

Curiosity Conversations: Appreciative enquiry

The Arc of a Conversation

Each interaction we have follows an arc, it has a start, middle and end. How do you start a conversation with a stranger at a bus stop and get them to the point of sharing what they care about in their community?

Starting Points

That thing that gets you talking. It could be complementing an outfit or chatting about when the bus shows up. Step one is starting the conversation - this is the scary bit!

Not everyone wants to talk and many will assume you are selling something or wanting donations. Give people an out - don't force someone to talk to you, if they are uncomfortable then stop and walk away.

Can state intent here - to learn about this place, to find out about this community etc.

THIS IS NOT OUTREACH

This is you meeting someone as an equal and striking up a conversation

Big questions

This is where we can start with some curiosity. You are asking for their input on simple / easy topics. Using positive framing really helps. In the UK we are very used to talking about what's wrong, things that someone else should fix for us. The questions you ask have the ability to shift people from being subjected to the state of the world to being active participants in it. So start with appreciative inquiry.

- Where is the best place to get coffee here?
- What is the best thing about living here?
- What would you tell someone who was thinking of moving to this neighbourhood?
- If you and three friends were to change something about this place what would you do?

Follow on questions

This is where we get creative and riff off the responses you have gotten. How do you turn the simple topic into something you can have a giggle about, or an interaction that feels positive that you could refer back to if you bumped into them again.

Starting with:

- Where is the best place to get coffee here?
 - X Coffee Shop → How did you discover that?
 - I don't know → Are you not a coffee drinker? Where do you like to hang out?
 - Nowhere → What do you look for in a good cafe?

When do you share names?

Names can be very personal and also aren't easy to riff off to create conversation. We are more comfortable sharing our names when we have had a positive interaction. Maybe when you part you introduce yourself and hope you bump into each other again.

This doesn't have to be one conversation! This builds up over time!