

RESEARCH METHODS AND TOOLS

Session 13

90 minutes

OBJECTIVE:

Youth will learn how to do an effective interview and gain self-confidence as interviewers.

MATERIALS AND PREPARATION:

- Butcher paper, tape, and markers.
- Paper, pens, and clipboards.
- Index cards.
- Copy the *Steps to a Good Interview* (Master Copy 3.13a) and *Designing Open-Ended Questions* (Master Copy 3.13b) before the session: one copy of each for each youth.

I. OPENING: ATTENDANCE, SNACKS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, AGENDA OVERVIEW (10 MINUTES)

Explain that the goal of today's workshop is to learn how to conduct a good interview.

Opening Circle Statement (Around the World): Someone I would like to interview and learn more about... (It can be anyone – famous or not, living or not.)

II. WARM UP: LISTEN AND RESPOND (5 MINUTES)

The purpose of this exercise is for youth to practice, as a group, the skill of listening and responding to questions. Pick a volunteer to be "interviewed" by the group, and pick another volunteer to ask an initial question (It could be "What do you think of your city?" or "What are your hobbies?"). After the first question has been answered, go around in a circle asking follow-up questions based on the responses of the person being interviewed. Because they don't have a script, this exercise requires them to listen and respond to what was said. Remind youth to keep questions respectful.

III. INTERVIEW EXPERIENCE BRAINSTORM (10 MINUTES)

Ask youth about their experience with interviews. What have they seen? Done? Have they ever interviewed someone else? Been interviewed?

- On a piece of butcher paper or the board, list the different types of interviews youth mention: Entertainment (talk shows), employment, information (news, radio), and others.

How to Do a Good Interview

- Ask youth to name, from their experience, qualities of good interviews and qualities of bad interviews. Ask for specific examples, and write down the comments on the board or butcher paper.

IV. BAD INTERVIEW – GOOD INTERVIEW (20 MINUTES)

Step 1: Ask for a youth volunteer. Interview the person using pre-written questions of your choice. Purposely do not do a good job (e.g., don't make eye contact, forget questions, check your cell phone for text messages, start telling a story about yourself, ask to borrow a pen, don't listen to what is said, ask leading questions, give your opinion, use poor body language).

Ask youth, what was wrong with this interview? Did you get good information? Why not? How did the interviewee feel?

Step 2: Brainstorm tips for conducting a good interview. What would have made the bad interview good? What are some principles of a good interview? Discuss and record. Examples include:

- Make eye contact.
- Show the person you are listening by repeating what they say.
- Ask follow-up questions (probes) to better understand what they are saying.
- Reference the warm-up activity here – the importance of showing the person that you are listening and are interested in what they have to say.
- Keep your questions open-ended so answers need to be more than "yes" or "no."
- Introduce yourself and the purpose of the interview.
- Ask for permission.

Step 3: Hand out the *Steps to a Good Interview*. Ask youth for questions and any additions based on the brainstorm.

RESEARCH METHODS AND TOOLS

Session 13

90 minutes

V. OPEN-ENDED AND NON-LEADING QUESTIONS (15 MINUTES)

Step 1: Explain that one of the most important goals in an interview is to be open-minded and to really hear what the person has to say. Open-ended questions allow people to talk in detail about their own perspectives. If you can answer yes or no, it is not an open-ended question.

Step 2: Explain that sometimes questions are leading. When a question is leading, it puts ideas and opinions into the question in a way that makes it hard for a person to share their own thoughts. If the answer to the questions below is yes, then the question is leading:

- Does this question assume a certain opinion?
- Does it direct someone to a particular answer?

As a group, evaluate the following questions (or other questions that you or the youth make up). Decide whether or not each question is leading or closed ended, and then revise the leading and closed-ended questions.

- Don't you think that youth in our community are stereotyped a lot?
- It seems like the media is to blame, don't you think?
- The news always focuses on the bad stuff happening in our community. I think if they showed more positive stories, the stereotypes would change. Don't you think so?
- How would you describe your neighborhood?
- Don't you think that school is a waste of time?

Step 3: Hand out the *Designing Open-Ended and Non-Leading Questions* worksheet. Students should revise each leading question to make it both non-leading and open-ended. Ask for volunteers to share a couple of examples.

