THE COLLABORATION LAB

Inquiry

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

CLOSED QUESTIONS

are restrictive in nature

limit the range of answers from the responder

may imply a particular answer is wanted

OPEN QUESTIONS

are broad in nature

invite a range of answers from the responder

Type	Use	Example
Broadening questions	▪ are encouraging and non-threatening ▪ invite further discussion ▪ are useful for beginning a session or opening discussion ▪ give the respondent latitude in what information s/he chooses to share	▪ "Tell me more about that…" ▪ "What else happened?"
Clarifying questions	▪ help gain understanding of a term or concept ▪ move from the general to the specific ▪ check your understanding of what was said	▪ "What do you mean by 'always, every, never'?" ▪ "What does 'unreasonable' mean to you?" ▪ "What don't you understand?" ▪ "Who specifically doesn't care?"

Explaining questions	▪ help gain understanding of the respondent's reasoning ▪ encourage reflection by the respondent and understanding by the questioner ▪ HINT: Ask these instead of asking "Why? (less confrontational)	▪ "How did you expect this to turn out?" ▪ "What leads you to that conclusion?" ▪ "When you use the word "safe," what do you mean by that?"
Exploring questions	▪ help gain understanding of the other person's interests, assumptions, fears, expectations and priorities ▪ help shift the respondent's thinking to what s/he is trying to accomplish ▪ Gets to the heart of the matter; a person's values, fears, needs….	▪ "What concerns you about…?" ▪ "What do you most want me to understand about ____ that you don't think I understand?" ▪ "What is the best/worst that can come from this?"
Challenging questions	▪ challenge a person's line of reasoning ▪ create a shift or change in a person's position or point of view ▪ "gently" challenge incongruities in a person's behavior, position, interests, etc.	▪ "What do you suppose would happen if the press reported that?" ▪ "You say you're interested in my suggestions, but I notice you turn away when I start to talk. What's going on?" ▪ "On the one hand you say...on the other hand…"
Brainstorming questions	▪ generate alternatives or options ▪ develop new ideas	▪ "What is one thing you could do to accomplish that?" ▪ "How else might that be done?"
Consequential questions	▪ reality test a possible situation ▪ explore the outcome of a choice or behavior ▪ examine the consequences	▪ "How does that suggestion meet your criteria for fairness?" ▪ "What would that be like for you?"