

Communication Skills Lab 4: Interviewing Children



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Unit 4.1: Debrief of Field Observations of Exploring and Focusing Skills

Effective Interview Openings

- Respectful greeting
- Purpose explained
- Personal expression offered
- Immediate concerns addressed
- Any suggested improvements

Information Gathering

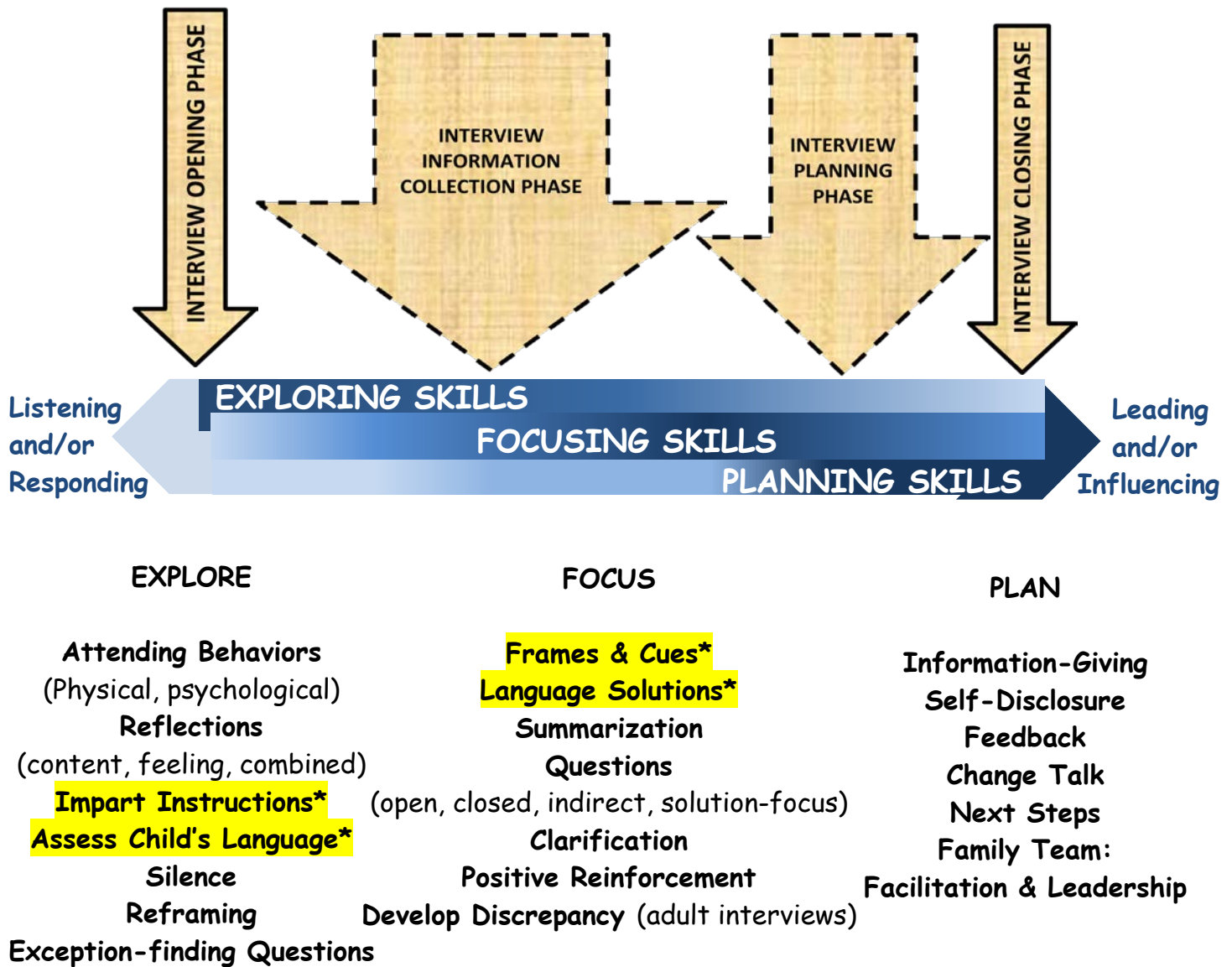
- Appropriate mix of exploring skills
- Appropriate mix of focusing skills
- Examples of:
 - Conversational flow to interview?
 - Reframes
 - Positive feedback
 - Developing discrepancy
- Suggested improvements?

