

180 Questions for Connecting Circles and Delightful Discussions

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Edited from, and inspired by, questions compiled by Mary Davenport (Edutopia.com), Kit Miller (M.K. Ghandi Institute), and educators around the world.

To get to know each other, build trust and community, or save a terrible day from the jaws of darkness - break out these questions and connect.

TIPS

- **EDITS:** Feel free to edit these to suit your needs. For instance, for #162, you can change “community” to “school,” “organization,” “team”, or “neighborhood.” For #7 you can change “people” to “friends” or “family” or “co-workers.”
- **AGES:** These questions have been tried and tested with adults, pre-teens, and adolescents. They make great openings at staff meetings, team meetings, and workshops. For younger kids, try chopping up questions that have two parts. For instance, for #1, ask “When is the last time you tried something new?” and stop there. You can also change vocabulary to be easier. For instance, for #12, you can ask “How do you thank people?” or “What do you feel thankful for?”
- **FAVORITES:** Generally, participants have told me that they prefer NOT to be asked about their favorites. This is a lot of pressure for many people, who do not have a “favorite” or their favorite changes often. Thus, it may be more effective to ask, “Right now, what is a _____ you enjoy?” or “For the past month, what is a _____ you have been enjoying?”
- **VULNERABILITY:** If your participants are new to each other, think about the vulnerability level of the question. You may want to use a number of questions that are less vulnerable and more “getting to know you” type in the beginning and move to “deeper” questions as a sense of community and trust develops.
- **CULTURE:** Try to be aware of cultural norms and social class privilege when thinking about your questions. The questions on the 180 List were chosen with care; however, please consider your specific social context before using a particular question – or consider editing the questions with an eye to your particular social context if you will be using them randomly.

IDEAS FOR CHOOSING QUESTIONS

- a) **LEADER CHOICE:** Choose 1-3 questions with a goal in mind (depending on vulnerability of the group or what you’d like them to think about). Divide participants into dyads, use for small or large group discussions, or use as in a large group circle.
- b) **PARTICIPANT CHOICE:** Have participants choose 1-3 questions from the list. Participants can be chosen randomly or by turns.
- c) **RANDOM TECH:** Use a random number generator (random.org) that chooses a number from 1-180 for you. Mark down the ones you have already used if you want them to be fresh every time.
- d) **RANDOM OLD SCHOOL:** Print the questions out and cut them up into slips. Allow participants to choose questions out of a box or can.

CIRCLE REMINDERS

1. Invite everyone to sit so they can see each other’s faces.
2. Set the tone by describing the purpose of the activity (e.g., to become a stronger team).
3. If using a talking piece, describe its meaning.
4. Go over circle values (e.g., speak from the heart; listen when others are speaking and trust that you will find the right words when your turn comes; work on being non-judgmental).
5. Once you have led a few of these, have participants take over as circle keepers.
6. Circle keepers need to model by answering each question first (leader is another participant – not someone who watches or observes).
7. For quick circles, choose ONE question.
8. For longer circles, use a 3-question “sandwich”. Encourage circle keepers to plan an opening and closing question and one for the middle. Try to end on a positive question that uplifts.

For academic circles and questions on other topics (e.g., problem-solving circles), see the book “Circle Forward”.

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(Tried and Tested with Youth and Adults)

1. When was the last time you tried something new and how did it go?
2. Who do you sometimes compare yourself to and how does that feel?
3. What's a helpful or wise thing you heard someone say lately?
4. What gets you excited about life?
5. What life lesson did you learn the hard way?
6. What do you wish you spent more time doing this past year?
7. How do you show love or care to people?
8. What's a belief that you have that is different from a lot of other people?
9. What is it like for you to apologize to others?
10. What can you do today that you could not do a year ago?
11. What would you do differently if you knew nobody would judge you?
12. How do you show appreciation or gratitude?
13. What is the difference between surviving and thriving?
14. Which activities make you lose track of time?
15. If you had to teach something, what would you teach?
16. What is a regret you have and how do you wish to make it better?
17. What are you holding onto that you need to let go of?
18. When you are 80-years-old, what will matter to you the most?
19. What makes you smile?
20. If you had the chance to get a message to a large group of people, what would your message be?
21. What do we all have in common besides our genes that makes us human?
22. If you could give a piece of advice to a brand-new baby that they would actually remember as they were growing up, what advice would you give?
23. What helps you do the right thing when you are tempted to do the wrong thing?

