

SESSION 2

WE ASK, WE LISTEN, WE LEARN

Purposes

- To discuss the fit between personal characteristics and service.
- To introduce and practice Listening Skills.
- To introduce and practice Questioning Skills.
- To connect Listening and Questioning Skills with interviewing for a community inventory.

Session at a Glance

Min		Activities	Materials
15	1	Welcome, warm-up exercise	Wall chart, prepared 3x5 cards
35	2	Review of Field Assignment and Training Objectives #1 - 4	Binders
45	3	Listening and Questioning Skills	Handout A, Handout B, wall chart
15	4	Community Inventory Assignment	Handout C, phone books, local papers
10	5	The Learning Store	Handout D

Preparation for the Session

1. Remind the members to bring their 3-ring binders to the session
2. Prepare two wall charts:
 - a) Session purposes.
 - b) Activity #3: Write these words in a list: Yes/No; Closed; Leading; Open.
3. Prepare 3x5 cards for Activity #1.
4. Copy and punch Handouts A – D for the members.
5. Review The Learning Store from Session 1.
6. Collect enough phone books and local papers so that each group of three has a supply.

Activity #1

Welcome, Warm-Up Exercise “Card-Swap”¹

15 minutes

STEPS

1. Welcome members and review the purposes of the session using the prepared wall chart.
2. Ask members to read Training Objectives #2 and #3 in their binders, page 9.
3. Call for and respond to any questions regarding the purpose of the session or the Training Objectives.
4. Inform the members that you are going to introduce today’s session with a short warm-up exercise.

CARD-SWAP¹

Facilitator Note: The purpose of a warm-up exercise is to put members at ease and introduce the session material in a relaxed manner. It also builds trust and sets the tone for full participation. For this activity you will need to prepare 3 X 5 cards or slips of paper (four cards per participant) with short statements related to personal characteristics written on them. You can use the list of 48 statements, page 52, to help you prepare the cards. If the group is larger than 12, you can repeat some of the statements or make up new ones.

STEPS

1. Lay out all the prepared 3x5 cards on a table.
2. Instruct each member to select four prepared cards at random and then to exchange the cards with other members until each person holds a set of cards that contains totally acceptable descriptions of themselves.
3. End the exercise after seven-ten minutes. *(Some members may still hold cards they don’t want but can’t trade off.)*
4. Thank the members and explain that this exercise leads in to the discussion of the field assignment.

¹ Adapted from *The Winning Trainer*, by Julius Eitington, Gulf Publishing, Houston, TX .1984.

Activity #2

Process Holland's Types and Service

35 minutes

STEPS

1. Ask the members to form groups of four- five.
2. Ask each group to choose a facilitator – someone who will keep the discussion moving and make certain that each group member contributes.
3. Ask each member to take five minutes to report the results of the Field Assignment, "Checking the Fit", to the rest of the small group. Tell members they have 20 minutes.
4. After 20 minutes, bring the groups together. Ask the large group: "Was anybody surprised by the results of the field assignment?" "Why?" (*Allow only five minutes for discussion.*)
5. Close the activity by thanking members for their responses, summarizing the main points of the discussion, and informing them that we will be revisiting and expanding on this topic in another session.

Activity #3

Listening and Questioning Skills

45 minutes

Facilitator Note: This activity has three sections:

- a. *Introduction to Listening Skills*
- b. *Introduction to Questioning Skills*
- c. *A Practice Interview Exercise*

Listening Skills

15 minutes

STEPS

1. Say to the members, "Think of someone in your life whom you consider to be a good listener. What are some of the behaviors that this person demonstrates when listening to others?"

Facilitator Note: Make sure to leave enough time – as much as 90 seconds – for members to reflect on this question before asking for responses.

2. After members have responded, mention that Handout A, page 54, can add to or reinforce what they already know about listening skills. Pass out Handout A and ask members to read it.

3. Close by asking, "Did you find anything important in this handout that was new information for you or do you have other information to share on listening?"

Questioning Skills

10 minutes

STEPS

1. Make the transition from the previous activity by pointing out that the information we are able to gather from an interview depends, to some extent, on the questions we ask. State that we will now spend a few minutes learning about four types of questions.

2. Post the wall chart with the four types of questions: Yes/No, Closed, Leading, Open.
3. Read aloud the questions below and ask the members to match each question to its type.
 - a. When you consider all of the terrible problems brought to our community by easy access to drugs, what are your concerns for our youth?
(Leading)
 - b. What opportunities or challenges does our community face?
(Open)
 - c. Which are the two neighborhoods in our community that have the greatest concerns about safety?
(Closed)
 - d. Do you think our community has issues or problems that should be addressed?
(Yes/No)
4. Distribute Handout B, page 56, and ask the members to read it.
5. Close this activity, then tell members that now that they have been thinking about listening skills and questioning skills, they will try out these two skills in a practice interview.

