

Pondering Point

Being an active listener means completely investing in what another person is saying. Unfortunately it's not always simple conversation. *What if we are caught in the middle of two family members having an altercation? Or our friend calls us on the phone to complain about another friend?* At times we may be pressured to take a side or offer support. In some cases, as much as we try to remain neutral, we find ourselves drawn to one side. *Are we sure we are getting all the details of the dispute in an effort to give educated advice or support?*

Every story has at least three sides: their side, the other side and somewhere in the middle - the truth. Often times both sides have some truth. Conversely, each point of view may be skewed in one favor based on a person's perception of the situation. Think of how a prism changes light. The prism is our perspective on things, and as it refracts or bends our interpretation of the details of a situation it generates a reality on the other side to complement it. **Sometimes getting the right facts means we need to ask the right questions.**

Am I the right person to be giving advice or support here? Am I really trying to take sides, or merely trying to uncover the truth? With so much emotion involved, am I really able to focus on this person's issue? Ethically speaking, we owe it to the person involved to react. *Do I know what they are really asking of me?* It is not always an option to get both sides and everyone's point of view. Asking some key questions will help to fill in the holes and help us to decide how involved we want to be in the situation – if at all.

Do you have the WHOLE story?



Imagine... having all the information about a situation before getting involved.

— From Pondering to Practice —

Activity:

"He who asks the questions is in control."

Have someone in the group share a situation from their lives and discuss questions you could ask to ensure that you are the in the best position to be supportive.

- Share what you did, what lessons were learned, why you are sharing and what do you want from the group.
- Then discuss what might have worked and what you may have been able to do differently.

Celebrate what you may have learned and take it with you into your next conversation!

***"Understanding is a three-edged sword.
Your side, their side, and the truth."***

- J. Michael Straczynski

Reflection:

Think about a time when you gave a response or showed support to someone and then found out more information that may have changed your response.

- *What could you have done to ensure you had the most information up front as possible?*
- *Was your response rushed or could you have taken more time to discover all the facts?*
- *Were you considering all points of view?*
- *Are you sure you understood what was said?*
- *Are you sure you knew what they were asking for?*

After thinking about this, what would you change moving forward?