January 2015

Communication Skills Lab 3: Focusing Skills

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Time: 6 hours

Module Purpose: Participants will debrief their field shadowing experiences by sharing their direct, personal use or second party observation of exploring skills. Participants will learn what focusing skills are, and how focusing skills in combination with exploring skills are used to steer the interview from an exploration of the general to gathering of specifics. There will be further discussion about the linkages between focusing skills and motivational interviewing, including building ambivalence to facilitate change. This module will begin to differentiate techniques appropriate for children vs. adults, and will provide an intro to child interviewing as the last module. Participants will continue to practice observation, note taking and providing feedback to peers.

Demonstrated Skills:

1. Participants will demonstrate beginning use of:
   - Summarization
   - Different types of questions
     - Open
     - Closed
     - Indirect
     - Solution-focused
   - Clarification
   - Positive Reinforcement
   - Developing Discrepancy
2. Participants will learn some of the differences between adult and child interviews. (i.e., primarily the processing and communication of information).

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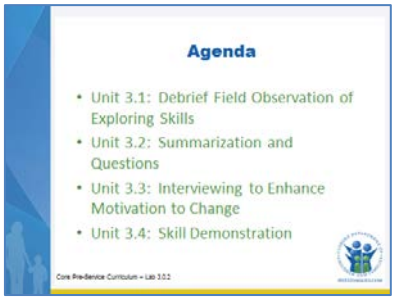

Agenda:

1. Debrief field observations of exploring skills.
2. Describe, identify and demonstrate summarization and different types of focusing questions.
3. Describe the purpose of clarification, positive reinforcement and developing discrepancy in terms of motivational interviewing.
3. Practice observation, note taking and providing feedback.
4. Identify different characteristics of interview techniques with adults vs. children.

Review the agenda with the participants.

Materials:

- Trainer's Guide (TG)
- Participant's Guide (PG) (Participants should bring their own.)
- PowerPoint slide deck
- Markers
- Flip chart paper
- Blank index cards, no lines on either side

Activities:

Unit 3.2

Lab Activity 1: Observation of Summarization - 16
Lab Activity 2: Observation of Interview with Jennae - 33

Unit 3.3

Lab Activity 3: Observation of Interview with Laura - 44

Unit 3.4

Lab Activity 4: Exploring and Focusing Skills Practice - 48
Lab Activity 5: Exploring and Focusing Skills Practice, Using the Full Spectrum - 50

Unit 3.1: Debrief Field Observations

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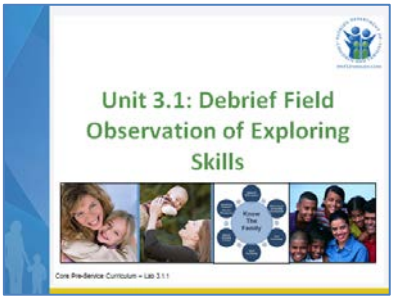

Time:

Unit Overview: The purpose of this unit is to give participants an opportunity to share their field shadowing experiences – particularly their use and observations of exploring skills. This will provide both a review of the exploring skills and an opportunity to further clarify any questions that participants have.

The trainer will want to identify any challenges with field shadowing that need to be conveyed to the department or provider agencies; or the need for further skill development for under-performing participants. Also, interviewing techniques and skills observed during shadowing that are not consistent with the training material will need to be discussed ~~steered~~ by the trainer in a way that avoids personal incrimination of "experienced" staff by considering why experienced staff may be practicing differently (e.g., may not have had the benefit of in-depth interviewing skills training, "are in a hurry and are pressed for time" or "think they already have the family figured out", etc.). The trainer will invite participants to describe other interviewing skills/techniques observed and the trainer should put a "name" to what was observed. It is recommended that the trainer record the other techniques described as many of them are likely to be ones that will be covered in the focusing skills lab.

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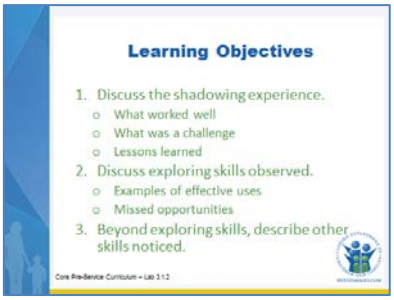

Review the Learning Objectives with the participants.

Learning Objectives:

1. Discuss the shadowing experience.
   - What worked well
   - What was a challenge
   - Lessons learned
2. Discuss exploring skills observed.
   - Examples of effective uses
   - Missed opportunities
3. Beyond exploring skills, describe other skills noticed.

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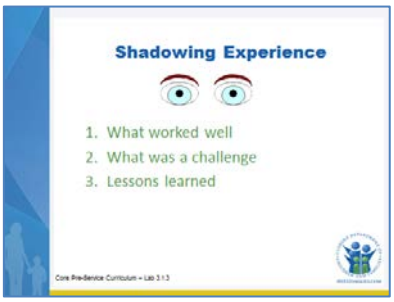

First we are going to discuss your experiences with "shadowing." Remember that when we give feedback, we always begin the positives.

Who is willing to share a success with establishing a working agreement with the investigator/case manager/other child welfare professional?

It would be good to hear at least two different success stories. Trainer should allow participant to tell the story of their working agreement. Be sure to

ask/clarify the following:

- *Were they able to share purpose of their observations?*
- *Did they get introduced to person being interviewed?*
- *Did they get some information prior to interview as to what the interview was for?*
- *How did they record their observations?*
- *What did they see as the benefit of the working agreement?*

Trainer should provide a precise summarization of the success story at the end to model summarization.

For those of you who feel that the working agreement was not attempted or effective, what was the issue?

It would be helpful for the trainer to also make the offer to talk to anyone privately who does not want to share concerns with whole class.

Be sure to ask "what" caused the working agreement to not be effective, not "who." It is important to tease out whether the working agreement needs strengthening next time and it is reasonable for the participant to do so; or whether there is a local issue that the trainer needs to address (e.g. worker did not want to be observed, asked participant to wait in car). Ask the participant what might happen differently next time to get a different outcome. Use reflection and reframing skills to the extent possible; use summarization at end.

Any other lessons learned about the working agreement that anyone would like to share?

Display Slide 3.1.4 ***(Lab PG: 3)***

Let's hear some examples of specific exploring skills observed. We are going to go right down the list. When you offer your example, provide a brief summary of what was happening at that point in

the interview, the skill demonstrated, and the positive impact of the skill used.

Go from interview openings to exception finding questions, one skill at a time. If an example is offered that doesn't match the skill type, state that it is a good example of "X." If negative examples begin to surface, remind participants that we begin with positives and to "hold that observation." Provide positive reinforcement for specific details and examples observed.

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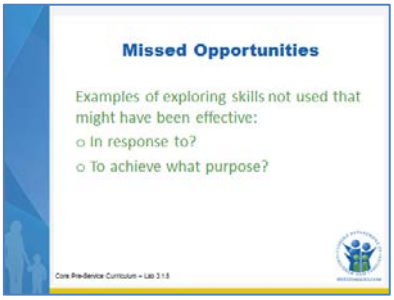

What were some missed opportunities to use exploring skills that you observed?

Be sure to prompt participants to provide the context of the interview, what exploring skill could have been used, and what might it have achieved? Provide positive reinforcement for specific details observed. Use summarization at end to recap any themes heard.

To wrap-up the debrief of your shadowing experience, what were some other skills/techniques that you observed?

It is recommended that you identify the specific skills you hear being described, and record on newsprint. As the material on focusing skills is presented, these recorded examples will help participants relate the material to a concrete example that was shared.

