

Using Questions Effectively: How to Structure Questions

Things To Do:

- Ask open-ended rather than close-ended questions.
- Ask primarily questions that promote higher levels of thinking (applying, analyzing, synthesizing, evaluating), rather than simple recall.
- Phrase the question unambiguously.
- Consider the following types of questions:
 - Information-Seeking Questions:
 - ***What were the blood values from the lab?***
 - ***What is her dose of digoxin?***
 - ***Have the x-rays come back yet?***
 - Diagnostic Questions:
 - ***What is your analysis of the problem?***
 - ***What is your differential diagnosis?***
 - ***What conclusions did you draw from these data?***
 - Challenge (Testing) Questions:
 - ***What evidence supports your conclusion?***
 - ***What arguments might be developed to counter that point of view?***
 - ***What alternative hypothesis or diagnosis is most likely?***
 - Hypothetical Questions:
 - ***If the liver function tests were normal, how would that have affected your treatment plan?***
 - ***How would a family history of coronary artery disease for this patient alter your thinking?***
 - Action Questions:
 - ***What needs to be done to implement the plan for this patient?***
 - ***What community resources do we need to find?***
 - Extension Questions:
 - ***What are the implications of your conclusions for the treatment of asthma among children in elementary school in our community?***
 - Priority/Sequence Questions:
 - ***Given the patient's limited resources, what is the first step to be taken?***
 - Prediction Questions:
 - ***If your plan (conclusion) is appropriate, what do you expect to happen over the next month? Year?***
 - Generalization Questions:
 - ***Based on your experience and the studies of the incidence of teenage pregnancy, what do you consider to be the most effective strategies for our local high school teachers and counselors?***

[Modified from: Christensen, C.R., Garvin, D.A., Sweet, A. (1991). Education for Judgment: The Artistry of Discussion Leadership. Harvard Business School Press]

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