

Pause + Perspective

36 conversation cards for the in-between moments - staff meeting downtime, table discussion, professional learning transitions, retreats, supervision, or team reflection.

How to use them

Cut the cards apart and keep them in a bowl, envelope, or meeting toolkit. Invite one person to draw a card. Give everyone a moment to think before opening discussion. There is no need to get through several cards - one strong conversation is enough.

Facilitation agreements

- Participation can be invitational. People may pass.
- Listen for understanding rather than debate.
- Do not force disclosure or ask people to explain personal experiences they do not volunteer.
- Stay curious about differences in perspective.
- Connect reflection back to how we work with people, teams, families, and systems.

The goal is not agreement.
It is to see more of the picture.

Change how we see it. Change what's possible.

PERSPECTIVE

01

Think of a behavior that frustrates you. What is one completely different explanation for it that could also be true?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

SELF-AWARENESS

02

What is something you tend to interpret quickly? What experiences taught you to read it that way?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

LISTENING

03

What is the difference between listening to understand and listening to respond? How can people tell which one you are doing?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

EMPATHY

04

When has someone responded to you in a way that made you feel deeply understood? What did they actually do?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

REFLECTION

05

What is a belief about people, work, or behavior that you have changed your mind about over time? What changed it?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

SOCIAL AWARENESS

06

Whose perspective is easiest for your organization to hear? Whose may require more intentional effort?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

VULNERABILITY

07

What is something you wish colleagues understood about what makes your work harder, but you rarely say out loud?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

VALIDATION

08

How can you validate someone's experience without agreeing with their interpretation or decision?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

ADULT EQ

09

What emotion is hardest for you to be around in other people? What does that reaction bring up in you?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

PERSPECTIVE

10

Choose a recent conflict. What might each person have believed they were protecting, preventing, or trying to accomplish?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

11

What makes feedback feel useful rather than threatening to you? How might that differ for someone else?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

SELF-AWARENESS

12

What is one of your stress tells - a change in tone, pace, patience, body language, or thinking - that others may notice before you do?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

LISTENING

13

What is something people often say they need when what they may actually need first is to feel heard?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

EMPATHY

14

What is a situation where good intentions can still create harmful impact? How should intent and impact both matter?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

REFLECTION

15

Think about the environment you grew up in. What did it teach you about emotions, conflict, asking for help, or vulnerability?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

SOCIAL AWARENESS

16

When someone is quiet in a meeting, what assumptions might we make? What are five other reasons they may not be speaking?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

ADULT EQ

17

What helps you stay curious when you strongly disagree with someone? What makes curiosity harder?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

VALIDATION

18

Finish this sentence in several ways: 'It makes sense that you might feel that way because...'
What changes when we start there?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

PERSPECTIVE

19

If a policy feels fair because it treats everyone the same, what might we still be missing?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

SELF-AWARENESS

20

What type of person or communication style tends to trigger defensiveness in you? What might be underneath that reaction?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

21

What does repair look like after you realize your words or actions had a different impact than you intended?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

REFLECTION

22

What did adults misunderstand about you when you were younger? How might that memory influence how you interpret young people now?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

LISTENING

23

What question could you ask more often before offering advice, solutions, or consequences?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

EMPATHY

24

What is the difference between asking 'What is wrong with this person?' and 'What might be happening for this person?'

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

VULNERABILITY

25

What is one professional mistake that taught you something important? What made it safe - or unsafe - to admit it?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

SOCIAL AWARENESS

26

Who carries invisible labor in your workplace? What kinds of work may go unnoticed because they are relational, emotional, or informal?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

ADULT EQ

27

When you are overwhelmed, what happens to your ability to communicate, problem-solve, listen, or show patience?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

PERSPECTIVE

28

Think of a family, colleague, or student others describe as 'difficult.' What might that label prevent us from noticing?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

VALIDATION

29

What is a phrase that shuts people down even when it is technically true? How could the same message be delivered with more care?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

SELF-AWARENESS

30

What is one strength you may overuse under stress - decisiveness, humor, control, independence, urgency, helping - until it becomes less helpful?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

REFLECTION

31

What is a rule you learned growing up about respect? How might someone from a different background define respect differently?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

32

What makes an apology feel genuine to you? What makes an apology feel performative or incomplete?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

LISTENING

33

When people repeat themselves, what might that tell us about whether they feel heard?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

EMPATHY

34

What does accountability with care look like in practice? What does it not look like?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

SOCIAL AWARENESS

35

What information do people with less power often know that leaders may not? How can organizations make that information easier to hear?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA

VULNERABILITY

36

What is something you are still learning professionally that you once thought you should already know?

PAUSE + PERSPECTIVE

MENSANA