

The Art of Focused Conversation Four Levels of Conversation

Type (Level) of Question	Focus of Attention *	Purpose	Example	Outcome *
Objective	Observation (w/o judgment)	Begin with data, facts, external reality	“What did you actually observe (see, hear, or read)?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared understanding of observations and facts • Appreciation of different perspectives
Reflective	Emotion	Evoke immediate personal reaction, internal responses, emotions, feelings, hidden images, and associations with the data and facts	“What is your gut-level response?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of emotional relationship to observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Your own ○ Others • Appreciation of similar and different emotional responses
Interpretive	Meaning	Explore assumptions, meaning, values, significance, and implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “What new insight do you get from this?” • “How do you interpret what you observed?” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of emotional relationship to observations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Your own ○ Others • Appreciation of similar and different emotional responses
Decisional	Resolution & Planned Response	Bring the conversation to resolution, and enable the group to make a decision	“What do you want to do?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consensus on planned response

Based on the table provided in *The Art of Focused Conversation* by Brian Stanfield. ICA Associates, Inc.

* These columns added to the original table by Mark Stevens based on his interpretations of Stanfield, R. Brian ed. 1997. [The Art of Focused Conversation: 100 Ways to Access Group Wisdom in the Workplace](#). Toronto: New Society Publishers