



Basic Skills Curriculum

Participant's Curriculum

Time Required: 1.5 Hours

Summary and Rationale

The module presents an overview of the skills of questioning and reflection and provides activities to practice these skills. These skills are essential communication tools that can help practitioners assist offenders in an effective manner.

Performance Objectives

At the end of this module, participants will be able to

1. list and describe the foundational principles of facilitation.
2. define and describe the advantages and disadvantages of open- and closed-ended questions.
3. define and describe the skill of reflection.

References/Resources

Cormier, S., & Cormier, B. (1998). *Interviewing strategies for helpers: Fundamental skills and cognitive behavioral interventions* (4th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Corey, M.S. & Corey, G. (1998). *Becoming a helper* (3rd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Corey, M.S. & Corey, G. (1996). *Groups: Process and practice*. (5th ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing.

Egan, G. (1990). *The skilled helper: A systematic approach to effective helping*. (4th ed.). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Hill, Clara E. & O'Brien, Karen M. (1999). *Helping skills: Facilitating exploration, insight, and action*. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

Hoppin, J. & Splete, H. (Eds.). (1996). *Curriculum for career development facilitators*. Rochester, MI: Oakland University.

Ponterotto, J. G., Casas, J. M., Suzuki, L. A., & Alexander, C. M. (Eds.). (1995). *Handbook of multicultural counseling*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Sue, D. W., et al. (1998). *Multicultural counseling competencies: Individual and organizational development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Equipment

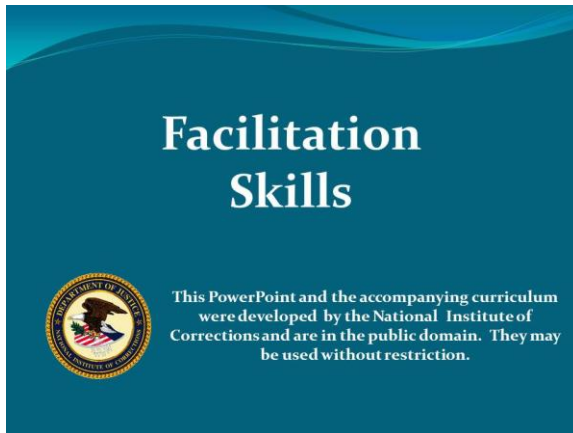
- Easels with flip charts
- Markers
- Computer and LCD projector
- Screen

Materials

- PowerPoint presentation for this module
- Activity worksheet: Asking Open- and Closed-Ended Questions
- Activity worksheet: Reflection of Content and Feeling

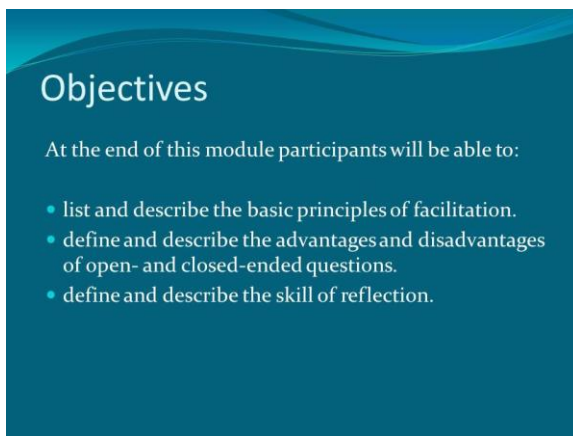
CONTENT

PowerPoint 1



Anyone who helps offenders make career decisions and prepares them for employment must have good facilitation skills. This module is intended to help you learn and practice those skills and improve employment outcomes for persons with criminal convictions.

PowerPoint 2

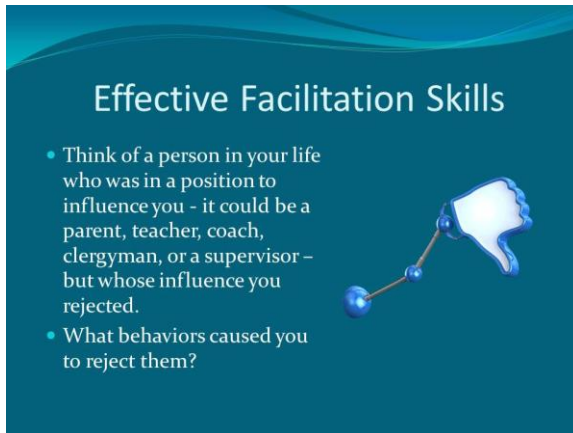


At the end of this module participants will be able to:

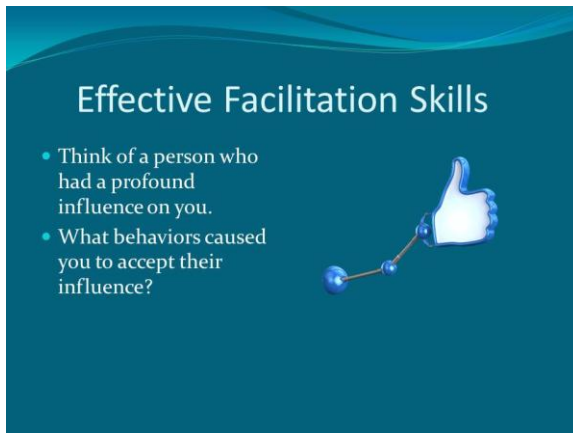
- list and describe the basic principles of facilitation.
- define and describe the advantages and disadvantages of open- and closed-ended questions.
- define and describe the skill of reflection.

During this session we are going to review and practice the facilitation skills needed by persons who provide workforce development services to persons with criminal convictions. Before we get started, let's review some key points.

PowerPoint 3



PowerPoint 4



We know from our personal experience that there are facilitation skills that are effective at motivating us and that there are others that are ineffective at motivating. Consider this list:

Ineffective Motivators

- Demeaning
- Judgmental
- Authoritarian
- Used threats
- Controlling
- Overbearing

- Micro-managed
- No trust
- Bossy
- Self-aggrandizing: all about him
- Duplicitous
- No integrity: talk didn't match walk
- Manipulative
- Moody-angry
- Arrogant
- "My way-highway"
- Closed minded
- Created hostile environment
- Coercive-dictatorial
- Condescending—no respect
- Know-it-all
- Suspicious—accusatory
- Negative, pessimistic, bad energy
- Only talked, never listened
- Vindictive
- Punitive attitude & behavior
- Didn't model the behavior advocated
- Tried to motivate by fear
- Unwilling to understand—no empathy

Effective Motivators

- Listened-respected my point of view
- Confident in me
- Modeled work-ethic
- Didn't give me advice—but helped me find options
- Open minded
- Optimistic—believed I could succeed
- Dependable: kept his commitments
- Willing to help
- Never gave up on me
- Non-judgmental
- Patient; gentle
- Empowered me: "You can do it."
- Modeled the desired behavior
- Had faith in me—told me
- Open to options—creative in helping me find the right ones for me
- Supportive, even when I screwed up
- Encouraging—even when suggesting change
- Honest
- Humble, but strong
- Genuine—not phony

- Believed in me more than I believed in my self
- Saw the best in me and brought out the best in me
- Modeled integrity: talk matched walk
- Compassionate
- Kind

PowerPoint 5



There are six basic principles of facilitation. These include acceptance and respect, understanding and empathy, and trust and genuineness.

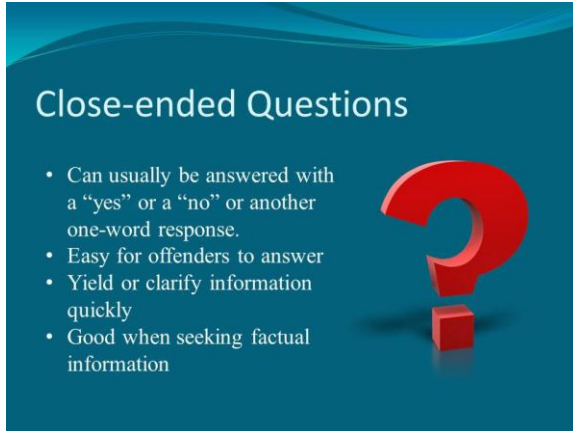
Acceptance means that you can relate to people just as they are without judging them. This implies that you are able to approach people openly and flexibly, without having preconceived notions of what they should or should not be. *Respect* has to do with treating other people as though they are inherently important, whether or not society might view them as having any special status. In corrections, for example, we should treat offenders as though they have value simply because they are human beings.

Understanding is achieved when we believe that another person is able to comprehend and relate to what we are experiencing. *Empathy* involves putting yourself in another person's shoes in order to try to understand that person's thoughts and feelings.

Trust is an underlying principle of facilitation skills that works differently in a corrections setting than in non-corrections counseling settings. In a correctional setting it is usually best defined as a principle of "firmness, fairness, and consistency."

Genuineness is a concept that is related to trust. We tend to trust people who seem to be sincere in the way they relate to us. Individuals who are genuine have an authentic interpersonal style. This means that they say and do things that are consistent with their thoughts and feelings.

