

Inquire

Ways of de-emphasising this voice:

1. Ask yourself whether you are inquiring because you personally find it interesting and stimulating rather than because it is serving a useful function in the conversation. Use the Inquire voice to serve the purpose of the interaction.
2. Use Inquiry specifically to help others to voice their views, feelings and concerns. Make your Inquiry consist of more listening and less questioning.
3. Reflect and solicit feedback on the types of questions that you tend to ask. Are they merely polite, superficial inquiries reflecting social niceties? Or are they mostly information-gathering? Do they include thought-provoking questions which enable wider and deeper discussions? Can you pursue different levels of inquiry? Do you have all these types in your repertoire?
4. Reflect and solicit feedback on the impact of your Inquiry. How does your inquiring make others feel? Acknowledged? Involved? Respected? Cornered? Exposed? Belittled? And how does it make them react and behave? Productively or not? Effective Inquiry engages others and enables them to contribute.
5. Reflect and solicit feedback on whether you are actually inquiring when you think you are. People often present what they say in the form of a question as an easier way of expressing emotions, such as anger, frustration, weariness, scepticism. ('No kidding...?') Questions can also be abused to disguise other modes, especially perhaps Advocacy, Challenge, Direction and Evaluate.
6. Be careful not to over-prepare your questions. This will make them more rigid and more detached (and change them into Probing or Diagnosing). Inquiry is the most open-minded form of exploration and so it is natural that questions in this mode should be formed, refined and re-formed in the moment, in the flow of the interactive inquiry process.