PRACTICE INTERVIEWS

20 minutes

STEPS

1. Ask the members to pair off, every member choosing someone he or she doesn't know very well. If the group has an odd number of members, the facilitator can be one member of a pair.
2. The purpose of this activity is for members to learn as much as possible about other members' AmeriCorps service. Tell the members that one member of each pair will interview the other member for five minutes. Then for the next five minutes, they will switch roles.
3. Give members two-three minutes to prepare their questions.

4. When the interviews are finished, ask the members to review the handouts on Listening and Questioning skills. Ask each member to do a “self-critique” of the listening and questioning skills done well and those that need improvement.
5. Finally, ask each member of a pair to tell his or her partner what the partner did well and what the partner should try to improve.
6. Close this activity by thanking members for their participation and summarizing the main points.

Activity #4

Field Assignment #2

15 minutes

STEPS

1. Make the transition from Activity #3 by pointing out that interviewing is linked to creating a **community inventory**. Explain the purpose of the inventory and describe what the inventory will look like (See Handout C, page 57).

Talking Points:

- A community inventory may reveal to members information and resources that they can bring to their current service.
 - A community inventory can expose members to new and interesting organizations and volunteer opportunities they may want to consider after their AmeriCorps service.
2. Ask the members to list the organizations and associations they know of that perform service work in the community. Examples include food banks, fire departments, homeless shelters. List these organizations on a wall chart.
 3. Form small groups of three members each.
 4. Distribute a phone book and/or local papers to each group. Instruct the members to look for other local organizations they can add to the list.
 5. Add organizations to the list on the wall chart.
 6. Ask each participant to choose one organization that he or she is interested in learning more about.
 7. Pass out Handout C, Field Assignment #2, page 57. Ask the members to read the assignment and answer any questions. Remind them to review their handouts as they decide on the questions they will ask in their interviews.
 8. Close this activity by suggesting that members who are having trouble finding a contact person in an organization ask their program directors for help.

Activity #5

The Learning Store

10 minutes

STEPS

1. Thank members for their comments on The Learning Store from Session 1.

Facilitator Note: If you haven't addressed common themes that you found in the Session 1 Learning Stores, now is the time to do so. Make sure you maintain anonymity.

2. Return the Session 1 Learning Stores to each member. Suggest that they keep them in their binders so that at a later date they can review their service experiences and develop action plans for the future.
3. Distribute Handout D, page 60, and tell the members that you look forward to reading their responses.

SESSION 2

MATERIALS

48 Personal Characteristic Statements	- 2 pages
Handout A, Listening is an Art, a Skill, and a Discipline	- 2 pages
Handout B, Types of Questions	- 1 page
Handout C, Field Assignment #2	- 2 pages
Handout D, The Learning Store	- 1 page

STATEMENTS FOR CARD-SWAP

I like everyone I meet.
New experiences are what I need most.
I have a high tolerance for ambiguity.
I am too creative to be a good team member.
I like fixing and repairing things.
I'm a listener and am quiet in conversations.
I enjoy talking and discussing ideas.
I like to exercise.
Generally, I dislike big groups.
On vacation, I would prefer to be outdoors with nature.
I enjoy figuring out crossword puzzles.
My favorite subject in school was math.
My favorite subject in school was art.
My favorite subject in school was English.
My favorite subject in school was science.
I play an instrument.
I like getting people organized and excited about a task.
I enjoy talking in front of groups.
I hate talking in front of groups.
My friends say I am very creative.
I like to dress differently.
I enjoy listening to music.
I'm very sensitive to other people's feelings.
I am very energetic.
I like taking risks.
I like driving fast.
I always like to dress well and look good.
I dress to be comfortable.
I like regular routines.
I am very detail-oriented.
I enjoy teaching children.
I am very reliable.
I am very spontaneous.
I am a meticulous, very safe driver.
I spend a lot of time choosing and wrapping presents.
I enjoy going to parties with new people.
I dislike going to parties with new people.
I am quiet and shy.

I am friendly and outgoing.

I make friends easily.

I play numerous sports.

I don't play any sports.

I am very family-oriented.

I crave adventure.

I crave stability and routines.

I judge people by the music they listen to.

I can learn a lot about someone by watching that person dance.

I like working with my hands.

Handout A

Listening is an Art, a Skill, and a Discipline.

Effective listening uses many senses. In his book, *The Seven Habits of Effective People*, Stephen Covey states, "Communication experts estimate . . . that only 10 percent of our communication is represented by the words we say. Another 30 percent is represented by our sounds, and 60 percent by our body language. In empathic listening, you listen with your ears, but you also and more importantly, listen with your eyes and with your heart. You listen for feeling, for meaning. You listen for behaviors."²

We have outlined several techniques that can be used to improve listening skills in the chart on the next page. However, we shouldn't confuse listening *techniques* with the *art* of listening. Good art comes from within. A person can learn theories of light and color and buy the recommended brands of paints and brushes, yet that won't make the person an artist. Likewise, effective listening uses many techniques, but those techniques fall short of the art of listening without a sincere desire to understand the other person.

