

F(earfully) Asked Questions

Large Group – 101 – Low Trust – 10 mins – szp.guide/fearfullyaskedquestions

Materials

- Sticky flip-chart paper
- Markers

Setup

- Write up and number a few of your pre-determined fearfully asked questions on the flip chart paper

Facilitator Framing

- Safe Zone participants are often afraid to ask questions that they perceive as being too basic, prejudiced, or offensive. That does not mean, however, that most people aren't wondering about those types of questions — they are! This activity is designed confront those unasked questions and provide an opportunity for participants to get accurate, healthy answers.

Goals & objectives

- Participants will be able to separate myth from fact, and accurate information from hearsay, regarding popular misconceptions about LGBTQ people.

Process Steps

1. Prior to the training, prepare a flipchart (or powerpoint slide) with 5 - 7 common questions you believe your group might have regarding LGBTQ people, but would be afraid to ask (e.g., because they are worried about appearing ignorant or offending someone).
2. Number the questions and write them large and legibly, allowing for people to easily identify them. The numbers allow participants to simply call out a number (instead of having to actually ask the question themselves).
3. When you begin this activity, hang the flipchart where participants can see them.
4. Provide context for the questions. For example, "These are common questions that folks have regarding LGBTQ people and we wanted to provide an opportunity to answer any questions that you have on this sheet. What is the number of one of the questions you would like us to answer?"
5. Answer each question a participant chooses. Continue until all questions are answered, the group stops choosing numbers, or you are out of time.

Sample "Fearfully Asked" Questions

1. What bathroom does a transgender person use?
2. How do lesbians have sex?

3. Are all transgender people gay?
4. Is bisexuality real?
5. Why is there a LGBTQ community, but not a straight community?
6. Why are gay men more promiscuous?
7. Don't all these labels actually make it worse not better?
8. In a gay relationship, who is the man?
9. Can I ask someone how they identify?
10. Is a man who dates a transgender woman actually gay?

Unlock the Magic

This format of question answering gives you total control to only answer questions you're comfortable answering, and to prepare (or even script out) your answers beforehand. Take advantage of this difference! Practice answering the questions with a co-facilitator or peer. Ask them to challenge you in particular ways you're nervous about encountering in the room.

Come up with several distinct ways to answer every question (e.g., in a really direct, short way; using an anecdote or statistic; situating your answer within a larger picture; using humor) and you'll be able to choose the one, in the moment, that best matches the tone of the room and group you're with.

Notes

None of the questions in our sample list are "easy" to answer, nor do they have *one* correct answer. Just asking some of those questions, or creating space for questions like this, is potentially opening a can of worms. Be ready for this when you choose your questions, or decide to use this activity.