

Action Responses



Definitions and intended purposes

Probe

- **Definition:** Open-ended or closed question to elicit new information



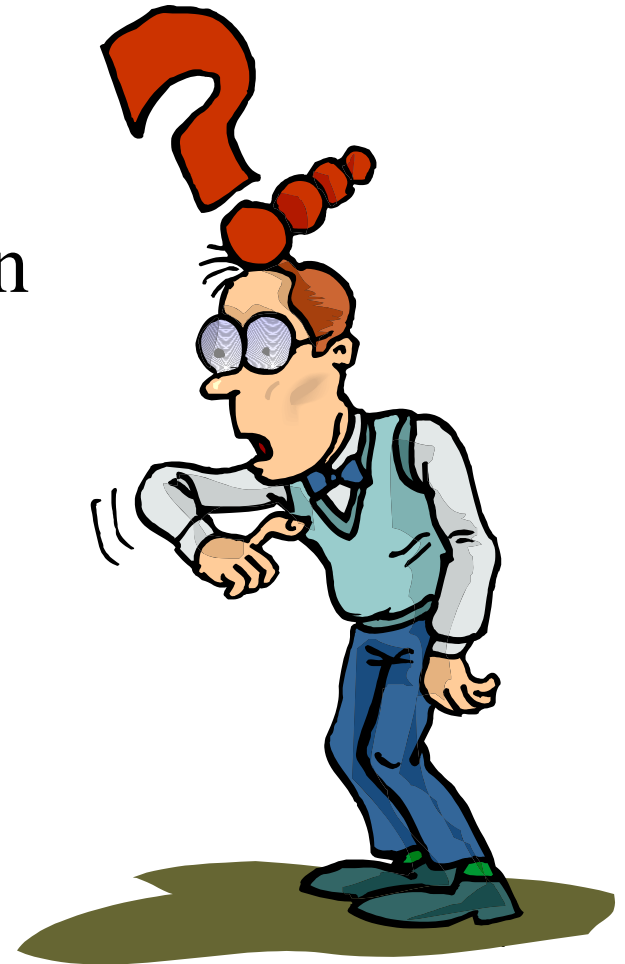
Open-ended Probe Purposes

- To begin an interview
- To encourage client elaboration or to obtain information
- To elicit specific examples of client's behaviors, feelings, or thoughts
- To motivate client to communicate
- To open up new areas for discussion.
- To remain focused on relevant and important issues.
- To move to a further stage of the helping process.
- To help nonassertive or reluctant clients tell their stories and engage in other behaviors related to managing their problems and develop opportunities.
- To be as concrete and specific as possible.



Closed Probe Purposes

- To narrow the topic of discussion
- To obtain specific information
- To identify parameters of a problem or issue
- To interrupt an over-talkative client
- To give focus to the session



Guidelines in Using Probes

- Provide challenges to clients to examine the way they think, behave, and act in session and life
- Probe in the spirit of empathy.
- Use a mix of statements, open-ended questions, prompts, and requests, not questions alone.
- Follow up a successful probe with a reflection rather than another probe.
- Use a judicious mixture of reflection and probing to help clients clarify problems, identify blind spots, develop new scenarios, search for action strategies, formulate plans, and review outcomes of action.

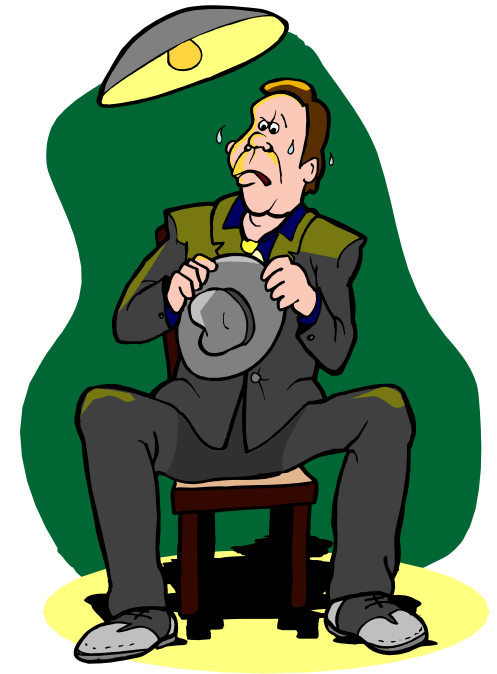


Probe Guidelines

- Ask about client's issues
- Give time to respond
- Only one question at a time
- Combine with reflection or paraphrase
- Avoid accusations (Why questions.)
- Do not use as primary response mode.

