



**Workshop Description:** This workshop includes practice for understanding how to successfully engage in inquiry, or asking open-ended question techniques. Successful implementation of this workshop will help youth program staff ask questions to help youth think deeper about their own emotions.

**Preparation Time:** The preparation time for this workshop is approximately 15 to 20 minutes. This preparation time should include reading background information on the Emotion Regulation and Positive Youth Development website and in this workshop guide, collecting materials, and gathering any additional information you may need.

**Instruction Time:** It will take approximately 90 to 100 minutes to complete all activities within this guide. If you do not have time for the full workshop, only use the most relevant activities to make the workshop fit within your timeframe. Be sure to keep the reflection portion of the activities and workshop as this is where staff should consider how the activities and knowledge apply to their work.

**Materials:**

- Printed copies of the Handout: *Inquiry Scenarios*
- One copy of Instructional Aid: *Prompts, Topics, and Examples of Open Questions*
- Paper for each participant
- Writing utensils for each participant
- Two large blank white sheets of paper or a whiteboard

**Preparation Instructions:** You should read the content related to this topic on the Emotion Regulation and Positive Youth Development website, specifically the content related to Emotion Regulation and Youth Program Staff. In addition, you should review the background information in this workshop guide, gather all necessary materials, and prepare for the activities.

In this series of workshops, youth program staff will learn skills that build on one another in a specific sequence. We recommend you complete this set of workshops the workshops in the following order:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. <i>Understanding Emotion Regulation,</i>              | 6. <i>Understanding and Practicing Inquiry,</i>               |
| 2. <i>Development of Executive Functioning,</i>          | 7. <i>Understanding and Practicing Acceptance,</i>            |
| 3. <i>Understanding Peer Relationships</i>               | 8. <i>Understanding and Practicing Problem-Solving, and</i>   |
| 4. <i>Understanding Emotion Regulation – Staff,</i>      | 9. <i>Understanding and Practicing Cognitive Reappraisal.</i> |
| 5. <i>Understanding and Practicing Active Listening,</i> |   |

**Knowledge: Understanding Active Listening and Inquiry**

Youth learn about emotion regulation by observing other people’s emotion regulation (within interactions with their family and others like their friends, peers, and other adults)<sup>36</sup> and through emotion coaching (*fostering awareness and reflection (i.e., acceptance), reinterpreting the meaning of emotions (i.e., cognitive reappraisal), and encouraging problem-solving*<sup>35</sup>).

Although parents and families often provide the first examples and lessons for youth regarding emotion regulation, adolescence is a time when youth begin to exercise more independence and interact in environments beyond their home (like school, extracurricular activities, youth programs, etc.) In these new environments, youth are exposed to and learn from other adults (like youth program staff) and their peers. The youth program provides a laboratory for youth to learn and practice skills like emotion regulation and youth program staff can play a unique role in youth’s lives. Adult-youth relationships



offer opportunities for supporting positive social norms around emotion regulation, and program staff have regular opportunities to influence how youth see themselves engaging with the world through the examples the adults provide.

Youth program staff have an opportunity to help youth learn to manage negative emotions when they occur. When staff provide support and guidance to youth to help them manage and understand their emotions, they are providing emotion coaching.<sup>61</sup> In order to be successful in this emotion coaching, staff need to practice active listening and inquiry.

Emotion coaching involves helping youth to identify their own emotions and develop solutions and strategies for how they manage what they feel so they can achieve their goals. A positive youth development program offers participants a safe place to practice healthy emotion regulation strategies. As youth grow more confident in their regulation abilities, youth program staff can offer challenges to further help youth learn and grow. For example, youth who are afraid to speak in front of their peers might be challenged to give a demonstration or presentation on a favorite topic. When youth understand how to manage their strong emotions, they will be less likely to quit the program or disengage with the other youth in the program.<sup>35</sup>

Two skills that are critical for effective emotion coaching are active listening and inquiry. Active listening is a technique that involves hearing, understanding, and reflecting on information as well as providing the speaker with cues to let them know their message is being received. Inquiry involves learning how to ask open questions to probe youth to think deeper about a topic or emotion.

**Objectives:**

- Understand elements of inquiry
- Learn how to employ elements of inquiry

**Introduction (5 minutes):**

- Describe emotion coaching as three techniques (fostering awareness and reflection, suggesting strategies, and encouraging reframing or perspective taking) that the group will be exploring in the next several workshops.
- Describe that before you start working on those three techniques it is important to ensure participants understand the skills that support effective emotion coaching (awareness, active listening, and inquiry).
  - What to say: "Today we are going to practice inquiry skills. These skills are important as you coach youth through their emotions. Using inquiry skills will help you understand the emotions a youth may be feeling while supporting self-reflection. In addition, you will have critical information to help with problem-solving through the process."
- Transition into Prior Knowledge activity:
  - What to say: "To start, we are going to talk about what you know about inquiry and explore where there may be gaps in your knowledge."

