

**tips for
asking
questions**

ask for use
instead of
meaning

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Asking Sarah, “What do you mean that you are getting forgetful?” may result in her simply saying, “I don’t remember things the way I used to.”

Instead, “Give me an example of what you are forgetting,” may elicit specific information regarding what Sarah forgets and when she forgets—information that may be important in formulating intervention strategies.

use open-
ended
questions

use open-ended questions

For example, asking Jay, “In what ways does the hearing loss affect your participation in the counseling workshops?” may elicit more information than the question, “Is the hearing loss a problem for you at counseling workshops?” That may result in a simple yes or no answer.

restate what
the user says

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Repeat the user's exact words
- don't paraphrase or interpret.
This lets the person know that
you are listening and ensures
that you are not interpreting the
client's or parent's statements
from your own perspective.

summarize the
user's point

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Before moving on to a new topic, it can be useful to summarize your understanding of the user's point. Be sure to preface this summary with a statement like "If I'm understanding correctly..." and encourage them to make corrections or clarifications.

ask one
question at a
time

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For example, if the clinician asks, “Sarah, you mentioned you forget things. What things do you forget, in what situations do you forget them, and what do you do to remember things better?” Sarah may become overwhelmed and not know where to begin.

Instead, asking singular questions allows Sarah to focus on the specific information asked.

avoid leading
questions

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Leading questions can often be yes/no questions, although they do not always have to be. Dora commented, “We’ve had some problems with Paul’s teacher.” A question such as, “What do you dislike about Paul’s teacher?” would be a leading question because Dora has not said she dislikes Paul’s teacher, only that she has had some problems with her. A more appropriate response to Dora’s statement might be “Tell me about your experiences with Paul’s teacher.”

avoid using
'why' questions

avoid using 'why' questions

Why questions tend to sound judgmental and assume that the person knows why. Instead of asking Jay, "Why have you refused to wear hearing aids?" the audiologist asked, "What are your reasons for not wearing hearing aids?" In response, Jay described how, as a child, he always felt different. He believed that wearing hearing aids would be another way he would be seen as different.

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