



Exercise: Asking Open-Ended Questions

Especially when workers are under stress, asking open-ended rather than closed questions may help to elicit useful information.

Closed questions tend to force a 'yes' or 'no' response. "*Do you have enough time to get this project done?*" is a closed question.

Open-ended questions, in contrast, solicit fuller and more detailed responses. "*How are you feeling about the timelines for this project?*" is an open-ended question. It is more likely to elicit an accurate and thoughtful response from a worker. The nature of open-ended questions, due to their inherent solicitation of a more detailed response, also tends to create more positive feelings in workers, because they are more likely to feel that their input is valued.

Go through your day asking open-ended questions. Be aware of the differences in responses you receive compared to the closed questions you have asked previously. How is the information you obtain different? Can you sense any difference in the tone of your interactions with workers?