

Curiosity Questions

Objective:

To get into your child's world by learning to really listen and "draw forth" instead of trying to "stuff in."

Materials:

Chart of "Curiosity Questions" below
Asking Parent and Telling Parent comments for Expanded Version that can be printed and laminated in advance

Comment: Remember that education comes from the Latin root educare which means "to draw forth." Most parents try to "stuff in" and then wonder why it goes in one ear and out the other.

Directions:

1. Ask participants to choose a partner and decide who will be a parent and who will be a child.
2. Have them choose one of the following issues:
 - Cutting school
 - Not doing homework
 - Not doing chores
 - Not keeping room clean
 - Staying out after curfew
 - Too much TV
 - Too much phone, computer, games use
3. Ask the person playing the parent to ask any ONE of the following curiosity questions to the person playing the child and then sit quietly and listen while the child answers. The only exception for the adult to break their silence during the listening phase is to remain curious by asking such questions as, "Anything else? Could you tell me what you mean by that? Will you tell me more? Could you give me an example of when that happened?"

Example of Curiosity Questions

1. What is your picture of what is going on re (cutting school, telephone use, etc.)?
2. What's your plan for (your education, getting your chores done)?
3. What do think would be some benefits for you if you (do your homework, engage in this sport, go to bed earlier, help around the house, etc.)?
4. What do you see as some problems for you if you don't (any of the above)?
5. What do you see as some solutions to this problem that would be respectful to all concerned?

4. Process by asking participants how this felt for them. If it doesn't come up in the discussion ask:
 - 1) How many of you noticed your resistance to just listening without trying to fix it or change a thing?
 - 2) How many of you noticed how difficult it is to listen to what the child has to say without wanting him or her to give you the answer you hope they will give?

Expanded Version:

Comment: Sometimes curiosity questions can be very simple (one question), and sometimes they can involve more questions to help children explore the consequences of the choices (as opposed to imposing consequences on them).

1. Ask for one volunteer to be a child.
2. Have the rest of your group (up to 18 people) form two lines about 10 feet apart. One line will be the adult "Tell line." The other will be the adult "Ask line."

3. Give each person in the Ask line and the Tell line one of the following statements written on a card or laminated: (see attached lists). Pass out the statements so they are in order so the first “parent” in each line has No. 1, the second “parent” No. 2, etc.
4. Let the volunteer “child” know that he or she will walk back and forth and listen to the statements of the parents in each line. He or she is not to say anything in response to the parents—just to notice what he or she is thinking, feeling, and deciding about what to do. In other words, the volunteer will stand in front of the first parent in the “Tell line,” listen to the statement, notice what he or she is thinking, feeling, and deciding, and then walk over and stand in front of the first person in the “Tell line,” listen and notice—going back and forth until he or she has heard the statements from each parent.
5. Process with the child by asking, “What were you thinking, feeling, deciding when hearing the “Tell Parents.” Then ask the child what he or she was thinking, feeling, and deciding when hearing the “Ask Parents.”
6. Ask the “parents” in each line what they were thinking, feeling, and deciding.
7. Invite a discussion from the group about what they learned from this activity.

Variation: If you have less time or a large crowd, ask for three volunteers. One will be the “telling parent” and the other the “asking parent” and one will be the “child”. Have the child go back and forth between the two parents as they each read their statements (one at a time) from the attached lists. Telling parent will read No. 1, and then child will go stand in front of Asking parent who will read No. 1, etc. Instruct the child to not say anything but to notice what he or she is thinking, feeling, and deciding in response to the statements from each parent. Then process as above and ask the audience what they noticed and learned.

Telling Parent

- 1. Go brush your teeth.**
- 2. Don't forget your coat.**
- 3. Go to bed.**
- 4. Do your homework.**
- 5. Stop fighting with your brother.**
- 6. Put your dishes in the dishwasher.**
- 7. Hurry up and get dressed or you'll miss the bus.**
- 8. Stop whining.**
- 9. Pick up your toys.**

Asking Parent

- 1. What do you need to do so your teeth won't feel skuzzy?**
- 2. What are you taking so you won't be cold outside?**
- 3. What is next in your bedtime routine chart?**
- 4. What is your plan for doing your homework?**
- 5. How can you and your brother solve this problem?**
- 6. What did we decide about what to do with our dishes when we have finished eating?**
- 7. What do you need to do so you can catch the bus on time?**
- 8. What words can you use so I can hear you?**
- 9. What is your responsibility when you are finished playing with your toys?**