

Communication Skills

1. Actively listening and attending – to understand what they're saying

- Pay attention to verbal and nonverbal messages
- Demonstrate empathy
- Don't react to emotive words
- Give verbal cues: "um-hmmm," "sure," "ah," "yes"
- LISTEN AS THOUGH YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME

2. Affirming (paraphrasing and reflecting back) – to gather information and report back; lets the other person feel listened to

- Restate and rephrase what the speaker is saying
- Put in your own words so it doesn't irritate the speaker
- Do not evaluate, sympathize, or give advice
- Use phrases such as: "In other words," "If I understand what you're saying," "What I hear you saying"

3. Probing/questioning – asking questions to help you understand

- Probing – inviting the speaker to elaborate
 - "Give me an example," "Please tell me more," "I'd like to hear more about this," "I'm not sure I understand"
- Questioning – asking open-ended questions to collect information
 - Helpful to use with young people and with problem solving
 - Questions that invite an explanation for a response; can't be answered yes or no
 - Examples: "How do you see this situation?" "Can you give me an example?" "How did you decide that?" "How does this affect you?"

4. Summarizing – to pull things together for further discussions

- Listen carefully to organize the information
- Good for emphasizing key points
- Shows that you've been listening
- Examples
 - "If I understand you correctly, your main concerns are..." "These seem to be the key things you're talking about," "This is what I heard you say...did I get it right?"

AVOID IMMEDIATE COACHING AND PROBLEM SOLVING – IT SHUTS DOWN THE DISCUSSION AND CREATES A LOST OPPORTUNITY

KINDS OF QUESTIONS



A. Closed Questions

1. Elicit specific, brief information – can be answered in single word responses.
2. Used when you don't need elaboration or detail.
3. Examples:
 - Did? Do?
 - Is? Are?
 - When?
 - Have?

B. Open-ended Questions

1. Facilitate conversation and encourage people to talk – require more than a one word answer
2. Show respect for the views of others.
3. Help people think analytically and critically.
4. Used to explore, probe, clarify, check out underlying feelings
5. Examples:
 - What? – results in facts being provided
 - How? – results in feeling, or process information
 - Why? - results in reasons or explanations (can be tricky and seem accusatory)
 - Could or Can? – results in information about the general picture

C. Examples of Open-ended Questions

1. Probing type questions:
 - Could you say more about that?
 - Could you explain more about this situation?
 - What do you think about that?
 - Could you more fully describe your concerns?
 - Have you explored or thought of?
 - Tell me more about...
2. Coaching type questions:
 - How can I help you?
 - What kind of help/support do you need?
 - What do you need from me or the agency?
 - What have you tried?
 - What might someone else say or do? (ex. another mentor)
3. Questions to promote action:
 - What is a viable alternative?
 - What are your goals?
 - What are the advantages, disadvantages of this suggestion?
 - What have you tried?
 - What are your ideas about this?
 - What are a few options for improvement?
 - What do you think is the real problem?
 - What might happen if you...