In particular, identify any techniques mentioned that are focusing skills or aspects of child interviewing that will be addressed in the next two labs.

Unit 3.2: Summarization and Questions

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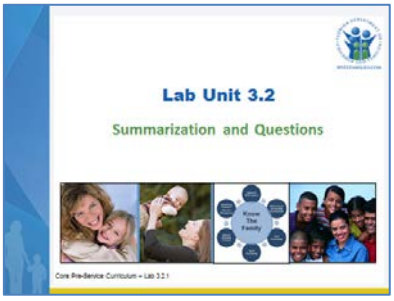

Time:

Unit Overview: This unit moves from exploring skills to focusing skills, which allow the child welfare professional to build on the foundation of general information gathered, zeroing in on the specific details of family conditions and dynamics. The effective use of focusing skills, in combination with exploring skills, will result in gathering necessary descriptive details as well as family perspectives towards the safety of their children and necessity for change. Focusing skills are essential in order for the child welfare professional to have the details needed for safety determinations and to create sufficient safety plans, when needed, that meet the standard of "least intrusive."

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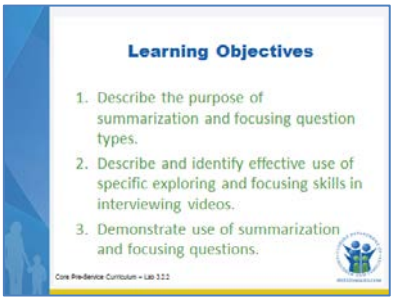

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the purpose of summarization and focusing question types.
2. Describe and identify effective use of specific exploring and focusing skills in interviewing videos.
3. Demonstrate use of summarization and focusing questions.

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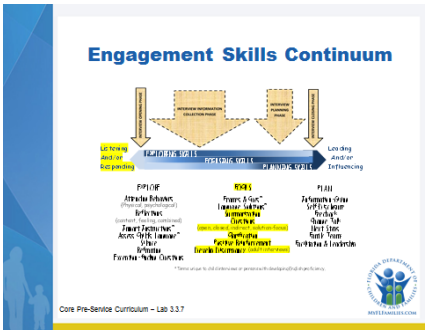

Focusing skills are used by the child welfare professional to build on the foundation of general information gathered, zeroing in on the specific details of family conditions and dynamics that might be out-of-control and need to be managed for a child to be safe.

Focusing skills are necessary in order to complete the information collection phase of the interview. The effective use of focusing skills, in combination with exploring skills, will result in gathering necessary descriptive details as well as family perspectives towards the safety of their children, how they are acting to protect, and their view of the necessity for change.

With children, we want to learn whether they feel safe, under what circumstances, and when they feel in danger. With children, you will need to adjust your focusing approach to their developmental stage. Children, as you learned in Module 3, are not just "little adults." Their ability to engage in any conversation will be shaped by their verbal skills and their level of cognition. For example, children under the age of six generally do not organize events like older children or adults.

In discussing past events, pre-school children often leave out details about settings, descriptions, chronology, motivations or emotions that require the child professional to ask questions that are very literal, avoiding the use of abstractions. This can make sequencing events challenging for young children because they often use words (e.g., for time, distance, kinship, etc.) long before they fully understand their meaning. We'll cover child interviewing

more in-depth later but for now just remember that even very young children can tell us what they know if we ask questions in the manner and form consistent with their stage of verbal development and processing abilities.

Focusing skills are also essential in order for the child welfare professional to have the details needed for safety determinations and sufficient safety plans, when needed, that meet the test of "lease intrusive."

With some rapport and trust established in the first part of the interview with adults or with children, focusing skills allow you to move into gathering details that can make or break accurate information gathering.

Display Slide 3.2.4 ***(Lab PG: 5)***

This is the part of the interview, or future interviews, where you are able to clarify your understanding of information that you are confused, unsure, unclear or simply lost about. You want to know that your understanding, and that of the person sharing the information, is congruent. You want to walk away from the interview knowing that you have perceived or attached the same meaning to what you heard as what the person who said it intended.

Again, this "qualification" is extremely important as related to young children who understand and process information very differently from older children and adults. By way of example, a six-year-old may respond "Yes," to the question, "Do your parents

drink alcohol?" simply because the child has no idea of what alcohol is, but they are sure their parents "drink." Unless the investigator or case manager qualifies with the child what his or her understanding of alcohol is miscommunication can easily occur. While the importance of qualifying stands out in regard to young children, the process itself is no less important with adults.

The further beauty of focusing skills, seeking to affirm with the child or parent that you have heard them correctly, is that you are further reinforcing that they are the expert, that you really don't know the answer and are looking to them to be the expert.

With children, who believe that all adults are the expert, you will literally have to prove to them and reinforce constantly that you don't know the answers to your questions. Otherwise, they will tell you what they think you want to hear. We will be spending more time later on this.

At this point, families may truly be in denial about the existence or pervasiveness of a problem; or they may not be telling the truth for other reasons. Navigating through these challenging dynamics can be difficult even for experienced staff. In the midst of establishing a trusting relationship with a parent you will have to respectfully model a "trust but verify" approach to the information gathered from the family, especially when it is inconsistent with your personal observations or with information received from other parties including both professional or non-professional collateral contacts (e.g., neighbors, extended family, etc.,).

For example, the mother says that the child has no problems whatsoever in school. Let's say the child is six-years-old.

Who might you go to validate that the child "has no problems in school?"

Endorse:

"the teacher!"

And what kinds of information could you learn from the teacher?

Endorse and elicit:

- Child is on track educationally
- Child has appropriate social skills
- Child completes homework
- Child completes work in class
- Child comes to school fed and appropriately dressed
- Child is clean
- Child stays awake in class
- Parent interacts with teacher, comes to parent child conferences, etc.

So, let's say you learn from the teacher that the child is really struggling to learn and falls asleep around lunch time every day.

You will return to the parent or other caregiver, and use focusing skills to reconcile this information discrepancy.

You could go to the parent and say, "Hey you lied to me about how your child is doing in school." How well do you think that would work?

Obviously, posing the question in that manner would put the parent on the defensive. Using your focusing skills, you would say, "I'm confused. You believe your child is doing well in school, yet when I met with the school, I learned that your child is having a hard-time learning and falls asleep at noon. Can you help me understand what is happening?"

When you have heard information that is contradictory or doesn't make sense, it is imperative to put it together as best you can, briefly, and ask the parent to help you understand. You do not want to walk away from an interview with any "missed opportunities" to clear up contradictory or confusing information.

As a child welfare professional, focusing skills will give you the tact and diplomacy you must have to reconcile facts and information without alienating the very individuals most likely to have accurate and up-to-date information on the family – parents, household and extended family members.

Clearing up confusion and reconciling details is a prerequisite to proceeding on to the next phase of the interview process - the planning phase - because any decision is only as good as the information it is based upon. Before we move on to the planning phase let's discuss the exploring skills used to make sure the information we are getting from the family is accurate and complete.

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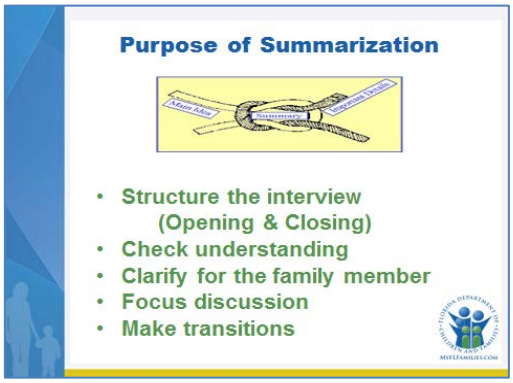


When you think of the word "summarization" what are the characteristics of a great summary?

