**QUESTION/NON-QUESTION TECHNIQUES**

**QUESTION TECHNIQUES**

*Asking Questions, Not Giving Answers* - Questions help sharpen critical thought and center the discussion among the students, moving the focus away from you. Your questions not only keep the discussion going but also reflect on you as a role model in the ability to develop questions.

*OPEN* a discussion by asking a “starter” question such as: “Where would you like to begin?” To *ENRICH* the discussion, use questions that allow a broad range of appropriate responses. The eight general types of questions below can help move the discussion from the general to the specific or vice versa. Changing the type often helps in moving to a student centered discussion.

1. **Diagnosis:** “What do you think is going on?” “What makes you think that way?”

2. **Action:** “How will you begin to narrow the diagnosis?” “What aspects of the management plan are most important to the team?”

3. **Information Gathering:** “How long has the patient had this problem?” “What were the pertinent positives and negatives on the physical exam?”

4. **Challenge:** “Why do you believe that?” “What supports your thinking?” “How will you confirm your diagnosis?”

5. **Extension** “How is the rash on his trunk related to the diagnosis?” “How does the lab work help to narrow your differential?”

6. **Prediction** “What do you expect to learn from the workup?” “How do you anticipate the patient will respond to treatment?”

7. **Generalization** “How do you connect the patient’s lab findings with the suspected diagnosis?” “How would you use this case to recognize this disease in the future?”

**PREPARE the question**

- Ask yourself “What is the question for?” and “Which question should I ask?”
- Consider these typologies of questions: Knowledge — Comprehension — Application — Analysis — Synthesis

**Before you ASK the question**

- Consider how you ask it; whether it is an open or closed question; and what you would do with the answer. Generally, “open” promotes student-directed discussion; “closed” promotes teacher-centered discussion.
  - *Open*: What do you think is the most important problem facing this patient?
  - *Closed*: Which of these is the most important problem facing this patient?

If the discussion is bogged down, asking more abstract questions gives maneuvering room and allows change in direction. If the discussion is too vague, asking challenge questions helps to move to the less abstract, which limits speculation and forces concrete statements and use of facts. Whether a question is personalized or not has considerable effect, e.g.: “How do you know that?” or “Why do you want that information?” is very different from “How do you think that fact was discovered?”
EVALUATE

- How well did your questions work?
- Did your questions do what you intended?

While there are many types that can be asked, QUESTIONS ALONG WITH STATEMENTS AND SILENCE (non-question techniques) all combine to enhance a discussion.

NON-QUESTION TECHNIQUES

a. silence
b. statements
   - Declarative statements
   - Reflective statements: repeating what has been said (stating again in the same form) and restating what has been said (stating again in a different or a summary form)
c. speaker referral
   - Stating the relation between what the speaker has just said and the case.
   - Stating the relation between what the speaker has just said and what the previous speaker said.
d. highlighting — Calls attention to a fact
e. polling
   - Posing the topic to other members of the group: “Let’s take a minute to hear what someone else is thinking.”
f. signals
   - Uttering a brief phrase
   - “Filler”

DISCUSSION DIMINISHES WHEN

- The teacher poses questions rapidly asking for factual information
- The students ask the teacher questions and receive answers directly
- There is less than a one second pause after a question
- Responses are judged. For example, saying: “Good John!” or “That’s excellent, Sally” will decrease broad student participation in the discussion.

Janet Palmer Hafler, Ed.D.