Example from Practice:

Former YELL participant Sandra Mendieta says that learning how to ask questions and learning the difference between open-ended and leading questions, helped her to be a better student in high school and in college.

VI. PEER INTERVIEWS (15 MINUTES)

The purpose of this activity is to practice interview skills.

Step 1: As a group, brainstorm what questions youth want to ask to find out more about each other (could also be related to their research topic, a current event, or something happening in the school). Make sure the questions are open-ended and non leading! Write these questions on the board or a piece of paper where everyone can see them. Remind youth of the Listen and Respond activity you did at the beginning of this session. Encourage youth to ask probing or follow-up questions based on what they hear from the person they are interviewing.

Step 2: Break into pairs and have youth take turns interviewing each other (three minutes for each interview) using the questions created by the group.

Step 3: Have each youth share their partner's name and one thing they learned (no more than one minute each for reporting back). As a group, discuss: How was it interviewing? (Communicate the idea that they already have lots of experience and skills.)

VII. DEBRIEF AND CLOSING (15 MINUTES)

To summarize the key points from the session, ask for two volunteers to start an interview in front of the group. Let the group know that if they see an opportunity for a probing or follow-up question, they can shout "freeze!" and take the place of the interviewer. Every few minutes, switch out the person being interviewed at random. As the facilitator, you can call "freeze" at any time to point out something positive, ask the group questions about how the interview is going, or ask for suggestions on how to improve the process.

Closing Circle Statement (Around the World): One thing I noticed today...

Optional Take-Home Assignment:

- Create four interview questions related to the research topic.
- Use these questions to interview a sibling, parent, or relative.
- What worked and what questions could be improved?
- Bring the revised questions to the next session.

Steps to a Good Interview

1. MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE PREPARED AND ORGANIZED.

- Practice saying the questions.
- Make sure you have...
 - Your interview questions.
 - A notepad and a pen/pencil.
 - A quiet, private place to do the interview.
 - Consent forms.
 - A tape recorder (optional).
 - A written description of your project or group (optional).

2. INTRODUCE YOURSELF AND ASK FOR PERMISSION.

- Tell them your name, where you are from, and why you are doing the interview. "Hi, my name is _____. I am working on a school research project and want to talk to people about (your issue) so I can think of ways to improve the community."
- Ask for permission to interview the person: "May I have your permission to interview you and use what you say in my school project?" (Have interviewees sign a permission form.)
- If the person says no, then you cannot do the interview. Don't hassle them!

3. DO THE INTERVIEW.

- Make eye contact.
- Listen to the person you are interviewing. Don't interrupt.
- Don't give your own opinion.
- Try repeating back what is said to make sure you understood the point. Ask subjects to speak for themselves and express their own opinion.
- Ask follow up questions! Don't accept yes or no answers.
 - Ask "Why?" or "Could you explain?"
 - "Can you say more about what you mean by that?"
- If they are nervous, give them some time to answer. Sometimes people need time to think – allow for some silence.

4. END THE INTERVIEW

- Ask them if they have anything else to say or add about the topic.
- Thank them for their time and shake their hand! Example: "Thank you very much for being interviewed. What you've said is very helpful for us."

5. RESPECT CONFIDENTIALITY!

- Tell the person you are interviewing that what they said was just between the two of you. (While the information they give you will be analyzed and shared, their names will not be connected with anything they say.)
- Do not tell anyone else what the person said. Only speak about the interview anonymously, without naming names.



Designing Open-Ended and Non-Leading Questions

In an interview, you should avoid questions that are leading or closed-ended.

- A leading question is one that “leads” the interviewee toward a particular answer.
- A closed-ended question is one that has a one-word, limited answer (yes or no).

Instructions: Turn the below questions into open-ended and non-leading questions that don’t lead to a yes or no answer, or show your opinion.

EXAMPLE:

Don’t you think that the shows on MTV are boring?

What do you think of the shows on MTV? _____

1. Don’t you think that youth in our community are stereotyped a lot?

2. I think the media is to blame for making girls feel bad about how they look. Don’t you agree?

3. The news always focuses on the bad stuff happening in our community. I think if they showed more positive stories, the stereotypes would change. Don’t you think so?

4. The dress code is ridiculous here. Do you like the dress code?

5. I think that we should be able to vote at 16. If we are old enough to drive, shouldn’t we be old enough to vote? What do you think?