Endorse and elicit:

- Brief
- Concise
- Captures the most important ideas
- Understandable
- Translates into the "bottom line"

Summarization is your brief, concise recap of:

- What will happen during an interview, it is part of your interview opening?

- What will happen after the interview, it is part of your closing?
- Information that has been shared during an interview, for example a child's daily routine, the circumstances that led up to and resulted in an incident of maltreatment, or a parent's approach to parenting.

Summarization can be a useful way to check your understanding of information that the parent has shared, giving them an opportunity to validate that, "Yes, that is true," or "Well, let me clarify a few things."

Summarizing helps the person being interviewed to consider their responses and contemplate their experiences, giving them an opportunity to notice what they may have overlooked or incorrectly stated.

One other use of summarization is to help the person interviewed make a transition. Sometimes a parent will literally "flood" the interviewer with information that may be disjointed; or it may be that they are anxious to be heard. A summary that validates the content and feeling that you have heard, and then poses a question to move the interview on to another topic, can be an effective way to regain control of an interview that is otherwise going off course.

When considering the different purposes of summarization, what would the following questions reflect in terms of the interviewer's intent?

"Let me explain what I am here for today. I need to talk with you, your husband, and your children to get a clear understanding of how Jeremy broke his arm last week. Since Jeremy was treated by Dr. Thomas I will also contact her to get her professional medical opinion. Finally, I may need you to take Jeremy to the Child Protection Team this afternoon but I won't know that for sure until I talk with Dr. Thomas."

Answer: Opening summary, purpose of interview.

"So to be sure I heard you correctly, let me recap what you said. You were in the kitchen doing dishes when you heard Javon cry out from the bedroom. You knew by the pitch of the scream that it wasn't an ordinary "feed me" or "pick me up" expression. You immediately ran "into the bedroom… "

Answer: Check understanding, focus discussion.

"I am confused; can you help me understand…? You told me you don't use drugs. Last week you tested positive for cocaine. You and your boyfriend went to a party and he did a few lines of coke. You had sex with him later that night and you think that caused you to test positive as well. How would having intercourse with him get a sufficient amount of cocaine in your body for you to test positive?"

Answer: Check understanding, focus discussion.

"You went to the store. Came back home and were upset because the dogs had gotten into the garbage. It took you nearly an hour to clean it all up. That must have been very frustrating. Tell me about what happened with Tomas later that afternoon."

Answer: Transition, focus discussion on more relevant information.

We are going to watch a brief video of foster care worker who uses summarization a number of times in an interview with a foster mom.

Some of things I want you to watch for in addition to what we have already discussed are

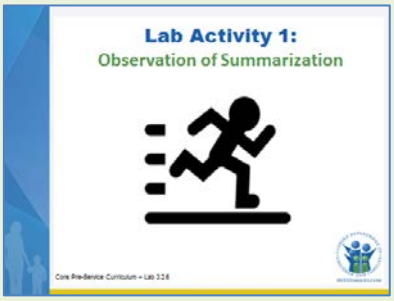
- Did the summarization come at a natural pause in the interview?
- Did the summarization communicate an understanding of

the family member's perspective and experience?

- Did the summarization encourage the family member to correct the interviewer?

Lab Activity 1: Observation of Summarization

Display Slide 3.2.6 ***(Lab PG: 7-8)***



Time:

Purpose: Watching a video produced to show summarization skills will give participants a concrete demonstration of the various uses of summarization, in concert with modeling of attending behaviors and other exploring skills they have been exposed to.

Trainer instructions:

- *Refer participants to* ***Lab PG: 7-8, Observation of Summarization****, which they will complete individually.*
- *Review the observation form to ensure that participants know what they are looking for.*
- *Debrief each item as a group.*

Lab PG: 7-8, Observation Tool

1. How many summarizations did the listener make? (Jot down a few key words of each so you can identify when the worker used summarization.)

2. Did summarization primarily reflect content, feelings or both?

3. For what purposes did the listener use summarization?

    a. Check understanding

b. Clarify for family member

c. Focus discussion

d. Make transition

e. Open the interview

f. Close the interview

4. Check the items that describe the listener's use of summarization:
   a. Brief and concise

   b. Included all important elements of content and feeling

   c. Accepting tone

   d. Checked accuracy

5. Check the items that describe the listener's ineffective use of summarization
   a. Interrupted family member

   b. Inaccurate

   c. Left out important elements of content or feeling

   d. Too long

Activity STOP

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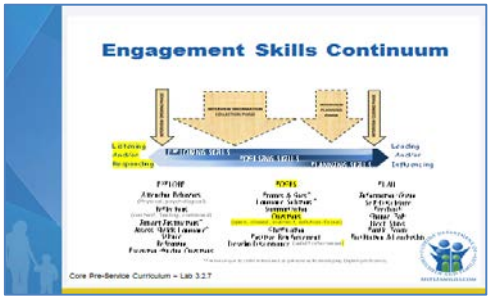


You have watched a number of interviews at this point, both in the labs and in the field. You have observed many types of questions.

How would you describe the difference between effective and ineffective questions? Let's talk about "effective" first.

Elicit and endorse:

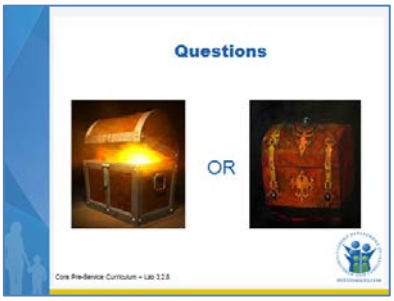
- Keep the interview going
- Building rapport
- Learning a lot of information
- Person does not appear to feel judged by worker
- Person appears empowered

What happens when the questions are ineffective?

Elicit and endorse:

- Person being interviewed stays angry, defensive, hostile
- Little or no information is gathered
- No rapport building

Display Slide 3.2.8 ***(Lab PG: 9)***



We have discussed why a family member may be defensive or angry when we show up. They may fear that our involvement will make their situation more dangerous, as in situations involving perpetrator violence. Or, the family may not yet truly understand that their situation or behavior is dangerous for their child; they are in a state of denial.

Even with the best use of our skills, it might not be possible to immediately calm down or defuse an angry person. That said, most of the time, our demeanor and effective use of questions matters and has tremendous potential to engage a person in a meaningful conversation about their child and their family situation. Without effective use of our skills, those family secrets remain tightly held.

In the interest of identifying an unsafe child or keeping an unsafe child protected, we must use the most effective skills possible to learn what we need to know, so that we can do what we need to do. The selection of the type of question to use is purposeful and specific to the phase of the interview or topic being discussed.

Questions are used to support the flow of a conversation and continued communication no matter how increasingly painful the topic might be. Questions move the conversation from the general to the specific and from the more benign, safe topics to more difficult and sensitive issues.

Some questions result in yes or no answers, other questions invite the person interviewed to provide more detailed information and

associated feelings.

When we ask a person to directly share their feelings about a situation, what do you think the benefit might be?

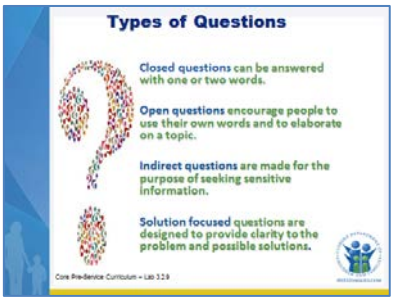
Endorse and elicit:

- Conveys that we care about them and about their situation.
- Can help to relieve stress of the interview.
- Can help interviewer gauge when or when not, to further probe a topic.

