

Humble inquiry

What is it?

Humble inquiry:

- Invites the other person to share what they are thinking or experiencing
- Shows that you value and are genuinely interested in what they have to say
- Consists of two closely related techniques: open honest questions and reflective listening

What is it used for/ Purpose?

Humble inquiry helps us learn more about each other's thoughts and experiences, increases the accuracy of what we understand about each other and builds relationships. It is essential for gaining a systems perspective.

How to practice humble inquiry

- 1. Ask open honest questions:** These questions are motivated by your genuine curiosity; they invite the other person to share their thoughts and perspectives. They aren't yes/no or multiple choice questions that limit the other person's responses. They don't begin with a statement of your own perspective or attempt to lead the other person to a particular answer.
- 2. Listen attentively and reflect back what you're hearing:** Try to understand what the other person is saying - both directly and at a deeper level, between the lines. It's hard to listen well while you are busy formulating your next responses, so quiet your own thoughts and just listen. Then reflect back to the other person what you have heard to be sure you are understanding them correctly. This demonstrates your interest in them, checks the accuracy of your understanding and often serves as an invitation to them to say more. And it's okay to be wrong! You get credit for genuinely trying...
- 3. Focus:** Concentrate on the person you are talking with, not just the problem you are discussing. What can you notice about their manner of speaking, their images and expressions, their body language? What can you learn about what matters to them?