Problems with Probes

- Offend the client who may feel interrogated
- Reduce responsibility for the process
- Increase dependence
- Encourage socially accepted rather than honest answers.



Confrontation

- **Definition:** description of client discrepancy
- **Purpose:**
 - To identify client's mixed (incongruent) messages
 - To explore other ways of perceiving client's self or situation



Interpretation

- **Definition:** Possible explanation of or association among various client behaviors.
- **Purpose:**
 - To identify the relation between client's implicit messages and behaviors
 - To examine client behavior from alternative view or with different explanation
 - To add to client's self-understanding as a basis for client action

3 Parameters Of An Effective Interpretation

- An effect of interpretation is only slightly discrepant of the client's beliefs,
- it focuses and causes client control and modify,
- Puts in a positive rather than negative frame of reference.

Ground Rules For Interpreting

- The client should show some degree of readiness to explore self.
- Occur in the middle or initial phase of an interview.
- Based on adequate data from client.
- Worded tentatively

Information giving

- **Definition:** Verbal communication of data or facts
- **Purposes:**
 - To identify alternatives
 - To evaluate alternatives
 - To dispel myths
 - To motivate clients to examine issues they may have been avoiding.



When, What, And How The Information Giving

- When –
 - Identify information presently available to the client,
 - Evaluate client's present information, (Is it valid - data base efficient?),
 - Watch for client readiness to avoid giving information prematurely.
- What –
 - Identify the kind of client information useful to the client,
 - Identify reliable sources of information to validate accuracy of the information
 - Identify any sequencing of information - option A before option B.
- How
 - Avoid jargon,
 - Present all the relevant facts - don't protect client from negative information,
 - Limit the amount of information given at one time - don't overload,
 - Ask for or discuss client's feeling and biases about information
 - Know when to start giving information so action is not avoided
 - Use paper and pencil to highlight key ideas or facts.



Action Responses Examples

Modified from Cormier and Cormier
(1991) Interviewing Strategies for
Helpers 3rd ed.

Probe



<http://www.picsearch.com/info.cgi?q=probe&cid=25929700153&start=33>

Probe Guidelines

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I just get so nervous
I'm just a bunch of nerves.

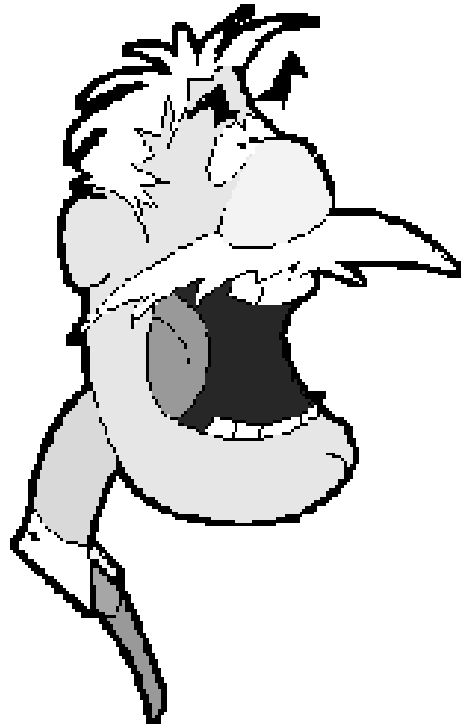


<http://www.picsearch.com/info.cgi?q=anxious&cid=509459552521&start=33>

I just get so nervous
I'm just a bunch of nerves.

- You say your are feeling pretty upset
(Reflection)
- When do you feel this way? (Probe)
- What are some times when you get this
feeling? (Probe)

It has been horrid around my house
this past year.



<http://www.picsearch.com/info.cgi?q=upset&cid=614353335940&start=17>

It has been horrid around my house
this past year.