Unit 4.2: The Power of Simplicity

Child Interview Types

- **Investigative interviews**
Associated with a child protection investigation to determine if specific incidents of maltreatment have occurred and if a child is safe (present and impending danger)
- **Child safety and well-being**
Interviews conducted by case managers and other child welfare system specialists working with children in the system who have been determined to be unsafe. Case managers assess the sufficiency of child safety plans through-out the child's involvement in the child welfare system.
- **Forensic interviews**
Conducted by a specially-trained law enforcement officer or interviewer who uses specific techniques for gathering evidence for a criminal investigation and possible prosecution.
 - Child Protection Teams
 - Child Advocacy Center
 - Law Enforcement
- **Therapeutic interviews**
Are conducted by mental health professional to determine the child's perceptions of events and how the events affected the child.

ENGAGEMENT SKILLS CONTINUUM



*Terms unique to child interviews or persons with developing English proficiency.

Ten Step Investigative Interview

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(Adaptation of the NICHD Investigative Interview Protocol)

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CHILD

1. DON'T KNOW instruction

- If I ask you a question and you don't know the answer, then just say, "I don't know."
- So if I ask you "What is my dog's name?" what do you say?
- OK, because you don't know.
- But what if I ask you "Do you have a dog?"
- OK, because you do know.

2. DON'T UNDERSTAND instruction

- If I ask you a question and you don't know what I mean or what I'm saying, you can say, "I don't know what you mean." I will ask it a different way.
- So if I ask you "What is your gender?" what do you say?
- That's because "gender" is a hard word. So I would say, "Are you a boy or a girl?"
- For child who knows what gender means, ask "What is my orientation?"

3. YOU'RE WRONG instruction

- Sometimes I make mistakes or say the wrong thing. When I do, you can tell me that I am wrong.
- So if I say, "You are thirty years old," what do you say?
- OK, so how old are you?

4. IGNORANT INTERVIEWER instruction

- I don't know what's happened to you.
- I won't be able to tell you the answers to my questions.

5. PROMISE TO TELL THE TRUTH instruction

- It's really important that you tell me the truth.
- Do you promise that you will tell me the truth?
- Are you going to tell me any lies?

6. NARRATIVE PRACTICE

- **LIKE TO DO/DON'T LIKE TO DO**

- First, I'd like you to tell me about things you LIKE to do.
- Follow up with TELL ME MORE questions. e.g., "You said you like to play soccer. Tell me more about soccer."
- Now tell me about the things you DON'T LIKE to do.
- Follow up with TELL ME MORE questions.

- **LAST BIRTHDAY (Any event with beginning, middle and end.)**

- Now tell me about your last birthday. Tell me everything that happened.
- FOLLOW UP with WHAT HAPPENED NEXT questions. e.g., "You said you played in the bouncy. What did you do next?"

7. ALLEGATION (If child discloses abuse, go directly to ALLEGATION FOLLOW UP. Determine IN ADVANCE which allegation questions you will ask.)

a. Tell me why I came to talk to you.

Or, Tell me why you came to talk to me.

It's really important for me to know why I came to talk to you/you came to talk to me.

b. I heard you saw

e.g., "I heard you saw a policeman last week. Tell me what you talked about."

c. Someone's worried

e.g., "Is your mom worried that something may have happened to you? Tell me what she is worried about."

d. Someone bothered you

e.g., "I heard that someone might have bothered you. Tell me everything about that."

e. Something wasn't right

e.g., "I heard that someone may have done something to you that wasn't right. Tell me everything about that."

