

THE POWER OF DIALOGUE

CHANGING CAMPUS CULTURE





Some time ago there was an anthropologist who lived amongst a North American tribe. He noticed that from time to time the tribe would meet in a circle. They talked and talked and talked –for what seemed like no purpose at all. There was no leader and no agenda. No decisions were made. Although tribe members tended to listen to the elders a bit more – wise men and women- everybody in the circle participated as equals. The meeting went on until it stopped and the group dispersed. The anthropologist didn't understand until one day the tribe was challenged. What he observed was remarkable. Everybody understood each other so well that they knew what to do. There was no crisis. They could easily move towards action having recognized the beliefs, values and perspectives that reside inside their community.

-David Bohm, On Dialogue



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“If we are concerned that
the quality of community life is deteriorating and
that public health problems are symptoms of disintegration,
then a vital part of the healing process will be
nourishing the bonds of community and
strengthening our mutual capacity
to discern values that define the common good”

-David Buchanan



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Chilliwack Matrix Meals Opioid Community Dialogues

"We hope to facilitate a new way of being neighbours—a new way of seeing each other, relating to one another. People can have different ways of looking at things, but these are discussed in a safe, respectful environment that enriches rather than enrages or isolates."

Hello Peace Line



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Why dialogue?



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Why dialogue?

+ Bring people to the table



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Why dialogue?

- + Bring people to the table
- + Discover new resources



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Why dialogue?

- + Bring people to the table
- + Discover new resources
- + Build citizen capacity



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Why dialogue?

- + Bring people to the table
- + Discover new resources
- + Build citizen capacity
- + Nurture collective leadership



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Why dialogue?

- + Bring people to the table
- + Discover new resources
- + Build citizen capacity
- + Nurture collective leadership
- + Shift cultures



Why dialogue?

- + Bring people to the table
- + Discover new resources
- + Build citizen capacity
- + Nurture collective leadership
- + Shift cultures
- = Strong community





“Real dialogue depends on us being passionately committed to our own world, and simultaneously, passionately interested in other worlds. It is possible to work for the realization of our values and interests, but to do so in a way that remains continuously open to inquiry and dialogue.”

– Margaret McKee



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So, what is the difference between
dialogue and debate?



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Principles of DIALOGUE

These principles help create a safe space to collectively explore the polarizations that divide our communities. They help us learn different ways to give space to each other – something most of us are not very good at. Although there are no “rules” for dialogue (since it is not a game), these principles will make our interactions more helpful.

Practice Empathy

- Attempt to imagine yourself in someone else’s shoes – to feel their feelings and to think their thoughts
- Understand that empathy is the *intention* to know what another person is experiencing, and not necessarily to *respond* to that experience in any concrete way
- Acknowledge that as human beings, we always have *limited capacity* to understand the entirety of another’s experience

Celebrate diversity

- Encounter difference with openness and acceptance in order to facilitate a welcoming position to the other
- Reflect on how our assumptions might be tied to our identities and why there is discomfort when we are challenged with a new perspective
- Get to know individuals as people rather than carriers of a position

Promote curiosity & learning

- Encounter difference with curiosity rather than defensiveness by asking thoughtful and open questions
- Focus on understanding a different perspective. Our intention is to learn from one another, not to determine who has the “best” view
- Assume that many people have pieces to the puzzle and that together we can craft long-term solutions

Expose assumptions & suspend judgement

- Become aware of our own assumptions and recognize how they shape our thinking, our conclusions and our way of seeing the world
- Practice patience and suspend judgement when engaging in conversation with others
- Pause our desire to prematurely jump to a solution and take time to explore the possibilities together

Put power in its place

- Engage in dialogue as peers rather than as representatives of an organization or profession
- Give space so all voices may be heard and no one voice dominates the conversation
- Understand that power is ubiquitous – we cannot simply pick it up and put it down like a tool
- Reflect on the ways unequal power relations influence our everyday social interactions

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“We cannot understand without wanting to understand, that is, without wanting to let something be said.”

“To be able to question means to want to know, and to want to know means to know that one doesn’t know.”

— Hans-Georg Gadamer



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Asking Good QUESTIONS

"To be able to question means to want to know, and to want to know means to know that one doesn't know." ~Hans-Georg Gadamer

ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS IS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF DIALOGUE. Good questions come from the position of genuine curiosity and are motivated by an authentic interest—an honest seeking. They do not position the listener as inferior, that is, they do not suggest that the questioner knows whereas the listeners have to prove their knowledge. Good questions do not support one side and exclude the consideration of the opposite. Instead, they are open to possibilities and take multiple perspectives and opinions into account.

ACCORDING TO THE GERMAN PHILOSOPHER, HANS-GEORG GADAMER, ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS IS AN ART, and "a person skilled in the 'art' of questioning is a person who can prevent questions from being suppressed by the dominant opinion." Asking good questions creates the space to look at a concept from different angles and leads to a deeper understanding of that concept. To be able to ask good questions, we need to have a good imagination. We need to think of different ways of looking at something while asking ourselves those "What could be" or "What

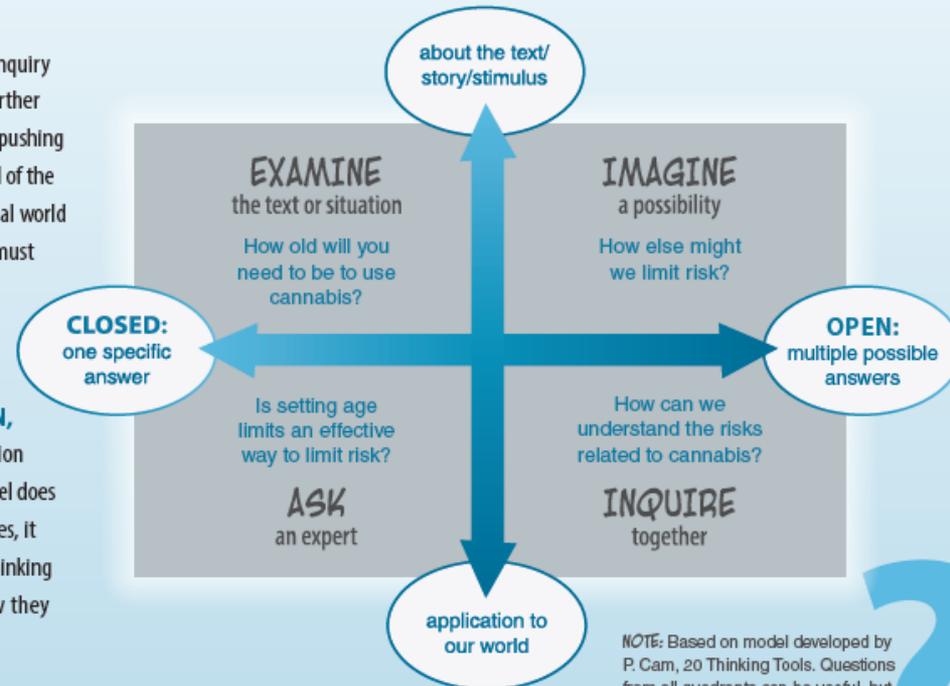
if" questions. Good questions can deeply impact the way we think, act, and treat others.

QUESTIONS CAN BE CATEGORIZED AS CLOSED OR OPEN. *Closed questions* have specific answers. They elicit short responses and are useful for collecting quick facts or information. *Open questions* are like an open door to a world of possibility.

