

Activity 4— Effective questions

Different kinds of questions yield different answers. Simple yes-no questions will give you yes-no answers, and often, this is not enough information when you are communicating with your child’s teachers, health care providers, and others. The way you approach questions can help you obtain information, establish clear communication with the other person, and promote teamwork. Effective questions also provide opportunities to clarify information, enhance your understanding of your child and autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and help you feel more in control and informed.

Types of effective questions

- Open-ended questions. These are questions that require more than a yes-no answer.
- Factual questions. These are questions that ask for more detail on definitions, confirmation of facts, asking how a fact or information relates to something else.
- Clarifying questions. These questions ask for more information about something. “What does this mean?” “How would you measure this?” “What is your goal?” “What are the next steps?”
- Evaluation questions. These are questions that compare or examine information. “What can you conclude from this?” “How would you interpret these results?” “What does this mean?”
- Solution questions. These are questions that build on clarification and evaluation answers to understand upcoming actions and goals based on information learned. “How can we use this information to help my child?” “How will this information inform treatment decisions?” “How can we apply this information to the intervention?”

“What” or “how” questions often yield the most information. “Why” questions can make the receiver feel defensive.

Transform the questions or statements below into effective questions.

Has this treatment worked with other children with ASD?

Make this an open-ended question.

Your child care provider has mentioned that your child had a difficult day.

Ask a factual question.

You’ve read an interesting article on a new social skills approach.

Ask a clarifying question of a professional.

Why would you recommend this type of medication?

Turn this into an effective evaluation question.



Your child just participated in a lengthy early intervention planning evaluation.
Ask a solution focused question of the evaluator.

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