

## **Developing Discussion Questions**

As part of a lesson, prepare several discussion questions. Preparing questions in advance helps start conversations and keep them going. Good questions encourage participation and can make the difference between an engaging discussion and a room full of silence. Sometimes discussion questions follow directly after the icebreaker. Other times, they are a part of the learning activities. Like good icebreakers, open discussion questions should not be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” Examples of discussion questions can be found later in this module. If writing them, follow the guidelines below.

### **Guidelines for Writing or Choosing Discussion Questions:**

#### **Do:**

- Make sure the questions are related to the class’ learning objectives.
- Choose questions that allow participants to relate the topic to their own experiences, background or perspectives.
- Start general and get more specific.
- Use “could” instead of “should,” as this subtle word change opens the door for different perspectives.
- Include questions related to major behavior change drivers (e.g., skills, self-efficacy, role-modeling).

#### **Example:**

**Objective:** To increase the parents’ self-efficacy or confidence to offer their children new foods.

**Discussion Question:** “What are some ways to successfully introduce new foods to a child?”

This question allows parents to hear ideas from their peers and think about the times that they have been successful in introducing new foods. Both peer modeling and building on prior successes may boost confidence.

#### **Avoid:**

- Questions that can be answered with a “yes,” “no,” or other one-word answer.
  - Avoid: “Do your children like vegetables?”
  - Better option: “What are some ways to prepare vegetables that children will eat?”

- Questions that ask respondents to simply state a fact.
  - Avoid: “Should children eat vegetables each day?”
  - Better option: “What are some benefits to feeding children vegetables?”
- Rhetorical Questions.
  - Avoid: “Isn’t it the parents’ responsibility to eat vegetables and model a healthy diet?”
  - Better option: “How do you think parents’ eating habits influence or shape children’s?”
- Questions in which the instructor has a specific answer in mind. This puts the respondents in the position of trying to guess what the instructor is thinking and can shut down a discussion.

**Sample Discussion Questions:** [Note: Examples in parentheses can be substituted with relevant topics.]

Questions that explore skills and self-efficacy:

- What are some preparation techniques for [*whole grains*]?
- What are methods to get children to eat [*vegetables*]?
- What are some ways to [*prepare food*] so that children eat it?
- What are some ways to handle a child who would not [*eat vegetables*]?
- What can be done when children will not [*eat a healthy dinner*]?
- Share a successful experience about [*introducing a new food to your child*].
- How comfortable are you when it comes to [*being physically active*] with your child?

Questions that explore role modeling:

- How often do your children watch adults [*eat fruits and vegetables*]?
- What are some ways to set a good example for your children?

Questions that explore child preference:

- What do your children like to eat?
- What [*vegetables, fruits, etc.*] do your children like to eat?

Questions that explore parental attitudes and feelings:

- What are some concerns about [*how your children eat*]?

- What are some feelings about [*weaning from the bottle*]?
- What are some feelings about the [*amount of food your child eats*]?

Questions that explore the situation:

- Describe [mealtimes at *home*]?
- What are some methods used to plan ahead for a [*healthy dinner*]?

Questions to explore barriers:

- What are some challenges concerning [*eating healthy*]?
- Describe some frustrations.

Questions that explore current recommendations for healthy living:

- Describe the current recommendation for [*physical activity*].
- About how much [*milk*] should children consume each day?

Questions to get parent input:

- What are some suggestions for [comforting a fussy child without using food]?
- What has worked?
- How did you start [using a sippy cup]?
- What are some recommendations for other parents?