

Activity : Open and closed questions

Aims

This activity enables participants to gain first-hand experience of the different type of responses that open and closed questions are likely to get. The activity will make participants aware of the impact these two types of questions have on involvement and verbal/non-verbal feedback.

This is designed to be a quick activity.

Objectives

- To introduce questioning techniques.
- To consider individuals' responses to open and closed questioning techniques.

Resources

PowerPoint slides or a handout made from the slides.

The activity.

Stage 1 Closed questions - in pairs (2 mins)

- Find a partner. If possible, choose a person you do not know well. Decide who will ask the questions and who will reply.

(You will swap roles for the next stage.)

- The person to be questioned should select one of the topics below but keep it secret. Their partner will then attempt to find out what the topic is and why it's important.
 - ◆ An unusual hobby.
 - ◆ A particular achievement.
 - ◆ An important day in their life which was out of the norm.
 - ◆ A very special holiday.

The questioner can only ask closed questions to which the answer is only 'yes' or 'no'.

The questioner should try to discover the topic area and then the specific issue. For example, to discover the topic, used closed questions to work your way through the list:

'Have you chosen an unusual hobby?'

'Is your topic related to a particular achievement?' Etc.

Stage 2 Open questions- in pairs (2 mins)

Keep the same partner and swap roles. The new questioner can now ask 'open' style questions, where the person replying can describe and explain.

Stage 3. Plenary discussion

How did it feel to both participants under the closed question exercise? How quickly did a picture develop of the topic being highlighted? Is it frustrating? If yes, for whom?

How did it feel during the open question exercise? What are the differences between the two approaches? How does it feel?

Slide 2 or a handout from slide 2 can be used at the end of the activity to summarise key points in open and closed questioning.