Kavana Tree Bressen ✶ Facilitation & Workshops
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Scenarios for Question Practice

These community scenarios were written as part of a workshop on learning to ask good questions. The idea is to split into small groups (3-5 people), print and cut enough packets for each group to have one, and then have people take turns saying what questions might be useful to ask in each particular situation. However, you can use the scenarios in whatever way you want.

The group has been working on its participation policy for months. You are at a community meeting and it's clear that the issue is very stuck. The community seems polarized into two camps: those who want an organized system of tracking hours that holds members accountable, vs. those who think if you post a list of what needs doing and basically trust people, it'll all work out fine. The first group thinks that the second group is hopelessly naive, while the second group thinks the first is way too uptight.

(a)

Ever since the group moved in, there have been problems with noise in the dining room at meals. In particular, the sound of the kids' voices seems to drive up the overall volume, to the point where people who are more sensitive or have hearing problems have trouble staying present in a conversation. As a result, their participation in common meals has been starting to drop off, and people are concerned about losing cohesiveness in the community. You are sitting at dinner and someone at your table is complaining about this . . .

(f)

You're at a meeting of all the community parents. The meeting was called because there have been tensions coming up around different parenting styles: some parents give their kids more freedom to run around and do their own thing, while others keep close tabs; some parents allow tv while others don't, and it's the same for junk food, and so on. What would be a useful question to lead off the meeting?

(e)

Your friend Robin comes to you feeling angry and upset because another member, Sage, just sent a “flamey” email to the community specifically saying negative things about Robin. Robin has told you the story and vented about it, and you’ve done some reflecting back.

(i)

One member really thinks the group should revisit its mission statement and do a bunch of work around visioning. They think that many of the other disagreements that come up really relate back to this. Most of the other members are not that interested, they think that rewriting the vision documents would be a frustrating process, take a lot of time, and probably not leave the community any better off. You are attending a coordinating committee meeting that is setting the agenda for the next community meeting, and the person who wants to see visioning happen has just explained that they’d like this on the agenda.

(g)

You are part of a forming community that has decided to start writing its core values. This is the first meeting on it, and you are facilitating. What do you ask the group?

(j)

A particular proposal has been getting worked on for a while. It's gone through a series of meetings both in committee and with the full group. Almost everyone likes it and thinks it would be beneficial to the community, but one person, Jesse, thinks it's a bad idea. You are in a community meeting, and Jesse has just explained their concerns.

(d)

It's time for the annual budget, and the finance committee has suggested increasing dues. Two households have expressed that their finances are tight this year and it would feel like a hardship to raise the dues. At the same time, there are some projects that have been waiting for a while that a lot of people care about and would like to fund, as well as a rise in some ongoing expenses that the group doesn't have a lot of control over.

(c)

You're at a community meeting. Kasey is presenting a proposal on something fairly small. Most people seem ok with it, but Harley clearly doesn't like it and is bringing up a bunch of concerns. You've seen tension between them before, and you suspect that what's really going on is an unresolved conflict between Harley and Kasey that has nothing to do with this particular proposal.

(k)

You're attending a maintenance committee meeting. After move-in, some construction defects were discovered in about a third of the buildings. The community has asked the maintenance committee to research the situation and come back with a recommendation on how to proceed. The maintenance committee has studied the problem exhaustively and contacted several experts in the field. The problem is, the experts' opinions are in conflict with each other, and so is the committee—split down the middle on which way to go. You strongly believe that your side is right, yet you also want to see the group make progress.

(b)

The group is stuck on land use issues—again. It's about fencing. A few families have gone ahead with building fences around all or part of their yards, even though there's been no agreement to do this and it actually goes against existing policy. Some people are sympathetic: they understand why those people went ahead, because the process of discussing it at meetings has been taking forever and meanwhile, people have needs for privacy, vegetable gardens that are free of critters, and so on. Other people are simmering with hurt and resentment, feeling like those who went ahead with building don't care about the community or the impact on their neighbors. So now there are at least two problems: the fencing issues, and the upset around the fencing issues. You're at a community meeting on the subject.

(h)

PLEASE INSERT YOUR OWN SCENARIO HERE: