

Philosophy & Wisdom

To Instructors

As humans, we have the capacity to wonder... and to question the meaning of life. The purpose of Philosophy Class is to promote THINKING! The questions and focal points should act as springboards for more questions and further analysis. As always, make sure it's fun!

Formats for conducting Philosophy Class:

- **Using “Why” Questions as Discussion Stimulants**
- **Using Focal Points as Discussion Stimulants**
- **Using Sayings / Words as Discussion Stimulants**

Using “Why” Questions as Discussion Stimulants

- Ask the philosophical question. Draw from the list or bring your own.
- Explain the question in different ways / words.
- Ask for reactions, opinions, gut feelings, etc.
- Use examples – e.g. from personal experience or common knowledge.
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- Constantly define terms & concepts, validate input, rephrase & reinforce.
- Suggest, solicit and list related questions i.e. questions that evolve from discussion.
- Present opposing views. Look at each side of the story.
- Summarize insights and record on board...

OR ... (particularly if it is a small group)... do the above as a collaborative writing project. i.e. Interview participants and record responses on a page. Guide the discussion and help to rephrase in order to assure that the content flows and is cogent.

Using Focal Points as Discussion Stimulants

- Expose participants to the Focal Point (i.e. piece of art, poetry, video, photograph, song, object, etc.)
- Give background – i.e. author, title, artist, era, style, tradition, history, etc.)
- Conduct a guided discussion, using the Board and/or relevant props to expand and expound upon the subject.

Ask for

- List of feelings evoked

- Opinions toward, observations, assumptions
- Related personal experiences
- Hypothetical scenarios about the Focal Point and reactions. E.g. What happens right after this photo was taken? What if the hero of this video was a woman instead of a man? Etc.
- Related poetry, drama, art, etc. inspired from the subject
- Critique technique, style, etc. of artist, author, etc.
- Universally held beliefs / cliches, etc. that apply
- Role plays related to the subject

OR ... (particularly if it is a small group) do the above as a collaborative writing project.

Using Sayings / Words as Discussion Stimulants

Choose a cliché or common saying / word.

- Have you ever heard this saying / word?
- What is the meaning of this saying / word?
- What picture / image does it evoke (literal meaning)?
- What do the pictures / images stand for (symbolic meaning)?
- Draw a picture (or diagram) of the saying / word.
- Give examples where the saying / word may apply. Draw from personal experience and common knowledge.
- Role-play some of the examples given, if possible.
- Try to paraphrase the saying / word. Use different words for it.
- Make up similar sayings or words of your own.

Homework: Look for opportunities to use saying / word where it fits during the course of your daily routine.

Philosophical Questions to be used as Discussion Stimulants

Instructors: Remember, the point is to get the participants to think, to wonder, and to express. This may take effort on your part; but make sure you do not do all the talking and DO NOT SERMONIZE. Constantly validate meanings, restate when helpful, define terms, and reinforce input with positive recognition. Don't just answer questions but allow each question to lead to new questions. Keep THEM talking.

- 1. Why do people cry?**
- 2. How can you judge others?**

3. How do people learn?
4. What are differences between children and adults?
5. Why is it OK to kill bugs, mice and rats but not dogs, cats and people?
6. Why do people dance?
7. How is God real to you?
8. What's so bad about boredom?
9. Do you believe in magic?
10. What is a habit? A custom? A tradition?
11. Why are people attracted to each other?
12. Should we always get what we want?
13. How do we know what we want? Need?
14. What does *home* mean?
15. What happens after you die?
16. Why do children play?
17. What does it mean to be mature?
18. Are there angels?
19. What is religion?
20. Why are some people disabled?
21. What makes us Human?
22. How can you make someone else happy?
23. Can you control the way others think or feel?
24. What is advertising?

25. What is sympathy? Empathy?
26. What is nostalgia?
27. What do you expect from others?
28. What do people expect from each other?
29. Why do people care about other people? Things?
30. What is happiness?
31. Why is there suffering? What good could come from it?
32. Can people control their moods? How?
33. Do you care about the weather?
34. Do animals feel affection and loyalty toward each other?
35. What is guilt?
36. Would you rather feel pain or embarrassment?
37. What is civilization? What is the opposite?
38. Where is civilization heading? Predict the future.
39. Why are there wars?
40. What are the things about life that you value?
41. What are the things about life that you regret?
42. What is a disability?
43. What is a spirit or spirituality? What is a soul?
44. What do dreams mean?
45. What is a symbol?
46. How would you change the world if you could

47. What is the most unfair thing about life?
48. What makes you the happiest?
49. What helps you cope with disappointment, misfortune, or tragedy?
50. What can't money buy?
51. Why help a stranger in trouble? Why not?
52. Does it help to worry?
53. What is charity? Faith? Hope?
54. Why hope? Why wish?
55. In what can you believe?
56. What are the interesting things about life? Your life?
57. Would it help to know everything?
58. What are valuable things to know?
59. What could you hope for? Wish for?
60. What would you like to learn that you don't already know?
61. What is curiosity?
62. What is the point in remembering the past?
63. How can you plan if you don't know what the future will bring?
64. What would you want to be if you were not a person?
65. What have you learned from other people? Who?
66. Why should you listen to people who are different?
67. Why should people trust each other? Why shouldn't they?
68. What is tragedy? Comedy?

69. What is art? Why is art valuable?
70. Why do some people like things other people don't?
71. Why do people hate each other?
72. What is beauty?
73. What is beautiful about aging?
74. What are the stages of life?
75. What is our most basic need? What are some less basic needs?
76. What is sad about aging?
77. Do people need people? Relationships? Why or why not?
78. What is honesty?
79. What is potential?
80. What is fantasy?
81. If you are laughing, are you happy?
82. If you are crying, are you unhappy?
83. Are people born good or evil?
84. Can anyone rehabilitate? Is anyone beyond hope?
85. When does life begin?
86. What does music do?
87. What is love? What kinds of love are there?