Some questions help a person think about the times that the problem occurs, and when it does not occur. Such details are crucial information for safety planning when a child is in danger. If we know when the problem is occurring, we might be able to create safety plans for those specific times and circumstances.

Specific types of questions help the child welfare professional assess a person's perceptions of family problems and readiness for change. They are used to elicit the family's own potential solutions.

Display Slide 3.2.9 ***(Lab PG: 9)***



There are four main categories of questions you will be using.

Closed questions can be answered with a single word or short phrase.

- How old are you?
- Where do you live?
- Where do you go to school?

- Is answered with a “yes” or “no” (Do you like your school? Do you feel better?)

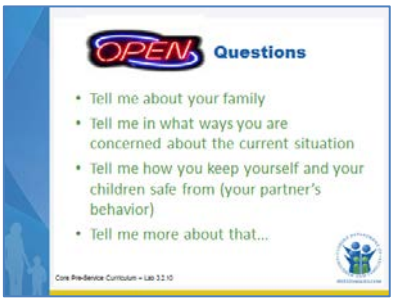
Closed questions should be used for “easy” topics such as names, birthdates, who lives in the household.

Closed questions might be useful to ask during the opening phase of an interview, but should never be used when an individual is conveying with body language or words that they are anxious to discuss a certain topic.

For example, if person says “You won’t believe what happened to me on the way here!” you would not want to respond by saying, “Let me get your birthdate and social security number first.”

Closed questions should comprise the smallest percentage of the different questions used in an interview.

Display Slide 3.2.10 ***(Lab PG: 9)***



Open questions are ones that encourage the person interviewed to use their own words, and to further elaborate on a topic. An open question will keep the interview going in a positive, productive manner.

An open question such as “Tell me about your family,” can be an effective way to begin an interview after the purpose has been provided, and emotions acknowledged.

Once the person understands you are there to learn more than just

about a specific maltreatment incident, a good opening question to learn about challenging, problematic dynamic in the family might be, “Tell me about the times when your family is having its best day, what does that look like?” Generally, when a family member starts describing the “good days” they will often naturally segue into discussion about the “bad days.”

When the conversation moves to a discussion of difficult family dynamics or conditions, asking “Why did you/he/she do that?” is about the quickest conversation stopper there is as it immediately tends to put people on the defensive. “How did that come about”? is a more neutral, non-judgmental way of learning “who did what to whom?”

“Then what happened,” “Tell me more,” and “How did that make you feel?” are further ways to focus on the details of family dynamics that may be resulting in danger for a child.

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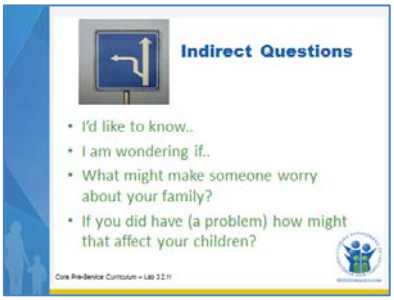


Trainer Note: All of the following material is in the participant guide. It is suggested that after you provide a recap of each type of question, allow participants to read the examples provided in resource guide, and then ask them to rewrite the statements provided in the guide. Then immediately debrief with the large group. These opportunities to practice each question type as it is introduced will improve the transfer of learning.

An indirect question or statement is used for the purpose of asking about sensitive information. It opens the door to a topic that might otherwise remain a tightly held family or personal secret. It is a good ice breaker, often leading into some discussion

of what really is occurring in the family. This deeper discussion is more likely to happen when the worker is able to use further focusing questions in conjunction with other skills that display a healthy amount of empathy and neutrality.

Rather than saying, “tell me,” a less direct approach is to state, “I’d like to know,” “I am wondering if,” or “I’d like you to tell me.” These are softer approaches to focus on a difficult topic.

Another type of indirect question is to ask how other persons might feel or respond to the problem or behavior. It is often useful during the opening phase of an investigative interview when a person is angry and focused on “Who called the hotline about me?” to ask, “What might be happening that would make someone be concerned about your family?”

During case management services when co-constructing case plan outcomes or evaluating progress, it can be useful to ask, “How do you think your children will react when you make this change?” This question will often help a parent see the benefit of change for their children before they are able to see the benefit of the change for themselves.

When a person being interviewed is denying that they have a problem with drinking, or abusive behaviors towards a partner, an indirect question that can be asked is, “If you did have a drinking problem, how might that affect your children?”

Display Slide 3.2.12 ***(Lab PG : 10)***

Solution focused questions seek clarity, coping strategies and other family solutions associated with family conditions or behaviors. Solution focused questions provide a transition between discussion of problem behaviors and conditions and planning what to do next, the last stage of an interview.

By focusing on a past success, you can learn when the family was functioning well enough not to require child welfare intervention. The goal is to help the family draw on their successes so they can again be independent.

It is empowering to the individual to realize that there was a period in his/her life when she/she was more successful than he/she feels now. If that timeframe for being successful was when they also had responsibility for the care and protection of their child, a "past success" question may also lead to important information about their ability to parent at that time.

Trainer Note: This is an important "teachable moment" to build upon. All too often, we fail to explore past parenting experiences to be able to know whether we need a "parenting skills intervention" or whether the underlying problem is a different family dynamic. Past success questions are an excellent technique to use to gather specific information about past parenting. Although participants have not yet had detailed information about the specific protective capacities, they have been introduced to the term "protective capacities" at the end of Module 3. They also know at this point that the parenting skills required at each stage of development are different.

Why do you think it matters to know if a parent was able to care for and protect their child in the past?

Endorse and elicit:

- It shows that they have skills and knowledge.
- It relates to skills associated with a specific age (e.g. care of an infant or toddler).
- It helps them recall what they were good, or not good, at doing.
- It conveys to the parent that you don't assume that they

have always been a bad parent.
- It helps you sort through whether they have a parenting skill deficit or another problem/family dynamic that is preventing them from using their parenting skills.

Trainer Note: Read the following statements to participants, one at a time. Ask participants to craft a follow-up response to each statement that reflects a past success question. You may need to demonstrate the expectation by walking them through the first statement and the rewrite provided.

READ:

1. You were also abused by your first husband.

Follow-up:

How were you able to successfully get out of a past abusive relationship?

READ:

2. You have already been through drug treatment.

Follow-up:

What worked well for you when you were in drug treatment before?

READ:

3. You were involved with the child welfare system before when your autistic child was found wandering the neighborhood.

Follow-up:

How did you succeed the last time you were involved with child welfare in terms of supervising your son differently?

With **coping strategy questions**, the interviewer attempts to help the family member shift his/her focus away from the problem elements and toward what they are doing to survive the painful or stressful circumstances. These questions are related to exploring for exceptions.

Coping strategy questions are important to use to determine how an adult or a child is dealing with a danger threat. These types of questions will help you determine whether a parent is able to act in a way that protects the child from what is occurring.

Coping strategy questions will also help you determine how children are dealing with dangerous parent behaviors or family conditions.

Trainer Note: Read the following statements to participants, one at a time. Ask participants to craft a follow-up response to each statement that reflects a coping question.

READ:

1. Your partner has verbally abused you in front of the children in the past.
   Follow-up:
   How do you know when he is more likely to be violent?
   Follow-up:
   What do you do to protect yourself and the children from his violence?

