





Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions are questions that cannot be answered with one word such as “Yes” or “No.” A closed-ended question might be, “Are you confident in the future?” An open-ended question might be, “What do you think about the future?” Open-ended questions create higher engagement and participation than closed-ended questions. Having a good inventory of questions may be the most important factor in successful facilitation. They are powerful tools for coaches, consultants, and facilitators alike.

Open-ended questions fall into four categories:

Harvest 	Clarify 	Solve 	Process 
Solicits and gathers ideas, usually after a round of small group or individual work. Harvesting questions can also be used to encourage open conversation. Though not strictly open-ended, they are invitations to share.	Encourages participants to refine their ideas.	Coaches participants towards solving their own challenges. A solution, when arrived at by the participant, is far more likely to be adopted than a solution handed to the participant by someone else.	Pauses the conversation and bring participants to an awareness of their emotional state or the group dynamics ¹ .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What else? ▪ Who else? ▪ Who would like to share what they came up with? ▪ Who has a reaction to that? ▪ Who else has a thought? ▪ Who does that resonate for? ▪ Who would like to go next? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What else can you say about that? ▪ What do you mean by...? ▪ Why is that? ▪ What else can you tell me about that? ▪ How so? ▪ What do YOU think? (when a question is directed to you) ▪ Why, in your opinion, is this happening? ▪ What's your position on this matter? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What's your commitment to solving this? ▪ What could you do about that? ▪ How else would you...? ▪ Who could you ask about that? ▪ What would your next step be? ▪ What's preventing you from...? ▪ What do you need to be successful? ▪ What have you tried before? ▪ What are some additional ideas? ▪ To what extent have you...? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What's coming up for you now? ▪ What does this bring up for you? ▪ How would you describe what's going on? ▪ How could you reframe that? ▪ How does this affect you? ▪ What's your reaction to that? ▪ What's going on for you right now? ▪ What are you thinking? ▪ What's the worst that could happen? ▪ What matters to you about that?

¹ From Ron Heifetz, this is “going from the dance floor to the balcony.” For more, search “balcony” at www.lizardbrainsolutions.com