

Questioning Techniques

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1. Closed-ended Questions

Closed-ended questions are asked in such a way that they elicit a ONE WORD response. Examples:

- Do you feel angry?
- Don't you think this would be a good idea?
- Is it really bothering you that much?
- Was he really devastated?
- You're not going to do that, are you?
- Are you thinking about confronting her?

Closed-ended questions often "lead" a person to an answer or response. They can be helpful when trying to suggest a feeling or idea. They often are less effective techniques because they narrow the person's focus and limit possible responses.

Words that often begin a closed-ended question: Are, Do, Did, Is, Have, Has, Don't, Were, Where, Was, You're, Can, Could, Would, Should, Will, When, Who, What is + a qualifier.

2. Open-ended Questions

Open-ended questions leave the other person a lot of room to answer the question in their own way. They often make people think about their answers. These questions put the responsibility for forming the focus of the discussion on the other person. Examples:

- How are you feeling about this? What are your reactions? thoughts?
- What do you want to do?
- How are you affected by this?
- How did he react feel?
- What are you going to do?

- What have you thought about doing?
- Help me understand what you mean by _____.
- Tell me more about what you mean.

Words that often begin an open-ended question: What, How, Why, Tell me more, Help me understand.

If you use WHY questions, then some people may feel that you are criticizing them. Examples:

- Why did you do that? (Help me understand what your thoughts were when you did _____.)
- Why do you feel that way? (Tell me more about how you feel.)

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