2. She has had some past over doses on pain pills and you had to call 911.
   Follow-up:
   How did you cope with her overdoses when this happened before?

3. Your dad has beaten you before.
   Follow-up:
   When you think your dad might hurt you, what do you do?

Miracle questions can be useful for the individual who is having a difficult time identifying their goals for change. It gives individuals permission to think about an unlimited range of possibilities for change, moving the focus away from their current and past problems and considering a more satisfying life.

There are many ways of asking a miracle question, depending on the degree of discouragement or hopelessness that the person being interviewed is experiencing. Sometimes only a "minor

miracle" question is necessary to ask a person what their situation would look like if things were better. For example, "If you could something you really enjoy with your family, what would it be?" Recall that our conversations, even about a specific topic, should always flow from the general to the specific, from the easy to the difficult.

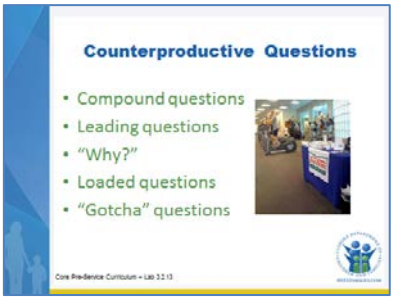
With a miracle question, and when using it with a person who is quite depressed and hopeless, it is helpful to break follow up questions into several steps that move from the "easy" to the "most difficult."

- First ask what would be different about their surroundings, where they live.
- Second, ask what would be different about their children.
- Third, if relevant, ask about their significant other or relatives.
- Last, ask what would be different about the person themselves.

An often used miracle question for a person who is really feeling low is the following:

"Suppose one night there is a miracle while you are sleeping, and the problem that brought you to child welfare is solved. Since you are sleeping, you don't know the miracle has happened or that the problem is solved. What do you suppose you will notice different the next morning that will tell you that the problem is solved?"

Display Slide 3.2.13 ***(Lab PG: 11)***



You are going to be working very hard to use focusing questions to gather the more specific details that are needed for your assessment. There are some common mistakes that are counterproductive to getting the information you need. These counterproductive questions and examples are in your participant guide.

The first counterproductive question type is asking a **compound question**. When you ask a compound question, you are likely to get only the last part of it answered. Even if there are two parts to the question, ask one at a time.

This is important for all persons you interview, and even more important for someone who does not speak English as a first language, or a child. As a good practice, never ask a compound question!

A leading question is any question that incorporates the answer you think it should be. With children, who are used to adults being the expert, a leading question will result in the answer you give. Adults who are particularly insecure will pick up on your leading questions, and will also give the answer they believe is the "right one." Some examples of leading questions are:

"It must be so much fun to spend time with your grandma, right?"

What would be a better way to ask about grandma's house?

Endorse and elicit:

- What is it like at grandmas?
- How do you feel when you are at grandmas?
- What do you do when you are at grandmas?

"Did it make you sad when that happened?"

What would be a better way to ask about how a child feels?

Endorse and elicit:

- How does it make you feel when…

Questions that begin with "WHY" are generally taken to mean a question about your inner motivation, and tend to convey judgment. The silent part of a "why" question is "you must be dumb, stupid, lazy, etc."

"Why are you late to class?"

"Why don't you tell her what you think?"

"Why don't you ask me any questions?"

Just drop "why" questions from your vocabulary!

A loaded question is equally judgmental. A loaded question asks about a sensitive area in an accusatory way.

"Have you been beating your kids again?"

"Have you been using lately?"

"Do you have any friends?"

“Are you ready to leave him at this point?”

A “gotcha” question is asking anyone a question that you already know the answer to. It is setting a family member up to lie, and confronting them with the evidence. Using “gotcha” questions is always counterproductive to building trust and while you may catch someone in a lie you very unlikely to get any more sensitive information from that individual in the future.

For example, you know the parent did not go to their drug evaluation, or you know they failed a drug test, or you know they kept a child home from school and yet you ask the question anyway.

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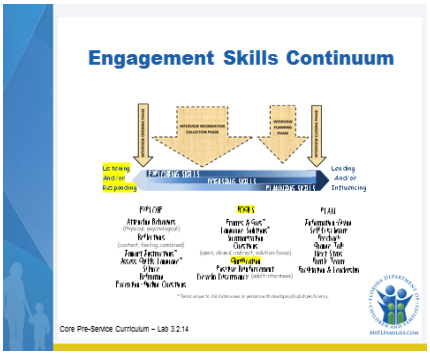

An important purpose of focusing questions is to seek “clarification.” Remember that focusing is for the purpose of gathering specific details.

We don’t know what a parent means when they say their child “is well-behaved” or “sassy” or “active.” It is important to not assume that the way you have learned to define those terms is the same way that the parent defines those terms.

It is even more important to seek the meaning of terms with children. They may have learned to repeat a word, but that does not mean that they know the meaning of the word. In addition, children we can never assume that we know how words or terms

are used in their family. Seeking clarification is straightforward and open ended, “Can you tell me what (that) looks like?”

Providing details that describe the unique characteristics of any family is the hallmark of quality family functioning assessment.

Trainer note: The purpose of the following is to have a brief discussion about the importance of gathering specific details and information about child functioning, parenting and approach to discipline. They will encounter in current FFA’s statements that only describe what is not present.

What would the following statement tell you about how children are disciplined, “The children did not have any bruises or marks.”?

Endorse and elicit:

- They did not have any physical or corporal punishment recently
- Tells us what is not there

This would be an appropriate statement to provide in a family functioning assessment **IF** the allegation stated that the children were covered in bruises. Otherwise, it provides no information about the parents’ approach to discipline.

What would be descriptive about parenting methods for discipline?

Allow participants to offer a variety of specific approaches to discipline and behavior management. Help them differentiate care of children (parenting) from approaches to behavior management.

Endorse and elicit:

- Parent uses time out when the child does certain behaviors
- Amount of time, location for time-out is provided
- Other specific consequences for inappropriate behavior
- How parent reinforces appropriate behavior
- Is approach working/not working to shape behavior?

What would the following tell you, "The children are well-cared for"?

- *Nothing!*

What descriptive details would tell us about the parenting approach of a parent?

Allow discussion; basically this is non-descriptive and subjective. Lead discussion as to what we want to know about parenting practices, differentiated from child functioning. Ask participants to "tell me about that" when you need more specificity as to what we want to know about parenting.

Endorse and elicit:

- Specific knowledge and skills related to child's developmental stage.
- Parent expectations for child.
- Reasons for being a parent.
- Parent levels of satisfaction.
- Cultural practices.
- Protectiveness (examples of).

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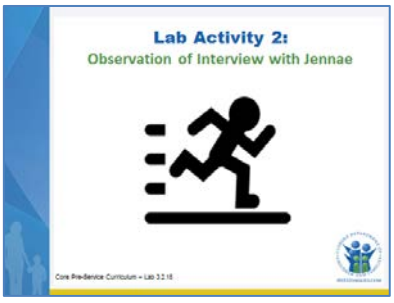

Lab Activity 2: Observation of Focusing Skills

Time:

Purpose: Participants will be introduced to the Chavez case, which demonstrates interviewing skills with a nine-year old child. There is a second interview with the child's mother which they will observe later in this module after "developing discrepancy" has been presented. These interviews both provide many examples of different focusing skills. The interview with a child, Jennae, also provides a later concrete experience to relate back to when child interviewing in introduced.