Listening is also a discipline. Most people do not listen to *understand*; they listen to *reply*. This is not unusual because our thoughts run faster than any speaker can talk. It takes discipline to hold back the flood of thoughts that pour through our minds while we are listening. The desire to understand can only be fulfilled if we have the self-control to be silent, inwardly and outwardly.

A Cup of Tea

Nan-in, a Japanese master, received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen. They chatted a while. Nan-in then served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full, and then kept pouring. The professor watched the overflow until he could no longer restrain himself. "It is overfull. No more will go in," he exclaimed.

"Like this cup," Nan-in said, "you are full of your own judgments, opinions, and ideas. How can you learn Zen until you empty your first cup?"

A Zen Buddhist Koan – a centuries-old story about life

² Taken from *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Steven Covey, Simon & Schuster, NY, NY. 1989.

Handout A continued

Listening Techniques³

TYPES	PURPOSE	POSSIBLE RESPONSES
Clarify	1. To get additional facts 2. To help the speaker explore all sides of a problem	1. Can you clarify that? 2. Why...?
Restate	1. To check out meaning and interpretation 2. To show you are listening and that you understand 3. To summarize and bring focus to the discussion	1. As I understand it, your plan is... 2. Do you mean...? 3. It seems you feel.... 4. So, the main points are...
Neutral	1. To convey interest 2. To encourage the speaker	1. I see. 2. I understand. 3. Huh, huh.
Body Language	1. To encourage the speaker 2. To show interest and understanding	1. Nodding 2. Eye Contact 3. Sitting forward attentively

³ Adapted from Training for Transformation, by A. Hope, S. Timmel and C. Hodzi, Mambo Press Zimbabwe. 1988.

Handout B Types of Questions

Yes/No. This type of question can be answered with a simple "yes" or no." However, a simple yes or no is often not what the questioner is looking for. For example, the question, *"Do you think our community has issues or problems which need to be addressed?"* can be answered yes or no, but this response probably does not communicate all the questioner wants to hear.

Closed. This type of question usually refers to a specific topic and has a limited number of factual responses. The question, *"What are the two neighborhoods in our community which have the greatest concerns with safety?"* is an example. Closed questions are useful for gathering and organizing information.

Leading. A leading question often includes words that direct the respondent's answer as in this example: *"When you consider all of the terrible problems brought to our community by easy access to drugs, what are your concerns for our youth?"* The words "terrible," "easy," and "concerns," slant the question in a particular way. This type of question is useful when trying to motivate people or involve them in a project. It should be avoided when you want to gather new or unbiased information.

Open. Open questions have the widest range of answers. For this reason, they can be very productive in the early stages of information gathering and brainstorming. The drawback of this type of question is that the information gathered can be difficult to categorize. For example, the question, *"What opportunities or challenges does our community face?"* may generate answers that involve political, economic, and educational factors.

Handout C

Field Assignment #2 Creating a Community Inventory

- a) Set up an appointment with a person in the organization you chose and ask for a 20-minute informational interview.
- b) Before the interview, review the handouts from this session. Use the sheet on the next page as a guide to write out your interview questions. In addition to the questions found on the next page, you may consider some of the following, "Sample Civic Inventory Questions":³
 - Who are the local leaders? To whom do people turn to get things done? How can you work with them?
 - What roles do religious congregations, schools, nonprofit organizations, and local businesses play in the community?
 - What relationships exist among community members? Between this community and others?
 - What are the community's social and cultural attitudes toward the problem you are addressing and the specific work you are doing?
 - What other service work has been done in the community? What lessons were learned?
- c) During the interview, take notes on a separate sheet of paper. Collect any available brochures or other written material about the organization.
- d) After the interview, complete the Community Inventory sheet.
- e) For next month's session, **prepare a three-minute oral report** on your interview findings.

³ By *The People*, edited by Henry Boyte

Tips for Setting up and Conducting an Informational Interview

- When calling for an appointment, give your name, organization and the reason you are calling. Ask if the director or other contact person is available for a 20-minute informational interview. Make sure to record the day, date, and time of the interview and the directions to the interview site.
- Dress appropriately and arrive on time.
- Introduce yourself again and explain the purpose of the interview.
- Take notes and keep track of time.
- Follow up with a thank-you letter.

COMMUNITY INVENTORY

Name and Address of Organization:

Contact person:

Beneficiaries of Organization's Services:

Goals of the Organization:

Main Activities:

Main Accomplishments:

Brief History:

How Volunteers are Utilized:

Any Additional Information:

Handout D

The Learning Store, Session 2

In order to help us better serve your learning needs, and to help you reinforce your own learning, please take a few minutes and thoughtfully answer the following questions about today's session. Please give this completed form to your facilitator. Thanks very much for your input.

Name:

1. Please list at least three things you learned or relearned today that you think will come in handy.
2. What did you find the most useful in the Field Assignment?
3. Was there anything you found less useful in today's session? If so, what was it?
4. What did you especially like about today's session?
5. What aspect(s) of this session could be changed to make it better in the future?