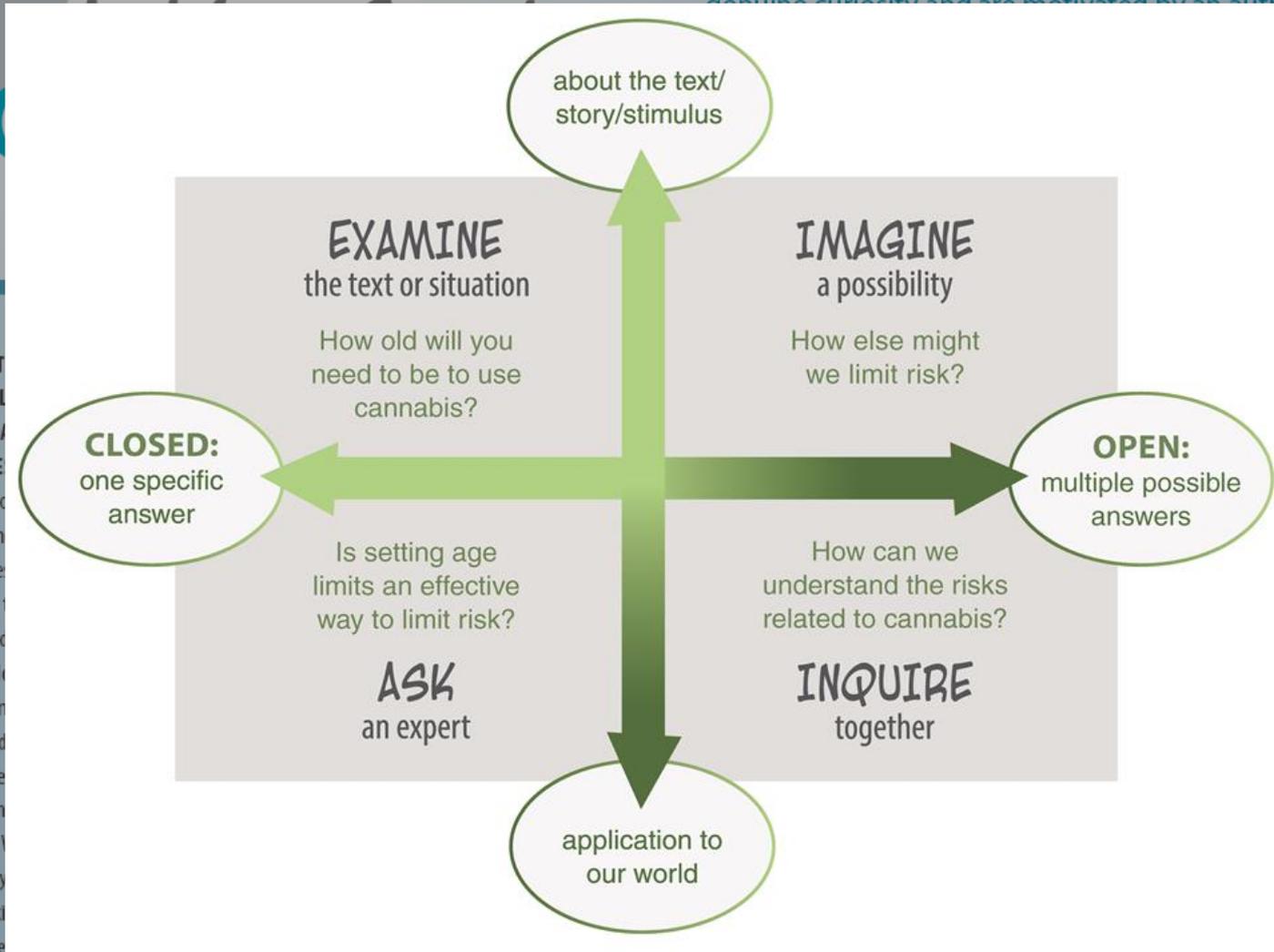
THE UNPREDICTABLE NATURE OF OPEN QUESTIONS CAN BE UNSETTLING, but when we are unsettled we become aware of, and begin to reconsider, our

values and assumptions. Inquiry questions may move us further from our comfort zone by pushing us from the abstract world of the text to consider messier real world applications in which we must engage in real dialogue.

IF WE ADD A SECOND DIMENSION TO THE CLASSIFICATION, we might develop a question quadrant. While this model does not exhaust the possibilities, it provides a richer way of thinking about questions and how they might contribute to dialogue.



NOTE: Based on model developed by P. Cam, 20 Thinking Tools. Questions from all quadrants can be useful, but some are more powerful than others.



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Four Dimensions of Dialogue

DIALOGUE IS A WAY TO CREATE TRUST AND BUILD NEW POSSIBILITIES for a community. It is deeply needed in our world. Competitiveness and self-interest have made it difficult to truly hear each other. We find it hard to deal with divergent opinion or contested evidence. As a result, our conversations tend to mimic our civic life of disconnection.



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Addressing complex issues requires that we come together as a community and build understanding. People need a variety of opportunities to talk with each other in safe environments and create connection. But dialogue takes time. It can challenge core assumptions tied to our very identity. Dialogue often involves a development or progression through various stages of intensity. By beginning with less intense engagement we can build the trust needed for deeper levels of exploration and collaboration.



Coming Together

The decision to reach out and engage is the first and most important step. This initial dimension carries hope and excitement. In it is the seed of possibility – the makings of a new beginning. But in its shadow lurks the prospect of conflict. But, coming together can open us to multiple ways of knowing. It can spark genuine curiosity about the root of difference.

There are no fixed “rules” for dialogue that ensure connection or understanding. Nonetheless, developing certain skills and capacities is helpful. These include, but are not limited to, approaching each other with



Four Dimensions of Dialogue

Coming together

Focusing on relationships

Questioning together

Acting together



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Who are the people/groups on campus that are impacted by smoking/smoking policy?

Who needs to be part of the dialogue?



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Thank You

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Further Resources

Understand and Plan Dialogue

<http://letstalkcannabis.cisur.ca>

Examples of Dialogue:

<https://www.theprogress.com/news/breaking-bread-and-barriers-in-chilliwack-with-new-matrix-meals>

Hello Peace Line:

<https://traubman.igc.org/call-now.htm>

Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=acd57U3xO58>



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Resources continued:

Principles of dialogue:

<https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/assets/docs/ltc-principles-of-dialogue.pdf>

Art of asking good questions:

<https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/assets/docs/ltc-asking-good-questions.pdf>

Four dimensions of dialogue:

<https://www.uvic.ca/research/centres/cisur/assets/docs/ltc-dimensions-of-dialogue.pdf>



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