24. What has life taught you lately?
25. What is one thing you would most like to change about the world?
26. (On paper – then share out) Describe your life in a six word sentence.
27. What impact do you want to leave on the world?
28. In the rush of your daily life, what are you not seeing?
29. What lifts your spirits when life gets you down?
30. Have you ever regretted something you did not say or do?
31. What is a positive childhood memory you have?
32. Is it more important to love or be loved?
33. If you had the chance to go back in time and change one thing, what would it be?
34. What do you think stands between you and happiness?
35. What's the one thing you'd like others to remember about you at the end of your life?
36. What do you like most about yourself?
37. What is a place you really want to visit and why?
38. What do you imagine yourself doing ten years from now?
39. What small act of kindness were you once shown that you will never forget?
40. Would you rather lose all of your old memories or never be able to make new ones?
41. What do you have that you do not want to live without?
42. What would you do differently if you were not afraid?
43. What one thing have you not done that you really want to do?
44. What is the most important thing you could do right now in your personal life?
45. (on paper – then share out) If you could ask one person, alive or dead, only one question, who would you ask and what would you ask?
46. What is your number one goal for the next 3 months?
47. What does 'peace' mean to you?
48. (on paper - then share out) If your life was a book or movie, what would be the title?
49. When do you feel most like yourself?
50. What is your greatest challenge?

51. If I could grant you one wish what would you wish for?
52. If you could live one day of your life over again, what day would you choose?
53. What can money not buy?
54. Can you think of a time when impossible became possible?
55. How have you changed in the last five years?
56. What are you sure of in your life?
57. What is your most prized possession?
58. (on paper – then share) How would you describe yourself in one sentence?
59. What makes you proud?
60. How do you find the strength to do what you know in your heart is right?
61. When have you worked hard and loved every minute of it?
62. Who do you trust and why?
63. (on paper – than share) If you were forced to get rid of everything you own except whatever can fit into a normal backpack, what would you put in it?
64. How do you spend most of your free time?
65. Whom have you helped lately and how?
66. What is your greatest skill or gift?
67. What is one step you can take towards your dreams this month?
68. What's the next big step you need to take?
69. What are you looking forward to?
70. What has been the most terrifying moment of your life thus far?
71. Who is the strongest person you know and why?
72. What have you done in the last year that makes you proud?
73. What did you learn lately that changed the way you live?
74. What is your best memory from the past three years?
75. What makes people happy?
76. What is a song you have been listening to lately and why?
77. What is a really nice thing someone has done for you?

78. When do you get angry and why?
79. If you could go back in time and tell your younger self one thing, what would you say?
80. What do you do on purpose just to impress others?
81. What will you never do?
82. What is your earliest childhood memory?
83. What's something you once believed that you do not believe any more?
84. What have you done that hurt someone else? What have you learned from it?
85. What's been on your mind most lately?
86. What chances or risks do you wish you could take?
87. Where else would you like to live? Why?
88. What motivates you to go to school (or work) each day?
89. What do you do with most of your money?
90. What helps you be your best?
91. When was the last time you lost your temper? About what?
92. When you look into the past, what do you miss the most about being younger?
93. What are some great things about being older?
94. What makes you uncomfortable? What makes you comfortable?
95. What worries you about the future? What helps you feel better about the future?
96. What is one of your saddest memories? What is one of your happiest memories?
97. What would you like to change about your life?
98. What's one of the best decisions you've ever made?
99. What's the most important lesson you've learned in the last year?
100. Through all of life's twists and turns who has been there for you?
101. What or who has been distracting you?
102. What are you looking forward to in the upcoming week?
103. Who is one of your mentors and what have you learned from them?
104. What is an appreciation you have not shared with someone?

