

Non-confrontational Questioning

Asking questions in meetings about our children/young people can be difficult, especially if we are nervous, angry or upset. Some meetings may be an emotional experience. Thinking about how to phrase questions ahead of time, can make a difference, keep the meeting positive and set the stage for a “working together” relationship.

Positive opening questions:

- Tell me how well my child/young person is doing in your class?
- What is my child/young person good at?
- What are my child/young person’s positive points?
- What do you/others like about my child/young person?

Questions that show that you are willing to work together:

- How can we help my child/young person with improving on [insert idea] together?
- How can we ...?
- What are your thoughts on...?
- It has been suggested that [insert idea] can be helpful
- Can we try [insert idea]?
- How can I support you in supporting my child/young person?
- I have found [insert idea] particularly helpful and I wanted to share this in case it’s helpful for you too (you know your child/young person best, feel free to share that knowledge)
- My child/young person thinks [insert idea] may help; would it be worth a try? (your child/young person’s views are important, if they are able to articulate their views that might be helpful)

Questions when seeking clarification or are unsure about what has been said:

- What do you mean when you say [insert idea]?
- How does [insert idea] relate to my child/young person?
- I am not sure what you mean, please could you put that another way for me?
- Let me see if I understand you; do you mean [insert idea] or [insert idea]?
- I am not sure how [insert idea] relates to our problem/discussion/issue please can you explain that to me?
- Could you give me an example of what you mean / how that would look/ how that will work?
- Would [insert idea] be a good example of that?

If things are not moving in the direction you wanted, you could try:

- Have you considered [insert idea]
- My understanding [insert idea] (especially helpful if you are certain of a fact and want to put this forward in a way that won't create ill feeling)
- I have heard that [insert idea] can be helpful, could we try that?
- If you can't do [insert idea], what could you do instead?

Planning for your meeting:

- Note down the topics that you want to cover so you don't leave without the information that you require.
- Take a notebook and pen so that you can refer to what you wanted to ask and write down anything that will be done as an outcome or an action and who is going to carry that out and when.
- Consider summarising the actions at the end of the meeting.
- Take your partner / friend / family member with you for moral support. They may also be able to help you to keep track of your questions and possibly help you to write down anything that is said in response to your questions.

SENDIASS will be able to help you prepare for a meeting and to reflect on the meeting afterwards. Someone from SENDIASS may be able to attend the meeting in an impartial capacity with you should you wish.

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