

Useful Questions for Mentors

Top Tips

- Ask open questions - avoid blind alleys or steering.
- Consider using How...? What...? Tell me...?
- Be careful using 'Why?' (especially in reference to the past), as this can prompt justification and defensiveness.
- Ask one question at a time - and give time for an answer.
- Allow for silence if the other person prefers this time for processing and thinking.
- Listen to the responses - really listen.
- Don't disguise your advice as questions!

Useful Questions

Questions of understanding:

- What are you trying to achieve?
- What is the difference between how you see things now and how you would like them to be?
- How will things change if you are successful?
- Who might be willing to help you? Who are you allies?
- What obstacles do you anticipate?

Questions to get below the surface:

- Can you explain?
- What exactly?
- How do you know?
- Can you give an example?
- What happened...? and? Because? Everyone? Always? Who are 'they'?
- How do you feel about that?
- What assumptions are you making?
- What do you think will happen and why?
- What are the consequences of doing that? What was the high point/low point for you?
- What have you learned from all this?
- What have you tried? Why did/didn't it work?
- Who else have you involved in this issue?
- Who can you turn to for advice and support?
- What if...? How would they react...?
- How do you feel about...?
- What do you think about...?
- What are you going to do next?
- What are you going to do for yourself before the next meeting?
- How can we help you to make progress?
- What gives you hope that this problem can be 'solved'?
- What could make this situation more tolerable for you in the meantime?
- Thinking of a time when you solved a similar problem, what was different?