Trainer Instructions:

1. *Have participants read the hotline intake and the intake summary in **Lab PG: 16-18**.*
2. *Ask the participants to observe the interview and record their observations on the worksheet provide on **Lab PG: 16-18**. Briefly review the observation worksheet to ensure that participants understand that they will record the number of times that different question types are used, as well as a few specific examples of open, indirect and solution questions.*
3. *Debrief as a group, using trainer version to guide discussion below.*

Trainer Version of *Lab PG: 16-18*

1. **Record some examples of the use of open, closed or indirect question, solution-focused, a reflection or a summarization.**
   a. Open question
   b. Closed question
   c. Indirect question
   d. Solution focused
   e. Reflection
   f. Summarization
   g. Clarification

2. **Record any examples of when the interviewer uses questions ineffectively.**
   a. Use a closed question when an open question would be more effective
   b. Compound question
   c. Loaded question
   d. Statement question
   e. "Why" questions

f. "Gotcha" questions

3. **Write two or three other questions that you might have asked.**

Activity STOP

The next unit continues the discussion of focusing skills, introducing the more advanced interviewing skills that are associated with "motivational interviewing."

Unit 3.3: Interviewing to Enhance Motivation to Change

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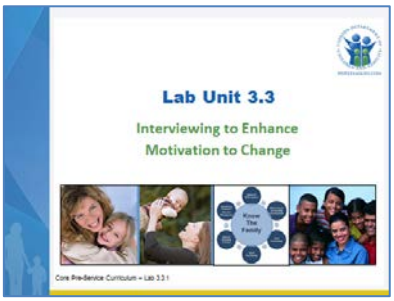

Time:

Unit Overview: In this unit, participants are introduced to stages of change and motivational interviewing, both at a high level. All of the skills covered thus far are foundational to motivational interviewing--the ability to build a trusting relationship, conveying empathy, and seeking solutions. The next focusing skills on the engagement skills continuum, positive reinforcement and developing discrepancy require a more direct linkage to the goals of motivational interviewing. Stages of change and motivational interviewing will be covered in greater depth in the specialty tracks.

Display Slide 3.3.2

Learning Objectives:

1. Describe the stages of change.
2. Describe the purpose of motivational interviewing.
3. Define the use of positive reinforcement and developing discrepancy.
4. Identify the use of positive reinforcement and developing discrepancy.

Display Slide 3.3.3 ***(Lab PG: 19-20)***

Through-out your training thus far, in the classroom modules and in the communication labs, there have been many references to your job as "change agents," child welfare professionals whose fundamental mission is to help families achieve changes that will prevent their child from ever being hurt the first time, or when an unsafe child is identified, from being hurt again.

The process that all persons go through when experiencing change has been conceptualized as a normal, predictable sequence of different stages. The change process tends to be cyclical, with intermittent pauses or even times of relapse or sliding backwards.

Trainer Note: Briefly review the stages of change as outlined in the participant guide. At this point in pre-service, only a cursory, high level perspective of the stages of change is expected.

Pre-Contemplation: Not Ready To Change!
The parent has no perception of having a problem or a need to change. The recommended motivational task is to increase the parent's perception of the risks and problems with their current behavior and to raise the parent's awareness about the behavior.

Contemplation: Thinking About It!
The parent begins to recognize that their behavior may be a problem and is ambivalent about making change. The motivational task for the CPI is to foster and evoke reasons to change and the risks of not changing and to help parents see that change is possible and achievable.

Preparation: Preparing for Action!
The parent makes a conscious decision to change and is able to identiy motivation to change. The motivational task is to help the parent identify the best actions to take for change and to support the motivations for change.

Action: Taking Action!
The parent takes steps to change. The motivational task is to help the parent implement strategy and take positive action steps.

Maintenance: Maintaining A Good Thing for Life!
The parent actively works on sustaining change strategies and maintaining long-term change. The motivational task is to help the parent to identify triggers and use strategies to prevent relapse.

Relapse: Sliding Backwards (Stage of Change Specific to Substance Use: SAMSHA and NCSAW)
The parent slips (lapses) from a change strategy or returns to previous problem behavior patterns (relapse). The motivational task is to help the parent re-engage in the contemplation, preparation and action stages.

Display Slide 3.3.4 ***(Lab PG: 21)***

Motivational interviewing is a way of interacting with individuals that is designed to reduce their natural resistance to change, and to elicit their reasons and motivation to change.

Motivational interviewing is for the purpose of assisting persons with developing a deeper understanding of the impact of their

behavior on other family members, and developing discrepancy between **their behavior** and **their goals, values or beliefs**.

Motivational interviewing is not about forcing your goals and beliefs on another person; it is a way to help a person develop their own reasons for wanting to change.

All of the engagement and trust building that we have discussed thus far is actually the foundation for motivational interviewing. If you take further courses in motivational interviewing, you will learn more about the use of open-ended questions, reflective listening and summarization. All of these skills are key to soliciting information in a neutral way, encouraging the family member to do most of the talking, and helping you to avoid premature judgments.

For most parents, when they begin to see the contradiction in their lives as to what they really want for their children vs. the effects of their family conditions or behaviors, they move from denial to contemplation. The interview that a child welfare professional conducts, using motivational skills, can help that parent make that shift.

In thinking about stages of change, what do you think happens when our interview comes across as judgmental, shaming or blaming?

Endorse and elicit:

- Parent digs in their heels
- Parent gets angry and shuts down
- Parent gets hostile
- Promotes resistance

When you feel that a parent is behaving in a manner that is really "uncooperative," it is an indicator to you that you need to work harder at that rapport and trust building. It may also be an indicator that the parent needs some time to consider the

conversation that you have had with them before committing to the need for change.

Motivational interviewing is also about encouraging a person every step of the way, through each phase of change, even when relapse occurs.

As you learn more about motivational interviewing in your specialty track, you will learn about associated interviewing skills given a person's stage of change.

Why do you think it is better for a person to be self-motivated to change, instead of the child welfare system just telling a family what to do?

Endorse and elicit (be sure to elicit each point):

- Person is more likely to be invested in making and sustaining change.
- Person might "pretend" to make change to get child welfare out of their lives.
- Person's level of commitment to succeed will be greater if they choose to change.
- Person is more likely to choose a successful or effectual manner in which they will tackle change.

Building on all of the communication skills we have learned thus far, there are two communication strategies that I want to introduce you to. Many of you may already know this first one.

Display Slide 3.3.5 ***(Lab PG: 21)***

I'd like you to meet "positive reinforcement."

Who already is familiar with this term? Do I have some participants with behavioral training? What does positive reinforcement mean?

Endorse and elicit:

- Rewarding the right behaviors
- Praise
- Providing stickers (reframe as providing a reward that child wants to earn)
- Getting an allowance for chores
- Encouraging a child to repeat the specific behavior you want, etc.

We often learn about this term in terms of an effective way to teach a child new skills. Positive reinforcement can be praise, it does not have to be a concrete reward.

With our parents, the behaviors we want to affirm and reinforce as professionals are any quality or behavior that boosts their self-efficacy. When we offer a positive feedback about something the parent did, is doing, or expresses, it helps a person develop and use those inner resources they need to take action and change behavior.

When we are asking about past experiences, we can identify behaviors or qualities that demonstrate a personal strength or a

solution. Examples of statements that are affirming (Miller and Rollnick, 1991) of self-efficacy include:

- I think it's great that you want to do something about this problem.
- This must be very difficult for you.
- You're certainly a resourceful person to have been able to live with the problem this long and not fall apart.
- That's a good suggestion.
- It must be difficult for you to accept a day-to-day life so full for stress. If I were in your position, I would also find that difficult.

