

Asking open questions in counselling is an essential skill that helps clients explore their thoughts, emotions, and experiences in a non-directive way. Open questions encourage deeper reflection and expression, fostering self-awareness and insight.

Why Use Open Questions?

- Encourage clients to share more information.
- Avoid limiting responses to "yes" or "no."
- Help uncover underlying feelings, thoughts, and beliefs.
- Promote client autonomy and self-exploration.

Examples of Open Questions

1. **Exploring Feelings & Experiences**
 - *"How have you been feeling about that?"*
 - *"Can you tell me more about what that was like for you?"*
 - *"What has this experience been like for you?"*
2. **Encouraging Reflection & Insight**
 - *"What do you think might be contributing to this situation?"*
 - *"How do you usually respond in these situations?"*
 - *"What has helped you cope in the past?"*
3. **Clarifying & Expanding Perspectives**
 - *"What do you mean when you say you feel 'stuck'?"*
 - *"How does this situation compare to others you've been in?"*
 - *"What thoughts go through your mind when this happens?"*
4. **Exploring Relationships & Social Context**
 - *"How do you think others see this situation?"*
 - *"What role do your relationships play in how you're feeling?"*
 - *"How has this affected the people around you?"*
5. **Encouraging Future-Oriented Thinking**
 - *"What would you like to be different?"*
 - *"How do you see yourself moving forward?"*
 - *"What small steps could you take toward change?"*

Best Practices for Using Open Questions

- **Use Silence Thoughtfully** – Give the client time to reflect before answering.
- **Follow the Client's Lead** – Stay curious and build on what they share.
- **Balance with Active/Attentive Listening** – Reflect, summarize, and validate their responses.
- **Avoid 'Why' Questions Too Often** – They can feel interrogative or judgmental (e.g., instead of *"Why did you do that?"* ask *"What led you to that decision?"*).