAMILY

In your opinion, where do we as a family get along with each other well? Why do you think that is? Where do we not seem to get along as well? Why do you think that is or what have you noticed?

What do you think the family can improve upon to have better relationships?

What do you think the other members in the family think about you as a person?

What do you think your role in the family is?

If you could have the family join you in any three activities that they normally never would join you in, what would they be?

If you would not want them to join you, why?/what are your assumptions about them or how they would be? How would that make you feel?

Where do you feel we understand you? Why is that?

Where do you feel we don't understand you at all? Why do you think that is?

How does that feel?

SELF-AWARENESS

When do you listen best?

When do you listen worst?

What kinds of things make you feel defensive?

What is your greatest strength in communicating with others?

What is your greatest weakness in communicating with others?

What are you most often triggered emotions?

Out of 100 percent, what percentage do you blame others for how you feel, and what percent do you take responsibility for how you feel.

What strengths do you feel you have that others don't notice?

What do you think others feel about you at school or work?

What is your most common challenge that you struggle with?

What support do you need on your life that you don't ask for?

What support do you receive that you are grateful for that you haven't expressed gratitude for yet? What is the best thing for you to do when you get upset?

What helps you bounce back and recover from things that are hard (stress, fear, sadness, anger, loneliness, etc.)

Where are three areas where you could take more responsibility for yourself?

Why have you not done this yet?

What would you need to do to start doing it?

What support do you need?

What traps might you fall into that could sabotage your progress? What would you lose by making these changes?

What would you gain?

How would this help you in the long run?

Is there any way I/we can be supportive and help out here?

How many times a day do you say “I don’t know” instead of really thinking hard about an answer? Why do you think you say this so often?

What do you gain from this?

What do you lose from this/how does this not help you?

What are three poor decisions you have made this week and why? What have you learned from them? What is one thing you have learned about yourself this week?

What are three good decisions you have made this week? What got you to make them?

What kinds of things have you “gotten away with” this week?

Where could you have been more honest this week, and why were you not honest at those times?

What makes you close down to me/us/others – (closing your mind or heart-shutting down emotionally)? What makes you feel safe to open your mind and heart?

How often are you not 100 percent trustworthy and honest with your teachers/fellow employees? How often are you not 100 percent trustworthy and honest with your friends?

How often are you not 100 percent trustworthy and honest with your family?

How often are you not 100 percent trustworthy and honest with yourself?

What kinds of things do you lie most about? What are you afraid about being judged about?

What kinds of things do you do to get out of responsibility and how does this make you feel after the fact?

When/where do you feel not listened to? When//where do you not feel loved?

When/where do you not feel respected? When/where do you feel judged?

When/where do you judge others? When/where do you not respect others?

What helps you relax - that you don’t do enough of? What helps you relax that you do too much of?

Where do you judge yourself/are you hardest on yourself? How does this limit you?

Where are you most responsible?

Where are you least responsible? Why? How does this limit you? Where are you nicest and why?

Where are you patient and why?

Where are you least patient and why? How does this limit you?

Where are you most loving and why?

Where are you most selfish and why? How does this limit you?

Where are you most judgmental of others and why? How does this limit you?

Where are you most judgmental of yourself and why? How does this limit you?

From the list below, list all the emotions you have had in the past hour. From the list below, list all the emotions you have had in the past day. From the list below, list all the emotions you have had in the past week.. From the list below, list all the emotions you have had in the past month From the list below, list all the emotions you have had in the past year. From the list below, list all the emotions you have had in your life so far.

Feeling loved.

Feeling unloved.

Feeling happy.

Feeling depressed.

Feeling cool.

Feeling like a loser.

Feeling accepted by others. Feeling rejected by others. Feeling busy.

Feeling bored.

Feeling deeply calm.

Feeling stressed out.

Feeling terrified.

Feeling God/the universe/life. Feeling distrust in God/the universe/life.

Feeling betrayed.

Feeling supported.

Feeling judged.

Feeling listened to.