As will any of the skills we are learning, offering positive reinforcement must be done with sincerity and genuineness. We also want to give positive feedback related to qualities that we want to reinforce.

There are also clearly times when you do **not** want to convey any positive feedback. For example, "I can see why you whooped your child, I would have done that too," or "yes, I can see why you get so mad when you wife does that…" In such cases, you want to find the exceptions to the behavior, and your positive reinforcement needs to relate to what the parent or spouse did to avoid the negative behavior.

People always appreciate a sincere compliment. Here are a few tips:

- Be as specific as you can about what the person did, or is thinking.
- Tie the compliment to the results that were, or might be, achieved.

By focusing on specifics, you reinforce the outcome and what the person did to achieve that outcome.

Display Slide 3.3.6 ***(Lab PG: 21)***

The second motivational interviewing term that I want to introduce you to is "developing discrepancy." When you are able to help a person begin to think about, and discuss, contradictions between what they think, and what they do, you are helping them prepare for change. In motivational interviewing, this is referred to as "change talk."

Individuals are often aware of the dangers of their behaviors but continue to engage in those behaviors anyway. They may want to stop, but at the same time they do not want to. They enter into agreements to change, claiming their problems are not really that serious.

These feelings can be characterized as "ambivalence" and they are natural, regardless of how ready the person is to change. It is important to understand and accept ambivalence because ambivalence is often the central problem, and lack of motivation can be a result of ambivalence. When you see ambivalence as denial or resistance, friction between you and the person is likely to occur.

At this point, during the stage of the interview where we are still gathering information in preparation for action, your goal is to help a person articulate their ambivalence about change.

Some different ways to explore ambivalence are the following:

"Tell me in what ways you are concerned about your

situation?"

"What do you see as the benefits of not changing this situation?"

"What might be some benefits of changing this situation?"

Even asking the question as to what might be the benefits of NOT changing the situation gives the person an opportunity to express why the basis for not changing.

Your task at this point is to continue to be an accurate, non-judgmental listener. You need to simply reflect back what you have heard, for example, *"So on the one hand you drink at the end of the day as your job is really stressful and it is a way to relax, yet it sometimes also let's down your guard and you get more impatient with your child."*

A powerful use of these questions can be to use them in a summarization at the end of an interview. You can summarize the information that has been shared by the family member, and close the interview by stating, *"I don't want you to answer me now, I want you to give this some thought. I want you think about what might be the benefit of (changing behavior or condition), especially for your (child)."*

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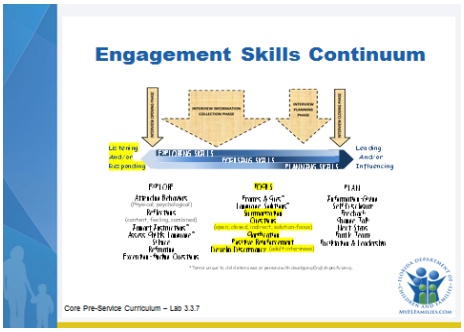

We have now covered all of the active listening skills associated with information collection from adults. With these skills, you have

gathered, clarified and now understand the family dynamics and situation enough to proceed to the planning and action steps.

Are there any further questions about focusing skills before we proceed with the next activity?

Trainer Note: The participants are about to observe all of the focusing skills in a video with Laura, the mother of Jennae who was interviewed in last activity. It is important for participants to feel reasonably confident about their understanding of each skill before they watch this video. The activities after the video will be to practice focusing skills with each other.

Display Slide 3.3.8 ***(Lab PG: 22-24)***

Lab Activity 3: Observation of Interview with Laura

Time:

Purpose: Participants were introduced to the Chavez case in the last activity which demonstrated interviewing skills with a child, Jennae. This exercise is an observation of the interview with the child's mother. With this interview, they will practice observation of all of the focusing skills they have learned, including the extent to which the interviewer provided any positive reinforcement and "developed discrepancy."

Trainer Instructions:

1. *Ask them to observe the interview, and record their observations on* ***Lab PG: 22-24*** *worksheet. Briefly review the observation worksheet to ensure that participants understand that they will record the number of times that different question types are used, as well as a few specific examples of questions, positive reinforcement and developing discrepancy.*
2. *Debrief as a group, using trainer version to guide discussion below.*

Trainer Version

1. Record some examples of the use of an open, closed or indirect question, solution-focused, a reflection or a summarization.

   a. Open question
   b. Closed question
   c. Indirect question
   d. Solution focused
   e. Reflection
   f. Summarization
   g. Clarification
   h. Positive Reinforcement
   i. Develop discrepancy

2. Record any examples of when the interviewer uses questions ineffectively.
   a. Use a closed question when an open question would be more effective
   b. Compound question
   c. Loaded question
   d. Statement question
   e. "Why" questions
   f. "Gotcha" questions

3. Did the interview have a conversational flow?

4. Write two or three other questions that you might have asked:

Activity STOP

We will spend the rest of the time in this module with practice of exploring and focusing skills, and further practice of observation. In addition, we will practice giving and receiving feedback.

Unit 3.4: Skill Demonstration

Display Slide 3.4.1

Time:

Unit Overview: This unit provides opportunities for participants to practice the exploring and focusing skills they have learned thus far. They will also practice observing, giving and receiving feedback. The practice activities are broken into two parts in order to best sequence their skill practice and acquisition. Using case scenarios provided and roles assigned, the first activities will involve the use of listening and focusing skills, but not the more advanced skills of reframing, solution-focused questions, positive feedback and developing discrepancy. The second set of activities will involve the full set of exploring and focusing skills. In this set of activities, participants will use one of their personal topics. The purpose of this second set of activities is to practice the skills, and hopefully, experience the benefit of effective listening and solution developing skills.

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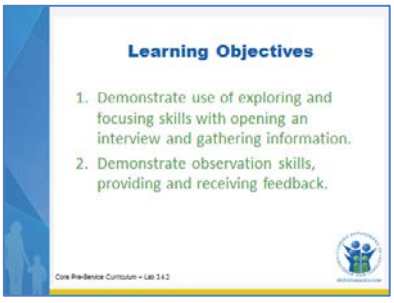


Learning Objectives:

1. Demonstrate use of exploring and focusing skills with opening an interview and gathering information.

2. Demonstrate observation skills, providing and receiving feedback.
3. **(Optional)** Use videotaping as the most effective means to help participants develop beginning proficiency with exploring and focusing skills.

You have learned that interviews generally progress from general, less sensitive topics to more detailed and difficult topics. That said, one important aspect of a good interview is that for the person being interviewed, it is experienced as a "conversation."

You will know going into an interview what you what to learn. During the interview, you will need to steer the interview in a way that ensures you learn what you need to learn, but being flexible in terms of the flow of the interview.

There will be times when the person you are interviewing says something that you know is a topic you must learn about. Based on the extent to which you feel the person has developed some trust in you, and is ready to share more details, you might choose to ask a follow-up, focusing question without waiting. "Can you tell me more about that?"

When a parent is anxious, not ready, you might choose to come back to the topic later when they seem to be more receptive to getting into details. "You mentioned a while ago that….can you tell me more?"

When a parent is having difficulty remaining calm, your psychological attending skills should result in adjustment of your questions so that there is an ebb and flow to the interview in terms of easy and difficult topics that helps the parent get through it, and remain open.