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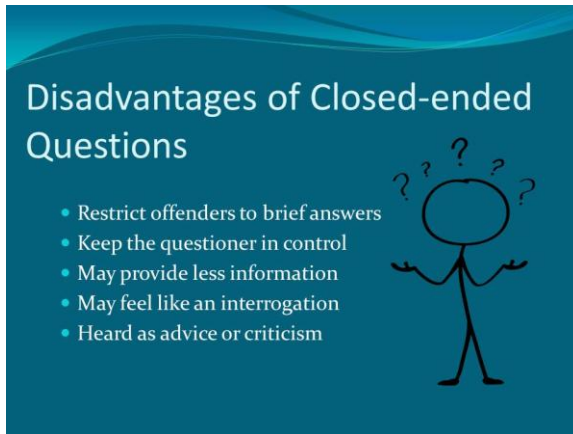


In your work with offenders it is necessary to encourage them to share information with you. Being able to ask question that allow you to obtain the information is an essential skill. There are two basic types of questions. Closed-ended questions are those that can be answered “yes” or “no” or with another simple one-word response. Usually, these questions ask for specific facts or opinions: “Do you enjoy working with computers?” or “Do you have any children?”

Closed-ended questions have advantages. They tend to be easy for offenders to answer. They may be useful when working with offenders who are learning English or with individuals who may be reluctant to open up initially.

- They yield or clarify information quickly. For example, “Can you meet at 9 a.m. tomorrow?”
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PowerPoint 7



At the same time, closed-ended questions have disadvantages. They may

- restrict offenders to brief answers.
- keep the questioner in control of the conversation, limiting the time that offenders can talk.
- provide less information because the interviewer must ask the exact questions needed to acquire it.
- cause offenders to feel interrogated and thus lead to mistrust or resistance.
- be perceived as advice or criticism.

For example, an offender who tells you that he is having trouble getting to work on time may feel you are being critical if you respond with “Don’t you have an alarm clock?”

Open-ended questions invite a longer response than closed-ended questions do and often start with what, how, or why: “How have you used computers in your job here?” or “What do you imagine will be the hardest thing about leaving here and getting a job?”

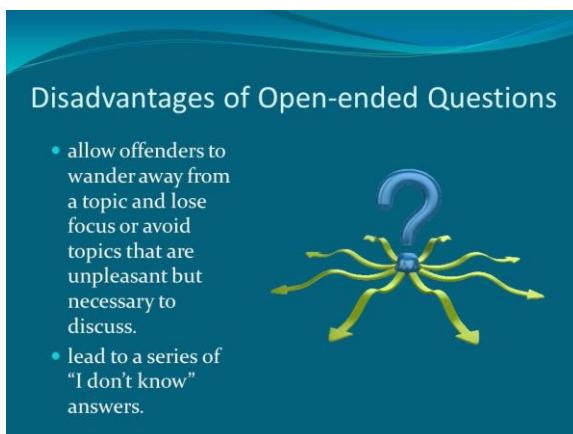
PowerPoint 8



Open-ended questions have advantages because they

- invite offenders to explore their thoughts and feelings.
- give offenders greater control in the conversation.
- convey interest and respect to offenders by inviting them to relate their experience in their own words and in their own way.
- provide information you may not have known to seek. For example, in responding to an open-ended question, an offender may mention a skill or experience that you would not have discovered by asking a simple yes or no question.

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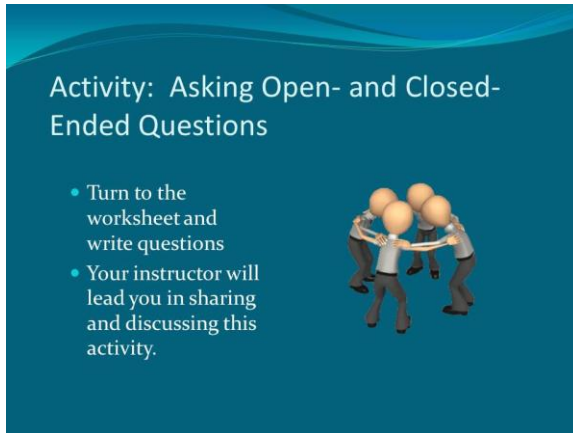