- It sounds like things have gotten out of hand. (paraphrase)
- What has been going on that's been so bad for you? (Probe)

40 year-old man: Sometimes I just feel kind of blue. It goes on for a while. Not everyday but sometimes.



<http://www.picsearch.com/info.cgi?q=depressed&cid=661353220583>

40 year-old man: Sometimes I just feel kind of blue. It goes on for a while. Not everyday but sometimes.

- Now and then you feel kind of down (reflection)
- What have you noticed that makes this feeling go away? (probe)
- Have you noticed anything in particular that makes you feel better?

35 year-old woman: I just feel overwhelmed right now. Too many kids underfoot. Not enough time for me.



35 year-old woman: I just feel overwhelmed right now. Too many kids underfoot. Not enough time for me.

- With everyone to take care of, there is not much time left for you. (paraphrase)
- How many kids are under foot? (probe)
- How many kids are your responsible for? (probe)

Confrontation



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<http://www.picsearch.com/info.cgi?q=mixed%20message&cid=115164045317>

I am very happy



http://www.otago.ac.nz/Hands-OnScience/HOS_2002/John_Taggs_talk_web/images/sad%20streptococcus.jpg

I am very happy

- On the one hand you say you are very happy.
- On the other hand when you walk you face down, your coat is half off and you slump your shoulders
- I am confused

Teenage girl with obvious limp: I'd like to be a star gymnast or ballerina.



ADAM.

Teenage girl with obvious limp: I'd like to be a star gymnast or ballerina.

- You are telling me that you want to be a star gymnast or ballerina
- How does that fit with the medical condition of your foot?

A young man says: we have intercourse using a variety of positions every week and have tried lost of different kinds of mutual masturbation and oral sex. The big problem is that I cannot talk to her about our sex life. I have just never been able to talk about sex.



http://www.leagueagainstaids.com/images/40_young_man_reclining.jpg

A young man says: we have intercourse using a variety of positions every week and have tried lots of different kinds of mutual masturbation and oral sex. The big problem is that I cannot talk to her about our sex life. I have just never been able to talk about sex.

- On the one hand you say the problem is you cannot talk about sex.
- On the other you have just given me a graphic description of your activities.
- I am confused.

My husband and I are thinking about having a baby. It would be a good way to fill this void we feel; to keep busy with someone who needs you all the time. It will be great as long as it isn't too confining. I don't want to be too tied down.



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- You want someone who needs you all the time.
- You also want to not be too tied down.
- This sounds difficult.

College student referred to you for repeated alcohol violations: I am going to be top of my class in nursing school if the university will stop picking on me.



College student referred to you for repeated alcohol violations: I am going to be top of my class in nursing school if the university will stop picking on me.

- On the one hand you are telling me you want to be top in your nursing class.
- On the other you have had repeated alcohol violations.
- I am confused about how these fit together.

A graduate student: My wife and child are very important to me. They make me feel it's all worthwhile. If I want to make it in my field I have to work all the time. Right now I cannot be with them.



A graduate student: My wife and child are very important to me. They make me feel it's all worthwhile. If I want to make it in my field I have to work all the time. Right now I cannot be with them.

- Jerry, you're saying that your family makes things feel worthwhile for you. At the same time the field of work you have chosen takes all your time.

A 10 year-old girl: Sure it would be nice to have mom at home when I get there after school. I do not feel lonely. It's just that it would feel so good to have someone close to me there and not to have to spend a couple of hours every day by myself.



<http://www.sensesofcinema.com/images/alone.gif>

A 10 year-old girl: Sure it would be nice to have mom at home when I get there after school. I do not feel lonely. It's just that it would feel so good to have someone close to me there and not to have to spend a couple of hours every day by myself.

- It seems like you are trying to accept your mom's absence and at the same time you are feeling like you'd rather have her home with you. I would feel lonely in that situation.