**Prior Knowledge (5-7 minutes):**

- Ask the participants to share what they know about inquiry or asking questions. You may need to assist with getting the discussion started using the background information provided in the Knowledge section of the workshop plan.



- Ask the participants if they have any questions about inquiry they would like answered or if there is anything they want to learn through this workshop. Again, record responses.

**Activities:**

**Activity: *Introduction to Inquiry* (15 minutes)**

- Describe the *Introduction to Inquiry* activity:
  - What to say: “When practicing emotion coaching with youth, there are two skills that should be refined. Active listening and inquiry. Active listening is a set of skills that involves focus, acknowledgement, and body language. Inquiry is a way of asking open questions that help to create awareness, thought, and reflection. Questions help youth further explore their thoughts and feelings on a given subject. Properly framing questions will be important to distinguish inquiry type questions from those that simply reframe or require only a brief or factual response. Inquiries, when coupled with active listening, prompt the youth to expand their thoughts about a given subject. These types of questions cannot be answered with one word and can sometimes be difficult to frame.”
- Lead the *Introduction to Inquiry* activity:
  - Watch the video, *The Power of Effective Questioning*, found at this location: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dO0dO\\_\\_wmE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dO0dO__wmE)
  - Lead a brief discussion about the video.
  - Ask the group to brainstorm the different ways questions can be used. Write these suggestions on a white board or large sheet of paper for all to see. A list of prompts from the video is provided for you in the Instructional Aid: *Prompts, Topics, and Examples of Open Questions*.
  - Discuss the difference between closed and open questions
    - Closed Questions require short answers, often from limited set of options.
    - Open Questions allow for longer responses and potentially more creativity and information.
  - Transition to the next activity by explaining that today we are focusing on open questions and how we can use them while practicing emotion coaching.

**Activity: *Clarifying Questions* (20 minutes)**

- Describe the *Clarifying Questions* activity:
  - What to say: “Even though we have been asking questions all of our life, how many of us really think about the power of questions or how to ask a question to get the information and the reaction we would like? In this next activity, we are going to do an activity to practice asking clarifying questions. Clarifying questions are used when you don’t have all of the facts and help you clarify what happened so that you can ask another kind of question (probing) that we’ll learn more about in the next activity. The goal of this activity is to learn what kind of question is considered clarifying and to practice forming these kinds of questions. Understanding how to ask a clarifying question will help you when you are trying to help youth through emotion coaching.”
- Lead the *Clarifying Questions* activity:
  - On a whiteboard or large piece of paper have two or three examples of clarifying questions written out. Examples might include the following:



## Emotion Regulation Workshop

### Understanding and Practicing Inquiry

---

- “Did I hear you say...?”
- “What’s another way you might say that?”
- Or, after paraphrasing what you heard (repeating back in your own words), ask, “Am I getting that right?”
- In a large group, ask the participants to brainstorm several other clarifying questions. Add them to the list you have started on the whiteboard or paper.
- Next, pass out several copies of the Handout: *Inquiry Scenarios*. Select one scenario and ask the participants to write down two or three clarifying questions. Have one or two individuals share what they wrote down.
- Transition to the next activity by asking participants what they think the difference is between a clarifying question and a probing question. Clarifying questions look for facts and details. Probing questions ask the respondent to reflect and think more deeply about the topic.

#### **Activity: Probing Questions (20 minutes)**

- Describe the *Probing Questions* activity:
  - What to say: “The next activity has us practice asking probing questions. Probing questions are intended to help youth think more deeply about the issue at hand. The goal of this activity is to learn what kind of question is considered probing and to practice forming these kinds of questions. Understanding how to ask a probing question will help you while emotion coaching.”
- Lead the *Probing Questions* activity:
  - On a whiteboard or large piece of paper, have two or three examples of probing questions written out. Examples might include the following:
    - “What do you think would happen if ...?”
    - “How did you decided ...?”
    - “What is the connection between A and B?”
  - In a large group, ask the participants to brainstorm several other probing questions. Add them to the list you have started on the whiteboard or paper.
  - Next, using the Handout: *Inquiry Scenarios* you handed out earlier, select a different scenario and ask the participants to first write down any clarifying questions they would want answered. As a group, agree on what the answer to those clarifying questions would be and then ask the participants to draft two or three probing questions. Have one or two individuals share what they wrote down.
  - Transition to the next activity by telling participants that during the next activity they will practice deciding which type of question is needed and at what time.