Open-ended questions also have these disadvantages. They may

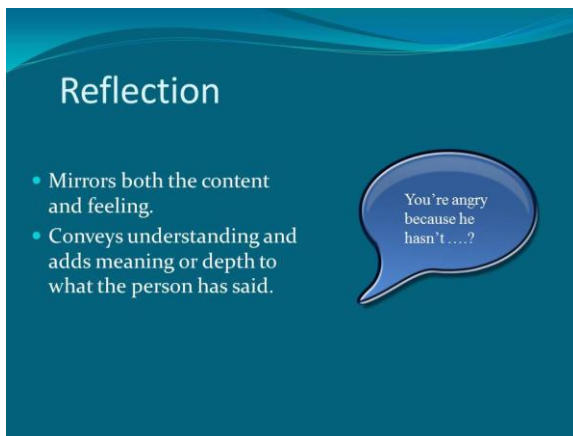
- allow offenders to wander away from a topic and lose focus or avoid topics that are unpleasant but necessary to discuss.

- lead to a series of “I don’t know” answers.

PowerPoint 10



PowerPoint 11

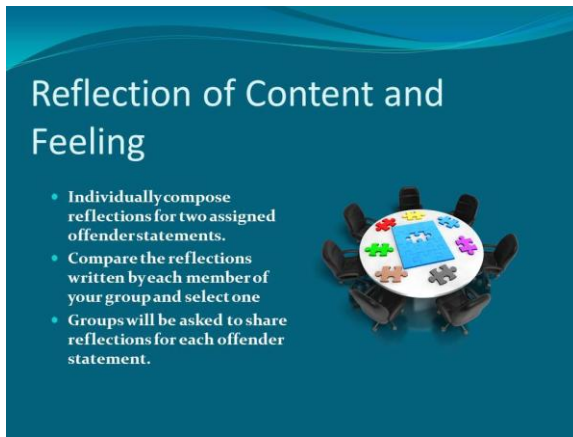


The offenders you work with will have been interviewed numerous times in corrections facilities. These interviews, however, will have focused more on getting information from them, or making sure that they understand facility regulations. Now that these offenders are preparing for release and are working with you on their career development, you will likely need new tools to facilitate this work at a higher level. Thus, the technique of reflection will be invaluable in your work.

We reflect what another person is saying when our response mirrors both the **feeling** and the **content** of their message. Though a reflection may paraphrase some of what an offender has said, it is more than simply parroting the speaker's words. Instead, reflecting echoes the essence of the verbal message and includes an understanding of what the speaker may be feeling. When done well, this technique enables offenders to feel more fully understood.

The first building block of good reflection is the ability to use words that capture the feelings that offenders are trying to express. It can help if you imagine what you might be feeling in a similar situation if you were looking at the world in the way the offender sees it. Once you've identified the feeling, you can then select a word or phrase that matches the intensity of the offender's message. It is important to neither overstate nor understate what the offender is saying.

PowerPoint 12



Summary

This module has provided an overview of facilitation skills in the areas of questions (closed and open-ended) and reflection. If you use these skills consistently in your work with offenders, you will be more likely to motivate them to change and avoid further involvement with the criminal justice system.

Activity: Asking Open- and Closed-Ended Questions

Write two questions that you might ask in response to each of the following statements by an offender. If possible, write one open- and one closed-ended question for each offender statement. You will have an opportunity to discuss this activity during the in-class session.

1. I'll take any job. All I want to do is work.

Your questions:

2. I don't really care about finding a job right now. The first thing I want to do is get custody of my children

Your questions:

3. Nobody wants to hire an ex-offender. I'll never get a job.

Your questions:

4. My probation officer is all over me. He's just looking to violate me.

Your questions:

5. I'm not going to wear that stupid uniform at Burger King. You can't pay me enough to do that!

Your questions:

6. My boss is always on my back. I want him to leave me alone.

Your questions:

Activity: Reflection of Content and Feeling

Now that you have practiced expressing feelings, you are ready to go on to the next step and apply them toward building reflections. As you work through this activity, you may want to use the formula, “You feel ... because” Following are 8 statements that an offender might say to you. Write down a statement for each that reflects the person’s feelings.

1. I don’t care what you think about my using marijuana. I’m not going to quit.

Reflection: You feel

2. You don’t know what it’s like to be a single parent.

Reflection: You feel

3. I would go to Alcoholics Anonymous, but my children need for me to be home with them.

Reflection: You feel

4. You’re just like my probation officer. You want to control everything I do.

Reflection: You feel

5. If I had a better lawyer, I would not be here.

Reflection: You feel

6. Why should I work? I can make more money selling drugs.

Reflection: You feel

7. My boss is always on my back. I wish he would leave me alone.

Reflection: You feel

8. You don't know what you are talking about. You can't help me.
Reflection: You feel
