

Questioning Skills

An open question is a good place to start a one to one exchange. Such an approach tends to encourage participation and to imply a more open agenda. They often begin with a what, how, when, where, tell me more...

Open questions: require the respondent to reflect and think about the answer. The response will often give deeper insights into feelings and the respondent will gain more control over the length of the conversation

Common usages and examples of open questions:

- As a conversation opener, to develop conversation depth, to help someone open up.

How are things going? What would motivate you to get this project done? How do you get your work done?

- To find out more about the other person, their wants, needs, problems etc.

How are you feeling? What's important to you? What do you value most in the team?

- To help someone gain a new perspective

What's another way of looking at this? What else could be done?



A closed question can be answered with either a single word, often 'yes' or 'no', or a short phrase or sentence.

Closed questions: give facts, are easy and quick to answer, keep control of the conversation with the questioner.

Common usages and examples of closed questions:

- As a conversation opener ***What's the time? Are we meeting this morning?***

- For testing understanding or summarising ***So, you would like to work from home on Tuesdays?***

- For getting to a logical conclusion ***Are you happy with current levels? Does everyone work hard enough? Do you need more staff?***

- For achieving closure and to persuade ***If I can do this extra work for you, can we move the deadline for the other project forward?***



Questions to help overcome obstacles

from The Skilled Helper by Gerard Egan

Problem finding

What are your concerns?

What's problematic in your life?

What issues do you need to face?

What's troubling you?

What's keeping from being what you want to be/doing what you want to do?

What do you need to resolve this?

What do you need to move forward?

Questions on planning

Which set of actions will get you to your goal?

Which actions are most critical?

How important is the order of these actions?

What is the best time frame for each action?

Which step of the programme needs sub steps?

How can one build informality and flexibility into this plan?

How do we gather the resources, including social support, needed to implement the plan?

Questions on implementing plans

Now that you have a plan, how do you move into action?

What the best way for you to get started?

What obstacles lie in your way? Which are critical? How can you manage these obstacles?

How do you keep your efforts from flagging?

What kind of support will help you?

Questions to uncover blind spots

What problems are you avoiding?
What opportunities are you ignoring?
What's really going on?
What are you overlooking/refusing to see?
What don't you want to do?
What assumptions are you making?
What are you failing to factor in?
How are you being dishonest with yourself?
What's underneath the rocks?
If others were honest with you, what would they tell you?

Questions on commitment

What is your readiness for change in this area at this time?
How badly do you want what you say you want?
How hard are you willing to work?
How highly do you rate the appeal of this goal?
What's pushing you to choose this goal?
What rewards can you expect if you work on this agenda?
What difficulties do you find in committing yourself to this goal?
What can you do to increase your commitment?
To what degree is the timing for this goal right?
What resources can help you?

Questions for exploring possibilities

What are your most critical needs and wants?
What are some possibilities for a better future?
What outcomes would take care of your most pressing problems?
What would your life look like if you developed some key opportunities?
What should your life look like in a year?
What should you put in place that is currently not in place?
What are some wild possibilities for making your life better?