#### **Activity: Understanding Open Questions (25 minutes)**

- Describe the *Understanding Open Questions* activity:
  - What to say: “Let’s think back to the video. Do you remember how they talked about the difference between closed and open questions? Questions have the power to get information and provoke a response. In this next activity, we are going to practice asking open questions. Open questions often start with what, why, and how, or like the narrator in the video suggested, with ‘tell me’ or ‘describe’.”
- Lead the *Understanding Open Questions* activity:



## Emotion Regulation Workshop

### Understanding and Practicing Inquiry

---

- Post the following reminders on a white board or large piece of paper:
  - **Judgement:** Do you have the answer in mind as you ask the question? If so, remove the judgement from the question, or don't ask it.
  - **Relevance:** Check for relevance. Is your question still relevant? Check back on what you have heard the individual said previously.
  - **Solution:** Is your question a recommendation or pushing forward your agenda versus helping the individual explore their thoughts on the subject?
  - **Choose Wisely:** Try to use "what" instead of "why". Why tends to imply, if not carry, judgement. A what question allows for many different kinds of response.
- Break the participants into groups of three or four individuals.
- Hand out writing utensils and paper to each group.
- Explain the activity by telling the group that you will give them a topic and their job as a group is to write down as many open questions about the topic as possible within 2 minutes. Explain that after the time is up, you will write these questions on the board as long as they are open-ended and not previously suggested.
- Provide the topic and start the group. See list of potential topics and questions on Instructional Aid: *Prompts, Topics, and Examples of Open Questions*.
- After 2 minutes, ask the first group for an example of one of their questions, write it on a large piece of paper or a whiteboard as long as it is open-ended. Use the reminders as guides for whether or not the question is open or closed. Ask for another volunteer and write that group's question on the paper or board as long as it is open-ended and not previously asked. The activity is over when the next group cannot ask a related question without repeating one that was already asked.
- Next, tell the group that you are going to change the activity so that they work as individuals and see how many open questions on a new topic they can generate.
- Make sure all participants have a writing utensil, paper, and the topic. Then start the activity.
- After 2 minutes, ask for a volunteer to start. Write their question on a large piece of paper or a whiteboard as long as it is open-ended. Ask for another volunteer and write that question on the paper or board as long as it is open-ended and not previously asked. The activity is over when you run out of time or no one can ask a related question without repeating one that was already asked.

#### Reflection and Recap (5 minutes):

- Return to the participants' responses gathered at the start of the workshop (see Prior Knowledge activity). Ask the participants what they learned during the course of the workshop and record the information on the same paper or a new blank page if there is no room. Draw attention to topics that were on the list generated earlier, new topics, and questions that were answered.
- Ask follow-up questions, such as "What part of the activity made you realize that?" and "How could you use these strategies with youth?"



**Resources:**

Handout: *Inquiry Scenarios*

Instructional Aid: *Prompts, Topics, and Examples of Open Questions.*

**Sources:**

Litmos Heroes. (2014, December 22). *The Power Of Effective Questioning* [Video File]. Retrieved from [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dO0dO\\_\\_wmE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1dO0dO__wmE).

*Understanding Open Questions* was adapted from  
Downing, S. (n.d.). Question game. On Course Workshop. Retrieved from  
<http://oncourseworkshop.com/life-long-learning/question-game/>

11 signs your child may need to see a therapist. (2017). Children's Health Team. Retrieved from  
<https://health.clevelandclinic.org/11-signs-your-child-may-need-a-therapist/>

Clarifying and probing questions. (2013). Indiana University Bloomington. Retrieved from  
<https://global.indiana.edu/documents/global-perspectives/clarifying-and-probing-questions-handout-step-2-define.pdf>



**Instructions:** Use these scenarios to practice asking open-ended questions.

1. A youth in your program has recently been informed by their parents that they are getting a divorce. Since then, the youth has had trouble performing well in school and has withdrawn somewhat from friendships with other youth in the program.
2. A youth in your program has begun to react very strongly to negative feedback, especially wrong answers on tests and lower grades in school. You are not aware of any changes at home. The youth talks frequently about how “stupid” and “worthless” they are. When you tell them things will improve if they work and study hard, they say things like “what’s the point?” They seem very anxious in the days preceding tests or project due dates at school.
3. Youth in the program have brought to your attention that one of their peers has been pushing them around and calling them names. The aggressive youth has not acted in this manner before, but you know that there was a recent death in their family. Furthermore, they have withdrawn from activities they used to enjoy.



## Emotion Regulation Instructional Aid

### Prompts, Topics, and Examples of Open Questions

---

#### Prompts from Video:

- Obtain information to make better decisions
- Control Conversations
- Show Interest
- Build Relationships
- Explore Personalities
- Provoke Further Thought
- Emphasize a Point
- Encourage Conversation

#### Potential Topics:

Pick your own topics or choose from this list:

- community
- graduation
- type of music or sport
- fast food
- technology
- bullying

#### Possible Open Question prompts:

- What were your thoughts as you ...?
- How were you feeling when...?
- What do you think would happen if you ...?
- Why do you think this is the case?
- What would have to change in order for...?
- What's another way you might...?
- How is...different from...?
- When have you experienced something like this before?
- What does this remind you of?
- How did you decide...?
- What is your hunch about...?
- What was your goal when...?