HS Student: My dad thinks it's terribly important to get A's. He thinks I'm not working to my potential if I get a B. I told him I'd much rather be well rounded and get a few B's and have time to talk to my friends and play basketball



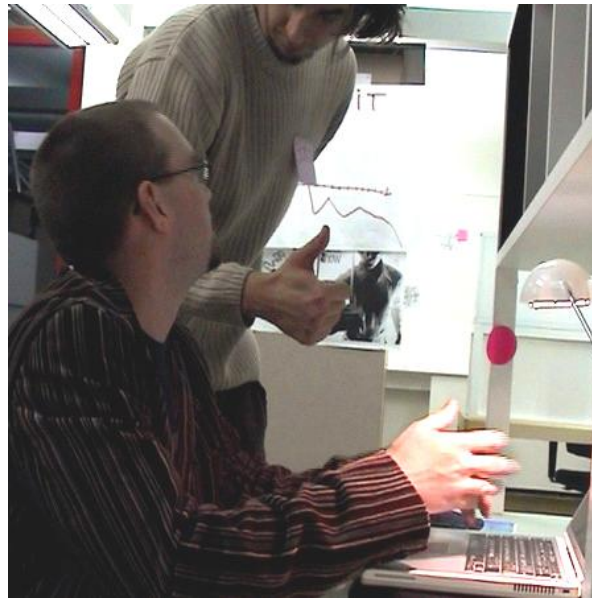
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- Your father wants you to get all A's and at the same time you want to be well rounded? That must be awkward.

Interpretation

- Viewpoint expressed should be only slightly discrepant from client's view
- Focus on causes that the client can control or modify
- Cast the new frame in a positive connotation
- If you meet resistance back off till a later time
- Consider using a metaphor
- Phrase your interpretation tentatively.

Client who did not get a raise: I know I am doing good work. My boss comes by and chats with me several times each day.



<http://www.picsearch.com/info.cgi?q=boss%20worker&cid=209274976104>

Client who did not get a raise: I know I am doing good work. My boss comes by and chats with me several times each day.

- Is it possibly that the boss is coming by each day because he is concern that you are NOT doing good work?

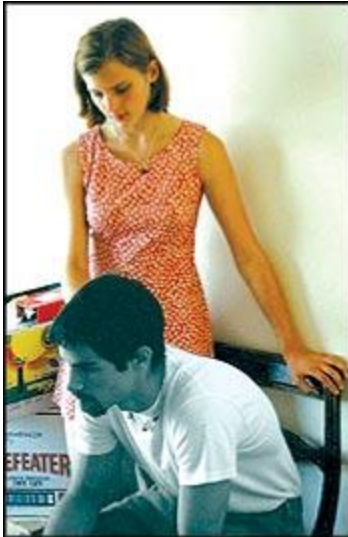
When I applied for the job, I told them I had lots of experience with Excel. I have used it for a couple of hours on several occasions. I am sure that will not be a problem



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- Is it possible that you are concerned that you may be accused of giving a false impression?

Couple that has been dating 3 years:
He says, “I want to get married, I just
want to get to know her better first”.



<http://www.washcp.com/archives/indc/popquiz/2000/pop1201d.jpg>

Couple that has been dating 3 years:
He says, “I want to get married, I just
want to get to know her better first”.

- Is it possible that the problem is not getting to know each other better but fearing commitment?

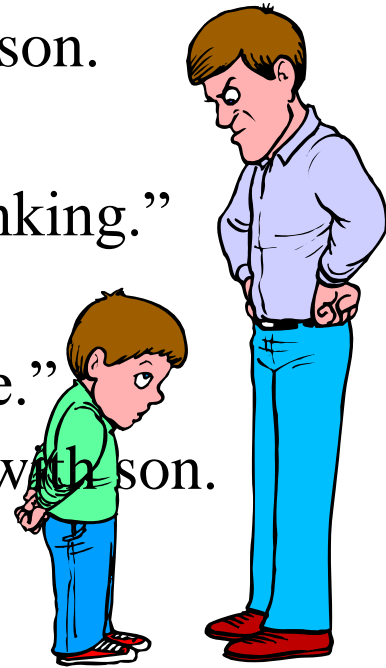
Information Giving



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Information Child Discipline Case

- Married couple in their thirties
- Disagree about the way to handle their 4-year-old son.
- Father views him as a “spoiled brat”
- “Best way to keep him in line is to give him a spanking.”
- Mother views him as a “typical boy”
- “Best way to handle him is understanding and love.”
- Couple admits little consistency in how they deal with son.
- Father reprimands him and swats him
- Mother stands, watches, comforts him, and often intercedes on the child’s behalf.