105. What do you wish you had more time to do?
106. What do you wish you could say NO to in your life right now?
107. What are you not sure about?
108. What do you think about when you lie awake in bed?
109. What's something most people don't know about you?
110. If you could relive yesterday what would you do differently?
111. What do you do over and over again that you wish you could stop doing?
112. What is a change you made in your life in the last year that you feel good about?
113. What do you understand today about your life that you did not understand a year ago?
114. Describe a simple pleasure in your life.
115. When you were young, who were your heroes. Why?
116. Who do you most admire today? Why?
117. Who has been the most influential person shaping your life?
118. What are the qualities of others you like most? Least?
119. Tell about your favorite childhood toy.
120. Tell about a time you got in trouble.
121. What is the best thing about your neighborhood?
122. Describe a recurring dream.
123. Tell about a childhood injury.
124. How would you like to be remembered?
125. Something positive my friends would say about me.
126. How do you feel about your first name? What would you choose if you could rename yourself?
127. How did you get your name? What is your name's history?
128. Describe something you did to tease a brother, sister, or cousin?
129. If you could have one wish come true, what would that be?
130. Name something you hate to do.
131. What is it about you that makes your friends like you?

132. What is the greatest disappointment you've ever had?
133. If your home was on fire, what 5 things would you save?
134. Where would you like to be in 10 years?
135. If you could live one day over, what would you choose?
136. What is a major accomplishment in your life?
137. What is something you've learned in life that is important to you?
138. What is the most humiliating moment you've ever experienced?
139. Do you have trouble with your temper?
140. Describe the best teacher you've ever had.
141. What would the ideal set of parents be like?
142. When you marry someone, do you want that person to be like your father or mother?
143. If this were your birthday and you were your best friend, what would you give yourself?
144. What is the best present or gift you have ever received?
145. What was the most humbling experience you've ever had?
146. Tell about a time you saw an adult cry.
147. What is the best thing that's happened to you today?
148. If you could teach everybody in the world one thing- an idea, a skill, a fact- what would that be?
149. What is the worst advice someone ever gave you?
150. If you could be talented at something you're not talented at now, what would it be?
151. What's your most irrational fear?
152. If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
153. What do you want to teach your own children?
154. Tell about a relationship you'd like to transform and why.
155. How do you deal with shame or guilt?
156. If you could be a superhero, what super-powers would you have and why?
157. What would you NOT want to change about your life?
158. If you were an animal, what animal would you be and why?

159. What would be your IDEAL (perfect) job?
160. What are you passionate about right now?
161. What does RESPECT mean to you?
162. What do you wish was different about your community? What do you love about your community?
163. What is a mistake you have made that you learned from?
164. What is a time you had a conflict with someone and you made it better?
165. What does family mean to you?
166. When I come home after school I like to...
167. One of my favorite seasons and why.
168. (on paper – and then share out) If you became president, what are three things you would do?
169. What is something you have never tried but would like to try?
170. (on paper – then share out) If you could give advice to a famous person – who would it be and what would be the advice?
171. If you could have lunch with a famous person who would it be and why?
172. What helps you keep going when you get frustrated?
173. What makes someone a good friend?
174. What do you wish people would do more often?
175. What is one thing you appreciate about the person on your left?
176. What do you like about this school? What do you wish was different about this school?
177. What are you grateful for in your life right now and why?
178. What gets in the way of your learning? What helps you learn?
179. What makes a group of people into a team that works together?
180. What gets in the way of people being kind to each other?

Have other great circle and discussion prompts you like?

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