

How to Dig Deeper in a Conversation

Key Vocabulary Terms

1. “Is something up? You don’t look like yourself.”
2. “Ok well I’m here if you need me.”
3. “You’re not acting like yourself”
4. “Is something going on?”
5. “Are you sure everything’s ok?”
6. “If you ever want to talk, I’m here for you”
7. “If you just need some time right now that’s fine.”

Lindsay: Okay. Hey Molly and Susan. How’s it goin’ (going)?

Both: Great.

Lindsay: All right. Welcome. And today I want to ask for your suggestions. Let’s imagine the situation. (Um), you run into a friend somewhere, let’s say in a café or in a restaurant or on the street and you ask your friend how he or she is doing and they say “Oh fine.” But you feel like they’re actually not fine. Right. How could you dig deeper, how could you actually go, (you know), try to figure out if they’re o – if they really are okay? What would you want to think about first?

Susan: (Um-hm). Yeah, the typical American response would be “I’m fine.”

Molly: Always.

Susan: Yeah, but really (you) should always be looking for the (uh) non-verbal signals, such as are they avoiding eye contact.

Lindsay: Definitely. Eye contact is a huge one. Molly anything else that you would want to look for in terms of non-verbals?

Molly: (I mean), generally, if, if the person looks uncomfortable when you're asking the question and, and people can, can express their discomfort in different ways. They might look away, they might fidget, (um), they might try to check their watch.

Susan: One-word answers.

Molly: Yeah, one-word answers as though they're trying to dismiss the topic (um) and move on or introducing a new topic quickly because they don't wanna (want to) talk about it.

Lindsay: Right, right. So if you get those non-verbal signals that they don't want to engage with you on that topic, you might wanna (want to) just back off. But if it seems like they actually wanna (want to) talk to you about something, what could you say to dig deeper to try to get them to talk about what's going on?

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Molly: (I mean) you might say something like **"You don't look like yourself. You're not acting like yourself. Is something up? Is something going on?"**

Susan: Yeah, **"Are you sure everything's okay? (Um), 'I'm here if you need me.'"** That's another thing, you really could (um) just let them know as a friend that you're there. (Um) if they need anything at all, but that you'll give them their distance if they need that right now.

Molly: Right. I'm always happy to listen, but that you're not necessarily prying for information with specific questions, that you're asking very open-ended (uh) you're offering your ear, rather than interrogating your friend.

Susan: Yeah, **"If you ever wanna (want to) talk I'm here for you, (um), but if you need some time right now, that's fine."**

Lindsay: Well that's great. Those are fantastic. You guys have offered some really good suggestions. I can't think of anything else that we would want to add. Can you guys.

Molly: No.

Susan: No.

Lindsay: It can be a little bit confusing in the US because (um) sometimes with the communication style here, a lot of people might not be likely to go right away into what's going on, so it's kind of like you need to read those signals a bit.

Molly: Sure and, and "How are you?" is offered here kind of interchangeably with hello. You can be passing a colleague in the hallway walking quickly and you'll still say "How are you?" Which is kind of ridiculous because you're obviously not going to stop and have a full conversation, when you're saying that over your shoulder in motion.

Lindsay: Yeah, that's a really good point. It can be really confusing, (you know), if you're here in the US, but (uh) just to keep that in mind and (uh), so now you guys have some tools to do that. Thank you guys.

Molly: Of course.

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Susan: No problem.