

Inquiry Guidelines

The practice of inquiry is the primary method of the Diamond Approach. It is based on the open and open-ended exploration of present experience. Openness allows whatever arises in consciousness to come up; open-endedness means that inquiry has no particular goal or aim besides the perception, expression, and unfoldment of being in the individual soul.

Guidelines for inquiry

Practicing inquiry with others is usually done in groups of two to four people. Each person takes a turn exploring whatever is presenting itself in the moment with as much openness and curiosity as possible.

The person who is doing the inquiry generally alternates between sensing what is arising and reporting verbally on the experience. In time, these become more integrated, and immediate awareness and the articulation of that awareness are not two different actions.

The inquiry can include sensing the body, noting associations and memories, reporting and following insights, experiencing emotions, being aware of body energy experiences, connecting with relevant personal history, and awareness of subtle or essential states. It is important during this process to sense the arms and legs to help ground the body and provide a container for your experience.

Stories about past experiences can arise, and it often helps to bring them into the inquiry in a way that they can deepen and fill out present experience. The aim of inquiry is direct and immediate experience in the present, not the reliving of past memories. However, memories can be useful to reveal the barriers and obstacles to present experience. Memories also reveal the source of our patterned behaviors.

We are encouraged to be aware of what is occurring in our moment-to-moment experience, letting unfoldment occur on its own. This usually takes practice. Painful emotions or historical connections might arise; patterns of ego activity might be seen (maybe for the first time). If the material that is arising is too difficult to stay present with, we may (or should) take a break from the inquiry, and come back to sensing the arms and legs until we feel grounded enough to continue. On the other hand, we should not underestimate our capacity. In time, it becomes more possible to be present and to explore past memories without losing that Presence.

It is especially helpful to adopt a “not-knowing attitude.” We are following the thread of whatever is spontaneously arising in the moment, and this not-knowing invites our inquiry to go to new insights and experiences.

However, it is important not to act out feelings or projections on others, including inquiry partners. Inquiry helps us see our projections and superego attacks for what they are.

If you get off track, be mindful of this, and return to sensing, looking, and listening. Noticing when, where, and how we get off track can illuminate previously hidden barriers or emotional reactions. The Diamond Approach encourages exploration of the barriers to the free flow of our experience.

It is also important to be kind to ourselves during the inquiry and to practice compassionate understanding. This allows our more vulnerable experiences to come forward.

Lataif qualities in the Inquiry

The Lataif have particular qualities that can guide and help to deepen the inquiry process. Access to these lataif is also developed through inquiry as the soul becomes more receptive to its depth. The **Yellow Latifa** (Joy) brings a presence of curiosity and lightness to the inquiry process, allowing more fluidity to the inquiry. The **Green Latifa** (Compassion) brings a sensitive, kind, attuned, and compassionate response to the inquiry, particularly when painful feelings arise. The **Red Latifa** (Strength) brings energy and vitality to the inquiry along with the courage and boldness to go into places that are difficult and unknown. Along with other essential aspects, Strength also brings the capacity to separate from the superego's judgments and suppression. The **White Latifa** (Will) brings qualities of support, groundedness, and steadfastness to the inquiry. The **Black Latifa** (Peace/Power) brings the quality of not-knowing, depth, mystery, and a quiet mind stilling the soul and revealing its silent, deep presence. Other essential aspects also contribute to inquiry and are, in turn, developed by inquiry.

The role of silent witness

The witness pays silent attention to the speaker. This serves to support the holding space for the speaker and is also a good exercise in paying attention while sensing the arms and legs. It is important not to become distracted while listening. The observer is present for the speaker and holds the neutral, open space. Observing affords the opportunity to note one's own reactions and judgments as they arise. Observing without reacting or responding to the speaker helps open the space for the speaker's experience to unfold without contraction or influence from the witnesses. If you want to talk to the speaker after the inquiry, ask permission first.

Confidentiality

All material in the inquiry process is to be held with strict confidentiality. Participants are not to discuss the process of others to anybody in the group or outside of the group. Confidentiality is necessary to build a supportive and trusting environment for continuing, individual unfoldment. Information received from the sharing in the group is not to be used against the person by other group members.

Guidelines for further/continuing inquiry

A monologue is followed by a period of “further inquiry” with the witness actively engaged in supporting the speaker’s inquiry process. This is a time when the observers can ask questions or clarify details. **The aim is to deepen the inquiry for the one who is inquiring.**

“Further inquiry” generally benefits more from witnesses asking questions, rather than making statements. It is important to refrain from giving advice, interpreting, explaining, giving psychic readings, or drawing conclusions about another’s inquiry. We refrain from assuming the role of teacher, rescuer, therapist, or reformer. We support the unfolding of the one who is inquiring.

When the “further inquiry” feels inappropriate, judgmental, or harmful, you may ask the person to stop.

When the space is not being held during the monologue, you can report your reactions in the moment. For example: “I’m feeling frustration because I believe the space is not being held for my monologue.” “I notice you are looking away, and I feel like you’re not paying attention.”

When the “further inquiry” seems harsh, judgmental, inappropriate, or advisory, you can choose to allow the questioning with awareness, or you can interrupt. For example, to interrupt you might say “I’m feeling judged” or “I’m not asking for advice.”

When the observer co-opts the space-time continuum of the one who is inquiring with his or her stories disguised as further inquiry, you might want to interrupt. For example: “I’m sorry, but I have to interrupt you at this moment because I don’t understand how this relates to my inquiry. Can we get back on track?” Note: you are not accusing and you are keeping to “I” statements.

It is also important to be aware that while you may *feel* attacked, you are not necessarily *being* attacked, by another person. Be aware of the possibility that you are projecting an internal attack onto another person and believing it is coming from them. Feeling attacked is often an opportunity to become more aware of one’s own unconscious processes.

To participate in “further inquiry” or feedback:

- Adopt the position of being curious and genuinely helpful.
- Support by asking questions. For example: “What’s going on for you right now?” or “What part of your inquiry are you most curious about now?” or “How does that make you feel?” Accept the answers. Often the most useful questions are simply asking for more precision, specificity, or unfolding.
- Avoid couching questions as advice. For example, don’t say: “Do you think you could do... when...?”

- Give positive observations, where relevant, with a possible check-in for relevance. For example: “You really seemed to brighten up when you experienced/saw....” or “That seemed to be a wonderful opening. Was it?” Accept the answers.

You can always check in with the speaker about the relevance or appropriateness of the “further inquiry.” This is a helpful way of learning about the process of “further inquiry.” You might be checking for harsh inquiry, inquiry disguised as advice, or confirmation of helpful inquiry. For example, you can ask: “How was my question for you?”

Conclusion

In the inquiry process, we gain skill as the one who is inquiring and the one who is a silent witness by doing the inquiry practice over and over. We are all developing our skills and capacities, and there truly is no limit on this development. In time, we open more and develop trust and confidence in ourselves and in reality. With experience, we develop the capacity to sense more deeply and directly into ourselves and to find guidance to live in a real way. We also learn to hold the space more steadfastly and more deeply for others, supporting their growth as well.

Initially, we engage inquiry as a *technique* for exploring our experience, revealing and working through barriers, and discovering the truth of our being. In time, inquiry becomes an ongoing *practice*, and we find ourselves curious, courageous, kind, and open to our experience throughout our daily lives and not only in formal inquiries. Eventually, we might even become aware of inquiry as the *display of Being* as it arises in our individual consciousness. It is the nature of Being to reveal itself in dynamic, creative, and optimizing ways; inquiry is another expression of the optimizing force of Being.