

Open-ended Questions

Open-ended questions are questions that encourage people to talk about whatever is important to them. They help to establish rapport, gather information, and increase understanding. They are the opposite of closed-ended questions that typically require a simple brief response such "yes" or "no."

Open-ended questions invite others to "tell their story" in their own words. They do not lead people in a specific direction. Open-ended questions should be used frequently, though not exclusively, in conversation. When asking open-ended questions one must be ready and willing to listen to the response.

To illustrate closed-ended vs. open-ended questions, consider the following examples. The topic is the same in both questions, but the responses likely will be very different.

- Did you have a good relationship with your parents? (closed-ended)
- Tell me about your relationship with your parents. (open-ended)

Examples of open-ended questions:

- How can I be of help?
- Would you tell me more about ___?
- Could you help me understand ___?
- What are the good things and the less good things about ___?
- What do you think you will lose if you give up ___?
- What have you tried before?
- What do you want to do next?

Affirmations

Affirmations are statements and gestures that recognize client strengths and acknowledge behaviors that lead in the direction of positive change, no matter how big or small. Affirmations build confidence in one's ability to change. To be effective, affirmations must be genuine and congruent.

Examples of affirmation statements:

- Thank you for ...
- I really like the way you ...
- That was a very creative how you ...
- You showed a lot of self-control in the way you ...
- It may not seem like much, but I think it was very impressive how you ...
- You have a real gift for ...