Feeling judgmental.

Feeling accepting of others. Feeling hard on yourself. Feeling gentle with yourself.

BIG PICTURE ABOUT LIFE

On a scale of zero to ten:

How would you rate your social life (and why)?

How would you rate your family relationships and why?

How would you rate your communication and why?

How would you rate your physical health and why?

How would you rate your play/fun time and why?

How would you rate the relationship with your significant other and why?

How would you rate your where you live and why?

How would you rate the choices you make for your best interest and why?

How would you rate the effort you put into school/work and why?

How would you rate over all energy and why?

How would you rate how well you take care of yourself and why?

How would you rate where you live and why?

How would you rate your knowledge of yourself and why?

How would you rate your person growth (how much you are becoming more confident, balanced, independent, peaceful) and why?

What are three things you can improve on in you life that you haven't tried to yet? What are three things that you know you can do better? What stops you?

Where/when do you not speak your opinions and feelings and why?

(Friends judging you or others, saying mean things, not feeling respected, ect)

DRUGS

Do/have you ever felt pressure to try or use them, or use more then you were intending to use? How do your friends pressure you?

How do you see people pressure each other?

Do you pressure others ever? If so, how do you pressure other?

What is your intention for putting such pressure on a friend? How does being pressured make you feel?

What do you usually do?

Why?

Have you ever regretted making a decision, only to make the same decision over and over? When have you done this? What are your feelings about it? What are your thoughts about it?

How often do you feel pressure to party? What kinds of things do you usually think, fear, and hope for when this happens?

What drugs have you used?

What are the most common drugs you know or have seen people use?

How often have you done them?

Why did you do them?

How did you feel about doing them the next day after?

What ways have you seen your friends make bad decisions with drug use?

What ways have you made bad decisions with drug use?

SEX

How often do you think about sex?

Where do you learn things about sex?

Do you have any concerns about being sexually active?

How do you think others see you in terms of being sexually active?

Do you think others judge you with this? What kinds of judgments do you think or know they have? How does this make you feel?

What are some reasons to not have sex that you actually believe in?

What are some reasons to have sex?

How often do you feel pressure to talk about sex?

How often do you feel pressure to have sex? What do you do when you feel that kind of pressure? What might happen if you were totally honest?

What ways do you see people try to become sexually desired?

What ways do you try to become sexually desired?

What do you think about condom use?

Do you (or do you think you would) use them 100% of the time?

If you don't, what are some of the reasons you don't?

Where would you/do you buy them?

What is (or would it be like) to buy condoms (the check out counter interaction, having time in you back pack or bag)?
Where would you carry them on you if you (purse, wallet, pocket, coat)?
Do you know some of the most common ways that condoms break or come off?
How do you think alcohol and sex mix? Why? Is it different for guys and girls? Why is that?
How do you feel during sex? How has it varied for you?
How do you feel 2 minutes after sex? What does your mind tend to do?
How do you feel one day after sex?

How important is confidentiality to you? Who do you tell? How much trust are you putting in your partner to not tell, or to not tell untrustworthy people?
How do you think having sex makes you less cool/less desirable/less confident?

How do you think having sex makes you cooler/more desirable/more confident?

How do you think your peers feel about this?

How uncomfortable is this conversation right now? Why is it so? What kinds of feelings is talking about this bringing up?

How has your relationship(s) changed from before you had sex to after you had sex?

How have your feelings for that person changed from before you had sex to after you had sex?

How have your feelings about yourself changed from before you had sex to after you had sex?

How much did you find yourself talking about your feelings to other friends? About how many? Why do you think you did talk/didn't talk to them about it? Any regrets?

Did you ever talk to the person you had sex with, after sex. about what you shared? Why or why not? If so, what was the conversation like? What was difficult about it?

What kinds of sexual behavior are considered "high risk"?

What kinds of birth control do you know about? Which is most effective?

Which is least? What are potential problems with each kind?

What kind of STDs do you know about? Do you know any statistics about STDs?