

Listening

The purpose of questions is to draw out information and to gain clarity. It is important that the mentee doesn't feel interrogated or that he is being judged. If he feels that he has to justify himself, he may block communication which could prevent him considering alternatives.

Different purposes of questioning:

Questioning can help mentees to learn by:

- prompting them to recall what they have learned and experienced previously
- engaging interest
- challenging them to think independently
- encouraging them to explore consequences
- stimulating their ability to think creatively
- deepening and broadening thinking, moving from concrete and factual to more analytical and evaluative
- helping to make their own assessments and evaluations of what's been said or done
- raising awareness of learning as a process
- helping to make connections between different aspects of knowledge and experience
- generating hypotheses
- bringing attention back to the task
- encouraging responsibility for their own learning.

When to ask questions

At the start of a session

- Encourage the mentee to relax and feel comfortable with the session
- Establish changes since last session
- Identify preparation for the meeting
- Check understanding and retention from previous sessions
- Engage attention by inviting mentee to share relevant experiences

During the session

- Encourage further examination of experiences and scenarios
- Hypothesise about "what if scenarios".
- To clarify and challenge assumptions and perceptions
- Help to make connections between what is known and what to learn
- Encourage self reflection and analysis

At the end of a session

- To reflect on the session and what has been learned
- To identify what future actions as a consequence of the session
- To confirm progress made

Exercise

Consider the following questions and which stage of the session you would use them

- What surprised you about what you have just learned?
- What do you know now that you didn't know before?
- What did you do that helped you learn?
- What got in the way of your learning?
- If you were to do that activity again, what would you do the same and what would you do differently?
- Where else could you use the skills that you have used?

Using Bloom's Taxonomy

Knowledge or factual recall

If you want to find out how well mentees can recall information, you could ask questions like:

How many...?
Can you name the...?
Describe what happened at...
Is it true that...?

Comprehension or understanding

If you want to know how well mentees understand things, you could ask questions like:

How would you describe it in your own words?
Why do you think it happened like that?
What are the differences between...?
Can you give me an example of what you mean...?
How does X compare with Y?

Application

If you want to find out how well mentees can use their knowledge in different contexts, you could ask questions like:

How would you solve this problem with the knowledge you have?
How would you apply that knowledge in this situation?
Do you know another instance where...?
How would this information be useful if you had a...?

Analysis

When you want to see underlying principles and the relationships between different aspects of a concept or topic, you could ask questions like:

Why did these changes occur?
What will happen if you change this part of the process?
Can you explain what must have happened when...?
Can you distinguish between...?
What is the problem with...?

Synthesis

To suggest ways of expressing new ideas.

Can you design an X to Y?
Can you see a possible solution to...?
What would be your way of dealing with...?
What would happen if...?
Can you develop a proposal that would...?

Evaluation

To make judgements and opinions of the actions taken

How would you justify your decision to...?
How could you have done that more efficiently?
What changes to X would you suggest?
How would you feel if...?
What do you think about...?

