

# Counselling Skills Year One

Open and Closed questions  
as a Tool for Helping

# Scene Setting

- Opening round ('Check in' for students to 'park' any issues from outside)



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# Touching base.....

- Admin slot (Group maintenance, any issues arising from last lesson or queries about module, etc) and outline of morning's work

# Aims for this lesson:

- To understand and appreciate the helping skill of questions
- Sensitivities and application of questions
- Skills practice

# CONTRACTING



# QUESTIONS IN A HELPING RELATIONSHIP





# The Kipling Questions



# Skills of Helping

- No helping work can be undertaken without the **core conditions** and the basic skills of **reflecting, paraphrasing, etc.**
- The art of asking open and closed questions is also a foundation skill of helping.

# SOME EXAMPLES OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF QUESTIONS:

- **Open questions**
- **Closed questions**
- Socratic questions
- Rhetorical questions
- Combination questions

# OPEN AND CLOSED QUESTIONS:

- ‘Open questions’ are encouraged in helping processes
- ‘Closed questions’ can curtail or close options for responding [yes or no answers], can shut disclosers down
- Open questions leave options of response open and can help a speaker ‘open up’

# A Place for Closed Questions

- It is not necessarily the case that open questions are always 'right' and closed questions are always 'wrong'
- Some speakers will only respond to closed questions and there is sometimes a need for a direct yes/no answer
- Can be helpful if speaker is confused or muddled

# Closed/open question:

**Do you see him often?**

**How often do you see him?**

# Open question:

- Is used in order to gather lots of information – you ask it with the intent of getting a long answer:

# Further Examples of Open Questions

- What ....?
- When ....?
- How .....?
- Where ....?
- Who?

For example, “How ready are you to...?” rather than “Are you ready to ...?”)

# Exercise on open and closed questions



# Other Useful Helping Interactions:

- Tell me about .....
- How do you .....?
- What do you think about .....?
- What do you make of that?
- Describe ....
- Explain ...

# How to ask questions

- Timing is important
- Ask follow on questions, but don't interrogate
- Reflect in between questions
- Appropriate tone of voice and body language
- Ask yourself "What is the statement behind the question?"

# Why do you think ‘Why’ questions can be problematic



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# “Why” questions:

- Can make people feel that they have to justify their answers in some way, e.g. “Why don’t you like him?”

Alternatives might be:

“How is it that you’ve come to dislike him so much?”

“What is it about him that you don’t like?”

These alternatives seek the same information, but are not judgemental and do not require justification

# “Why” .....

- “Why” questions need to be used with caution, but sometimes, ‘Why’ questions can be of help, for example:
- “Why have you chosen to address this issue now?”

# Why? Oh Why?

- Although “Why?” is an open question, reasons why often live in the past and can be unhelpful
- Can seem judgemental

# Questions

- Caution: Some people are vague as part of their defence mechanism

# QUESTIONS EXERCISE



# Have we achieved the aims for this lesson:

- To understand and appreciate the helping skill of questions
- Sensitivities and application of questions
- Skills practice

# Consider over the coming week:

- A leading question implies or contains its own answer

# Homework.....

- Listen to radio, or watch TV interviews and note the number of times “leading” questions are asked, especially in political interviews

# Closing round:



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