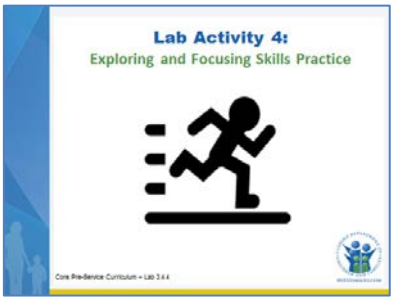
As you practice all of the listening skills in the next two units, and as you observe interviews in the field, I want you to also notice the "flow" of the interview and how a natural flow is accomplished.

Display Slide 3.4.3 ***(Lab PG: 25)***

In your participant guide, there is a "menu" of different questions that could be asked during an interview with a parent about a child, "Questions About Your Child, Parenting, Discipline." These are not a script, and some are different ways of asking the same question. They are offered to give you some ideas as to how you might to ask about different issues. This is not an all-inclusive list.

In the next exercise when we practice interviews using case scenarios provided, we will be interviewing a parent about their child, their parenting and approach to discipline.

Display slide 3.4.4 ***(Lab PG: 26-28)***



Lab Activity 4: Exploring and Focusing Skills Practice

Time: 2 hours (allowing 15 minute break at some point between role plays)

Purpose: This unit provides opportunities for participants to practice the exploring and focusing skills they have learned thus far. They will also practice observing, giving and receiving feedback. Using case scenarios provided and roles assigned, this activity will involve the use of listening and focusing skills, but not the more advanced skills of reframing, solution-focused questions,

positive feedback and developing discrepancy.

Handouts: Trainer is provided with special handouts for this lab so that only one person in each group has more information about the case and parent they are role playing. Trainer should give each group their parent role plays, asking them not to share the information with each other. It is only to be revealed during the role plays.

Trainer Instructions:

1. *Divide participants into groups of three persons. Participants in each group will take turns as listener, parent being interviewed, and observer.*
2. *Each group will practice with three different case scenarios provided; each time a different person will role play the part of the parent being interviewed, using the additional information they have as a guide.*
3. *Instruct the groups that the "Listener" should only seek information that relates to the child and related parenting, given what they have learned about child development in module 3. They should feel free to practice questions that are provided in their participant guide*
4. *Inform participants that each parent role has some assigned special challenges that they will be presenting the listener with. As this is a safe, learning environment, instruct the persons with responsibility for the role play to take their role seriously, but not to over perform it.*
5. *Instruct each group to take ten minutes of preparation time before each role play, focusing on the following:*
    - *Listeners and Observers should study the skills that they are to observe. In addition, listeners might want to jot down some of the questions they want to practice using.*
    - *Parent performing the role play should study the special handout they have been provided and think about the special dynamic they have been asked to display. There is not much information provided about the children or parenting and the person playing the role has the liberty to be creative in filling in the details.*
6. *After preparation, the role play should take 10-15 minutes. The Observer should then provide their feedback, allowing the person who was the listener to go first.*
    - *Listener—Discuss what was difficult and what helped to overcome it.*
    - *Observer-- Begin with all of the examples and skills observed that were strengths, following the flow of the observation worksheet. Offer any suggested improvements.*
7. *After all role plays and group debriefs have occurred, conduct a brief*

discussion with group to identify any common themes.

- *With what skills are we experiencing beginning proficiency?*
- *What skills will take more practice?*

Activity STOP

In the last activity for this module, you will do another role play, this time using your personal topics. The listener will listen to and respond to the talker's concern, using all of the skills learned up to this point, including finding solutions, positive reinforcement and developing discrepancy. There should not be any attempt to move to planning steps to solve the problem, only a focus on use of all the listening skills associated with information collection.

There should not be any concern as to the content of your partner's personal topic. After all, they are they expert, and you are practicing listening skills.

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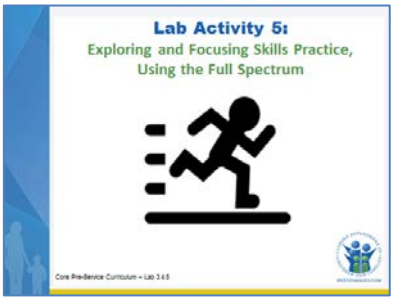


Lab Activity 5: Exploring and Focusing Skills Practice

Time: 1 hour

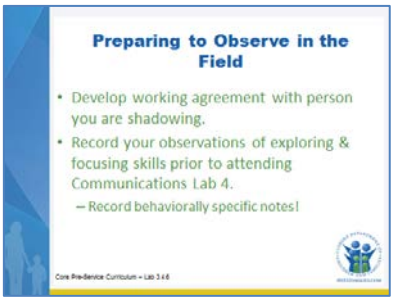
Purpose: This unit provides opportunities for participants to practice the exploring and focusing skills they have learned thus far including the more advanced skills of reframing, solution-focused questions, positive feedback and developing discrepancy. They will also practice observing, giving and receiving feedback.

Trainer Instructions:

1. *Each group of three remains the same, with participants again taking turns as listener, person being interviewed, and observer.*
2. *Each group will practice using their personal topics when it is their turn to be the "interviewee."*
3. *Each role play should take no longer than 10-15 minutes. The Observer should then provide their feedback, allowing the person who was the listener to go first.*
    - *Listener—Discuss what was difficult and what helped to overcome it.*
    - *Observer-- Begin with all of the examples and skills observed that were strengths, following the flow of the observation worksheet. Offer any suggested improvements.*
4. *After all role plays and group debriefs have occurred, conduct a brief discussion with group to identify any common themes.*
    - *With what skills are we experiencing beginning proficiency?*
    - *What skills will take more practice?*

Activity STOP

Display Slide 3.4.6 ***(Lab PG: 29-30)***



Trainer Note: Be sure to recap any lessons shared from the participants as to their first field shadowing experience, and things they want to do differently. Spend a few minutes reviewing the observation sheet in their participant guide. This is the same tool they used for the last exercise.

As you shadow child welfare professionals over the next few days, you will be recording your observations of all exploring and focusing skills. A guide for recording your observations is in the Participant Guide; there are worksheets provided for observing up to three interviews.

As with the last time you shadowed a worker be sure to spend a few minutes before you go in the field developing a working agreement.

Field Observation

Person & Title, Observed:_____

Date and Time of Interview:_____

1. **Opening of Interview**

a. Was greeting respectful? How so?
b. Was purpose explained?
c. Was personal expression provided?
d. Was purpose of meeting explained in an understandable way?
e. If necessary, were immediate concerns addressed effectively
f. Any suggested improvements?

2. **Information Gathering**

a. Was there appropriate use and mix of listening skills (attending behaviors, reflections, reflections, silence, and exception-finding)?
   Examples:
b. Was there appropriate use and mix of focusing skills (open, closed, indirect, solution-focused)?
   Examples:
3. Was there use of additional engagement skills (reframing, positive feedback, developing discrepancy).
   Examples:
4. Are there any suggested improvements?

This time you will be observing all of the skills we have learned thus far. Remember to try to "catch" detailed examples of effective skills observed, and some examples of missed opportunities. The goal is not to capture a detailed analysis of all skills observed, just highlights. Bring your written observations to Lab 4 as we will begin with a debriefing. In Lab 4, which will take two full days, we will turn our attention to child interviews. All that you have learned thus far is relevant to child interviews; we just need to learn how to adapt our interview for a person with underdeveloped language skills.

Trainer Note: Review the "Working Agreement" information as well as the "Field Shadowing Observations" form that is in their participant guide (shown below). Ask for and discuss any questions or concerns. Remind participants that the first part of Communications Lab 3 will be spent reviewing and discussing and their field observations.