

It is important that we learn to listen and help people get in touch with their passion and potential for creating the life they want.

Session 6

Effective Listening and the Art of Asking Questions:

demonstrates effective listening and the art of asking questions
and the kinds of questions that are helpful and not helpful in putting a person
in touch with his or her own inner wisdom.

Effective Listening and the Art of Asking Questions – Part 1

Quotation 1 - If you listen to the patient long enough, not only will they tell you the diagnosis but you will also learn the best way to deal with the problem.

Quotation 2 - When someone truly listens to me, and does not interrupt with judgments, criticisms, stories of their own or even good advice, I feel better and often figure out what I need to do for myself.

If listening is so important, why is it hard to really listen to another person?

Main points of the presentation:

- 1) There is a difference in listening and what is called ‘effective listening’. Effective listening has to do with knowing what we are listening for.
- 2) In recovery work, we are listening for:
 - * beliefs that a person believes about themselves and their current situation (self-image),
 - * what they believe would make their life better (goals), and
 - * why they believe they can’t have that life (barriers).
- 3) What you are listening for is what you often hear; therefore, questions are an important part of our training.

Notes:

Quotation 3 – “I am convinced that we shut down communication and destroy trust more often by trying to “help” the person with a problem than by any other means... We all know that for life’s most difficult problems, the only real answers come from within. We want only one thing from others – simply to be heard. So I insist on a simple ground rule in the small groups: in response to what you hear from each other, give each other the gift of honest, open questions; questions that come from deep attentiveness, questions that have no other purpose than helping the speaker listen more deeply to his or her inner truth.”

Parker J. Palmer

Scenario 1

Ronald is 35 and has been coming to ‘Day Treatment’ for 10 years. He is now in a goals-oriented, psychosocial rehabilitation program. When you ask him about his plans for the future or any goals he wants to work on he typically says, “You know that I have been sick for a long time. I’m schizophrenic. The medication helps. I don’t hear voices or see things much now. I like coming to program. I have some friends here. I don’t know why you keep asking me what I want. Why do I have to set a goal? As long as I take my medications and come here every day I’m OK.” He explains that coming to program gets him out of the house and gives him something to do. He adds that he doesn’t do any cooking, but he gets a good meal here every day. He has his own apartment (even though he doesn’t like his roommate).

He used to enjoy going fishing with his uncle on the weekends, but he doesn’t go much anymore. You have noticed that he avoids reading newspapers and magazines, but is always asking people to tell him about what they are reading. He likes to watch TV “so he can stay up on current events.” He reports that he often falls asleep on the couch at home when watching TV.

He gets frustrated easily by group work. One day he storms out of the program after a peer hands out information on creating a new advisory group. Ronald states, “It’s not fair that people who can read get all the responsible activities. He says, “The program should be more accommodating to everyone.”

You have noticed that he has gotten much angrier at program lately. He says that he doesn’t like all of the changes and wishes things were like they used to be.

Scenario 2

Geraldine lives with her mother and comes to a peer-run, day program. She does hold a High School diploma, even though she attended some Special Education classes. She states that she is getting tired of just coming to program every day and then going home and watching TV all evening. She thinks that she might want to get a job, or go back to school or just do something different. She is getting tired of the “same old thing day after day.” She adds that her lifelong dream has always been to become a lawyer. Her mother says it is not possible. Geraldine states her mother is very controlling and directs her life for her. She asked her doctor about going to work so that she can save money in order to attend a workshop on law at a local technical college. Her mother tells her, “Absolutely not! I won’t allow it.” Geraldine states that she’s really tired of everybody telling her what to do.

She has shown interest in leading groups, but always has an excuse when asked to do so. She states that she would like to be able to help other people, but is not sure she knows what to do. She heard about the Peer Specialist Training Program and has stated that she wants to go. She tells you that she has been saving money out of her SSI check and that she will have enough to pay for it by the time that the next training comes along. She asks you if you think she can do it and would you help her. This is the first time she has ever shown any interest in doing anything other than coming to program. Some of the staff think she is not ready to go to an intensive two-week training.

Two weeks ago, Geraldine was complaining of hearing voices that were disturbing to her and it is very hard for her to concentrate.

Geraldine is very shy. It takes her a long time to formulate a sentence and then she usually follows it with some statement to the effect that she is probably wrong, but it is what she thinks. She is constantly looking for yours and others approval, in spite of her anger toward others telling her what to do.

Scenario 3

Shalika is 28 and has been in a peer-run day program for the past two years. Recently she returned from a consumer leader training program. She is excited about her experience. This was a major event in her life. She has never demonstrated so much motivation. She has decided that she wants to become a Certified Peer Specialist. She feels overwhelmed. She has always struggled with a feeling of low self-esteem and self-doubt. Shalika experiences symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Major Depression with acute episodes. In the past she would often isolate herself and miss a lot of days from the program she was in. She has a long history of self-harm and often struggles with expressing strong human emotions in a way that others feel is sincere. However, she does not believe that she has issues with expressing anger, so she refuses to participate in Anger Management groups.

Although this is the most excited staff can remember Shalika ever being about anything, there have been a few times in the past two years that she has indicated interest in various possibilities for herself. Each time she has tried to move in a new direction or take on more responsibility, she has become very symptomatic. The last time she tried to venture out, she had to be hospitalized for four weeks. This last experience has caused Shalika to be very hesitant to try anything new, but she is so excited about the possibility of becoming a Certified Peer Specialist. Some people on her treatment team feel that is too big of a move for her at this time. They think that one more failure might destroy the little self-esteem she has left.

Shalika has agreed to come to the Peer Support Program every day, if you will help her reach her goal. She wants to know if you believe she can do it and what she has to do to get started.

Session 6 – Review Questions – Effective Listening and the Art of Asking Questions

1) What are the 3 characteristics of good questions?

2) When using effective listening, what are the 3 things you are listening for?