

CURIOUS QUESTIONS

BY DEIRDRE MCLAUGHLIN, RCC

There's no such thing as a stupid question. Or, as one of my teachers said, "Yes there are, but those are outliers and they don't count."

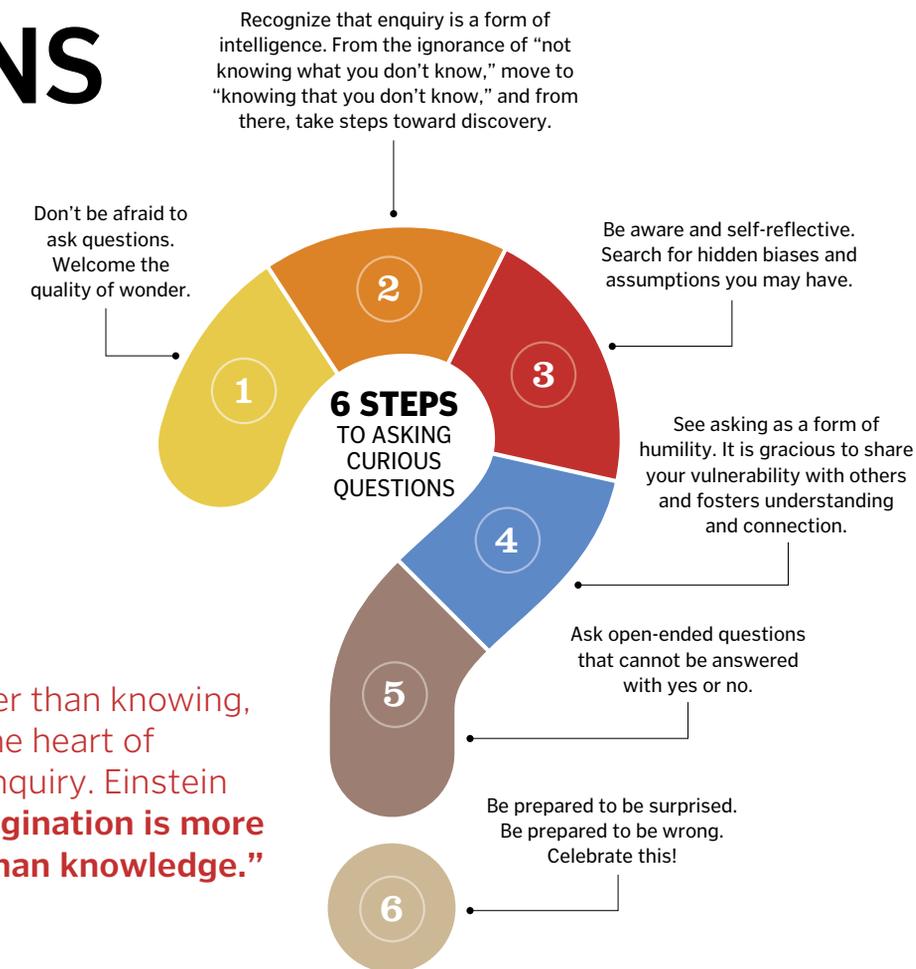
As counsellors, we sometimes think our job is to be the "expert," and our clients might even expect that from us, too. The simple truth is that we often don't know where an encounter will take us, and that's the good news: this is where the magic can happen. Professionally and in life, the courage to be curiously questioning opens us up to worlds of possibilities.

It requires vulnerability to ask a question for which you have no answer. You risk exposing yourself as a non-expert, and many of us fear looking ignorant, as well. Yet, as Brent Atkinson says:

"The way our brains are wired, the most effective way to solicit cooperation is by exposing vulnerability." Many of us can identify with the feeling of relief when someone else asks a question we are too afraid to pose. Thank goodness, we think. People trust sincerity. It puts others at ease when we reveal vulnerability. It's honest; it's human.

When you wonder in the spirit of open-ended enquiry, seeking to learn rather than to prove, you will likely expand your horizons and minimize the chance for bias in your thinking. On the other hand, asking leading or close-ended questions can promote a false sense of certainty and garner premature conclusions. Assuming we already know the answer before we ask a question puts us in the same quandary as bad science: we risk making the facts fit our theories rather than the other way around.

Asking, rather than knowing, is really at the heart of intelligent enquiry. Einstein stated, "Imagination is more important than knowledge."



It's okay to begin with an idea — we often do. But from that point, try to see where the enquiry takes you. Your destination may come as a surprise and perhaps (hopefully) you will learn something along the way. Asking, rather than knowing, is really at the heart of intelligent enquiry. Einstein stated, "Imagination is more important than knowledge." The poet e.e. cummings put it this way: "and even if it's sunday may i be wrong/for whenever men are right they are not young." Not knowing can be a good thing indeed.

The journey to embracing wonder and curiosity is fundamentally one of humility. The very act of asking is an invitation for feedback; it allows for connection and

attunement with others. In essence, we are saying, "Are we on the same page? Have I understood you?" or, posed in the language of richer enquiry, "How may I understand you better, and what would you like me to know?"

What awaits us when we follow the path of an open-hearted question? Adventures, wonder, and even magic, both in our practices and in our lives.

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