

Curious and Creative: Generating Questions

USING PUZZLES AND CONUNDRUMS TO ENCOURAGE FREE FLOWING QUESTIONING

We can develop skills that support creativity by encouraging a natural desire to ask questions. However, many people 'self-edit' - failing to ask a question because they consider it to be 'stupid' or think that other people may react negatively. This is a potentially very quick, light-hearted way of enabling people to generate multiple questions and experience the creativity that comes when people build on the ideas of others. It requires a set of counters (buttons or matchsticks will do!)

COUNTERS AND CONUNDRUMS



You can work in groups of any size but 4-6 people is a good number as it allows plenty of different ideas to develop and encourages involvement.

At the start of the activity give 5 counters to each person and have a 'collecting pot' in the centre of the group.

- Tell the group that they may begin working together to determine the full story that lies behind a puzzle. (See examples and solutions on the following page)
- Give the puzzle question.
- They may gather information by asking questions of the facilitator.
- Only 'closed' questions may be used: the facilitator will answer either 'Yes' or 'No' or in certain circumstances 'I don't know'.
- Each time a person asks a question they must put a counter in the collecting pot
- A person may only ask a question if they still have a counter.
- When all the counters are in the pot they are re-distributed (5 each) and the questioning can continue. There is no limit to the number of questions that can be asked.

Work with the group until they have discovered the full story, or got very close to the answer. Review the process, identifying those people who found it easy to generate multiple questions. how did they do it?

Summarise the importance of avoiding 'self-editing' and asking 'curious questions' in order to generate new connections.

Further creative and curious activities are available from RSVP Design:

<https://shop.rsvpdesign.co.uk/breakthrough-thinkingworkshop>

EXAMPLES OF LATERAL PUZZLES

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

A dead man is found naked in the middle of the desert with a straw nearby. How did he die?

He and a friend were in a hot air balloon when the balloon started losing altitude. After removing all the other weight, they decided to pull straws and the one who got the shortest straw would jump. The dead man pulled it.

A man dressed in full scuba gear is found burnt to death in a remote forest. How did it happen?

He was scooped up by a helicopter getting water to dump on a forest fire.

A woman has incontrovertible proof in court that her husband was murdered by her sister. The judge declares, "This is the strangest case I've ever seen. Though it's a cut-and-dried case, this woman cannot be punished."

The sisters are conjoined twins

A hunter aimed his gun carefully and fired. Seconds later, he realized his mistake. Minutes later, he was dead.

It was winter. He fired the gun near a snowy cliff, which started an avalanche.

Acting on an anonymous phone call, the police raid a house to arrest a suspected murderer. They don't know what he looks like but they know his name is John and that he is inside the house. The police bust in on a carpenter, a lorry driver, a mechanic and a fireman all playing poker. Without hesitation or communication of any kind, they immediately arrest the fireman. How do they know they've got their man?

The fireman is the only man in the room. The rest of the poker players are women.

Many suitable puzzles can be accessed from a simple internet search for 'lateral puzzles'. An example site is <http://www.folj.com/lateral/>