Child Discipline Response

- All children need discipline
- Discipline involves setting and enforcing limits, not spanking, getting revenge, or giving in to a child.
- All disciplining should occur in a manner that enhances rather than destroys a child's self esteem.
- There is a hierarchy in parent/child relationships: parents are there to be in charge and to take care of children, not the other way around.
- Kids behave better and more secure when their parents work together rather than argue on how to handle and respond to them.

Child Discipline Response

- I sense that you are in agreement on the fact that you love your child and want what is best for him.
- So what I'm going to say next is based on this idea that you are both trying to find a way to do what is best for Timmy.
- In discussing how you feel about Timmy and his behavior, I think it is important to remember that all children need discipline or limits.
- Kids ask for limits in all kinds of ways and don't get along very well without them.
- So when I talk about discipline for Timmy, I mean the idea of setting some limits the two of you agree on and sticking to them.
- I don't mean spanking or getting revenge, or giving in to him and letting him have his own way.
- But discipline does involve taking charge, being in control- and doing so in a nurturing way that can help Timmy feel good rather than bad about himself.

Information Conception Control

- Young female adolescent who is sexually active
- 3 pregnancies and 3 abortions
- Not worried about getting pregnant again
 - They abstain certain days
 - He withdraws
- If she does get pregnant she will just get another abortion it is no biggie.



Information Conception Facts

- Rhythm is not a foolproof pregnancy prevention method.
- Withdrawal also may not prevent pregnancy particularly if semen is around the vaginal opening.
- Multiple abortions can have physical and /or emotional complications, depending on the individual.

Information Conception Response

- Marie, since you've said you're not worried about getting pregnant again because you and your partner practice rhythm and withdrawal, let me share some information about these methods with you. I'm not telling you these things to say "Do this" — or "Don't do this" —but more to give you some fact that you can use to decide what might be best for you with this issue. First, withdrawal can and often does result in pregnancy, because in withdrawing, sometimes some semen is left around this vaginal opening [draws diagram]. What can happen then is that the semen can travel up the opening and reach these tubes [continues drawing] and can fertilize an egg and result in pregnancy, just as if you had had a complete act of intercourse. Rhythm is also something that doesn't have a very high rate of preventing pregnancy--- about half the time it works, half it doesn't. That's because it can get awfully difficult and tedious to know for sure when to have sex and when not to and also because women can ovulate at any time in the menstrual cycle. I mention this because depending on the person, having several abortions can result in physical or emotional complications. Since you seem to be interested in preventing another pregnancy at the time, you may want to consider other, more foolproof methods.

Information Divorce Case

- 35 y/o woman w/ 2 teen daughters
- Secretary in engineering firm
- Husband is department store manager
- Stormy relationship for several years
- Wants a divorce but fears she will loose her job
- Also worries about supporting her daughters
- Feels a divorce will make her happy and solve all her internal problems.

Information Divorce Facts

- a. Getting a divorce rarely results in loss of a job.
- b. In most situations the husband would be legally required to give financial support for the children.
- c. Although divorce may make a person feel happy and relieved, it can also be unsettling, can result in temporary feelings of loss and depression, and is not an antidote for all other life issues.

Information Divorce Response

- Leslie, in discussing your situation with you, there are a couple of things I want to mention.
- First, it might be useful for you to consider seeing a competent lawyer who specializes in divorce mediation. This person could give you detailed information about the legal effects and the processes of at divorce.
- Usually, however, a person does not lose a job because of a divorce.
- Besides, in most instances, the husband is required to make support payments as long as the children are of minor age. I would encourage you to express these same concerns to the lawyer.
- The other thing I'd like to spend some time discussing is your belief that you will feel happy after the divorce. That might be very true. It is also important to remember, though, that just the process of ending a relationship—even a bad relationship—can be very unsettling and can bring not only relief but often some temporary feelings of loss and maybe sadness.



Sources

- Cormier, W. H. (1991). *Interviewing strategies for helpers: Fundamental skills and cognitive behavioral interventions* (3rd ed.). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Egan, G. (2007). *The skilled helper: A problem-management and opportunity-development approach to helping* (8th ed.). Belmont, CA: Thompson.