Activating Individual & Collective Power in Communities: An Introduction to Generative Methods

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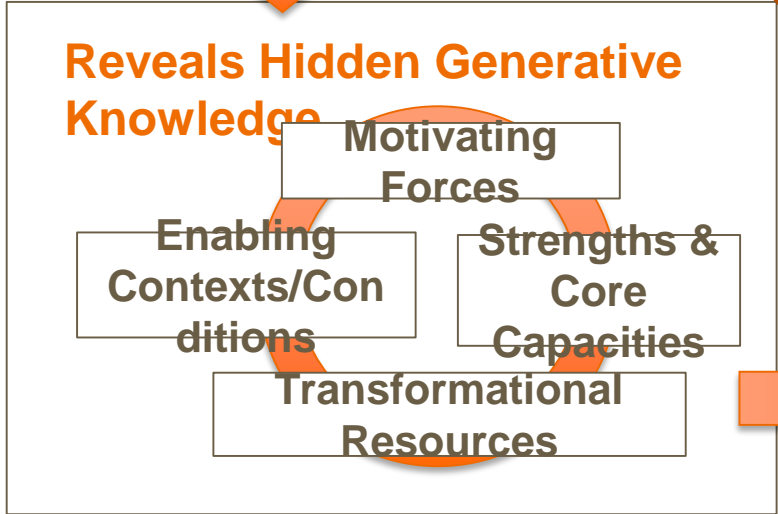
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Exercise 1:

1. Write down your definition of deep or transformational learning

2. Pick a partner & share your definitions

3. Remember a specific time when you experienced learned something that changed you in a deep way

4. Share with your neighbor

Debrief:

What was different between sharing/listening to the two descriptions of deep or transformative learning?

Tool 1: Embodied Questions

A way of asking questions that reveal insights from lived experience rather than only what people consciously think

Disembodied Questions:

Ex: What is your definition of great team?

- ❑ Prompt surface level information that is vague and abstract

- ❑ Based only on what a person thinks at a surface level

- ❑ Do not reveal the rich details of context, aliveness, etc.

Embodied Questions:

Ex: Can you tell me about a time when you were part of a great team?

- ❑ Gets below the surface to "actionable intelligence"

- ❑ Based on what a person sees, notices, etc.

- ❑ Information is "time-stamped" "place" stamped

Key Concept:

Disembodied communication only reveals what people think about something on a surface (top of the mind) level

Embodied communication gets at what people have experienced, what they really know, believe and assume unconsciously

Embodied Questions

Prompt people to describe their experience in as much detail as possible rather than just their thoughts or feelings about an experience

Prompt people to reveal the motivations, assumptions, insights, values, etc.. that underlie decisions and actions but often remain hidden from awareness

Impact of disembodied knowledge, learning and communication

- Fragments students from their own "body of knowledge" , which they will need to "read" for the rest of their life

- Instills people with the belief that the knowledge they need to be successful is "out there" and they lack what they need in life

- Fails to teach people how to understand, question or make sense of their experiences; people do not know how to recognize when they are learning.

Everyday Uses of Embodied Questions

To unpack a common word or phrase:

"You keep saying you want students to be more engaged...can you give me an example of what "more engaged" looks like to you?

You say that you want us to collaborate more, can you give a specific example of what that means to you?

To connect someone back to their resilience:

"Tell me about a time you faced a similar challenge. How did you get through it?"

To get a clear picture of what someone means when they say they want to be successful

"What does "success" look like to you? Tell me about a time you felt successful."

To understand what someone values:

"Who is a person you admire and why?"

To get past someone's personal story and *reveal what they really know/believe;*

Tell me about a time when

Institutional Barriers to Embodied Knowledge

- Totally outdated assumptions re: how human beings learn, grow, evolve, etc..

- Academic fundamentalism re: objectivity, scientific method and logical positivism

- Formal educations' focus on standardized skills and content (not human beings)

- Professional jargon, values and principles

- Social norms that reinforce surface-level communication

Personal barriers to embodied knowledge

- Ignorance – we don't know it exists or how essential it is

- Habit - when we hear people use common words and phrases, we automatically assume we "understand" them. However, the meaning we've created is based on our own assumptions, experiences and frames of reference, NOT theirs

- Misguided listening – although most of us think we are good listeners, we rarely (if ever) get outside of our own frame of reference.

- Apathy - since we don't care to know, we fundamentally lack of curiosity

- Fear, Power and Control – taking time to understand the wants, needs, experiences of others often causes us to change.

Everyday Disembodied "Talk"

I really want to work in a place that encourages collaboration…

Yeah, me too….

We had a really good talk and worked out our differences…

That's nice

I learned a lot about diversity….

Oh, that's good, it is really important

Typical Disemebodied Reflection

Q: What did you learn at school today?

A: Nothing.

Q: What did you learn from the assignment?

A: I learned that I don't like to work in teams

A: I learned that it is a good idea to research things in advance

Disembodied statements hinder problem-solving

Typical statements of resistance spoken in faculty meetings:

- *We tried that a few years ago and it didn't work….*

- *If we do that, then (name of person or group of people) won't like it…*

What are some ways you could use embodied questions or prompts to open up the discussion?

Exercise 2: Adopting Embodied Question Mindset

1. Think of a recent challenge when you felt confused frustrated, resistant and/or overwhelmed in relation to something or someone.

2. Write down 1-3 questions you might typically ask yourself or someone else related to this challenge

3. With your neighbor, discuss your questions and reframe them into embodied questions.

What did you discover?

Describe a moment when you felt engaged, frustrated, challenged or excited during the exercise?

Debrief:
Any "a-ha" moments?

Exercise 3: Listening in Action

Directions: Need a volunteer willing to share a current challenge

Round 1: Listen and ask questions with goal of solving problem

Round 2: Listen and ask questions to relate emotionally and make someone feel better

Round 3: Listen and ask questions to understand someone's unique experience from their perspective

Generative Listening = Reverence + Radical Curiosity + Unpacking

Tool 2: Generative Listening

A method of listening with presence, curiosity, and attunement to strengths

Three levels of listening:

1) **Problem-solving listening:** goal is to solve the problem(s) at hand

2) **Empathic listening:** goal is to relate emotionally and make someone feel better

3) **Generative listening:** goal is to understand someone's unique strengths/truth/experience from their perspective

Debrief:
What differences did you notice between these levels of listening?

Key Concept:

Generative Listening =
Reverence + Radical Curiosity + Unpacking

Embodied Questions **+** **Generative Listening** **=** **Generative Knowledge**

Allowing you to:

Identify **patterns** across people's experiences

Connect someone back to their **strengths & passions**

Use their past experiences to work through **current challenges**

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Exercise 4: Putting It All Together

1. Take 5 minutes to respond to the questions on the handout

2. Count off into groups of 3

3. Share stories in trios

    a. **Storyteller**: tells ALL three responses in one turn

    b. **Interviewer**: interview and ask follow-up questions in generative listening mode

    c. **Time-keeper**: keeps time and also listens and asks additional questions

    d. **Interviewer & timekeeper fill out feedback form and share insights** about the storyteller's values/passions/superpowers

4. Switch & Repeat!

Debrief

What was an a-ha moment you had from today and why did you have it?

What are 2 specific ways you can apply what you learned from this workshop in your work/life?

What Happens Next?
Questions?
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