8. ALLEGATION FOLLOW-UP

You said that (repeat allegation). Tell me everything that happened.

e.g., "You said that Uncle Bill hurt your pee-pee. Tell me everything that happened."

9. Follow up with TELL ME MORE and WHAT HAPPENED NEXT questions

Avoid yes/no and forced-choice questions.

10. MULTIPLE INCIDENTS

Did (repeat allegation) happen one time or more than one time?

Tell me everything that happened the time you remember the most...

Tell me everything that happened the first time...

Tell me everything that happened the last time...

Was there another time...

Ask open-ended questions

Tell me...

What
Who
When
Where
How

Avoid...

Did
Was
Can you tell me?
Do you know?
OR (multiple-choices)

Interviews at School

- Find quiet, private setting
- Wait for natural break in child's schedule
- Help child regain composure before going back to class

Explaining Interview Purpose

- Introduce yourself and your role
- Explain purpose of interview
- Address child concerns/misconceptions
- Discuss limits of confidentiality

Interviewing Essentials

1. Never lie to a child - but DO give them information in a manner and narrative consistent with their ability to understand what you're saying.
2. Never promise a child you will keep them safe (shelter petitions are denied by judges and you never really know for sure how a parent will react) – but DO talk about things you are going to do to make things safer for them.
3. Fully explore who else knows about the maltreatment incident(s) so you can intentionally re-direct the parent's focus off of what the child may have shared (i.e., "I've talked with many/several individuals who knew about the incident," etc.,).
4. Make definitive plans with the child regarding what the child should do if the parent is angry with them or starts pressuring the child to recant their story (e.g., "Tell a responsible adult immediately – an adult family or extended family member they trust, a teacher, guidance counselor, pastor or for older children, provide them with your direct cell phone number, etc.,).

Tips to Consider When Talking With a Child in Distress

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a trusting relationship by first showing your interest in the child; show you are concerned. • Regardless of how shocking a child's statements might be, maintain your openness and composure. Never appear shocked at what the child says. • Don't stifle a child's trust by expressing disbelief or outrage. • Be careful not to express a negative or discrediting attitude toward a child's parents. • Let the child go at his/her pace. Listen and pick up on verbal and non-verbal clues the child gives. Do not talk too much yourself. • You may wish to use drawing materials to provide diversion and lessen the tension. • Let the younger child use a less threatening way to speak, through a doll, a puppet, a toy or a drawing for example. • Don't convey anger or impatience if the child is not ready to discuss troubling issues. • Never ask "why" questions. • Try to arrange to talk with adolescents in a recreational setting. They may be more ready to talk while shooting a few baskets or walking the track. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with the child in a quiet place where you will be relatively alone, if you have control over the setting. More than one person may be intimidating to the child. • If a child begins to feel discomfort and wants to break off the conversation, allow him/her to do so. Be alert for the child's readiness to discuss the situation at a later date. • Listen for conflicting statements which may be the child attempting to cover an incident at the directions of a parent, or from loyalty or fear of retaliation from the person who abused them. • Use the child's own works (especially in cases of sexual abuse) and check to make sure you both understand their meaning. • Remember a child may feel some anxiety after telling you about his/her situation. • You can help the child most by believing the child through the process. • If you feel you should report abuse or neglect, explain this carefully to the child and reassure him/her that your care about both him/her and his/her parents. Explain that you need to tell someone who has helped other children and who may be able to help his/her family. • Do not assure a child that he/she will not have to leave home. If the child asks, only assure that as a child welfare worker you will talk with the family members and try to help them. • Above all, don't promise the child anything that may not happen (for example, "It will be all better"). |
|---|---|

Unit 4.3: Language Assessment and Narrative Practice

Suggestibility

- Inadvertent interviewer influence.
- Coaching or shaping by a caregiver.
- Coercion not to tell.

Frames

- Lets the child know the topic
- Keeps interview focus
- Redirect a child's focus
- Can go back to it

Narrative: Helping the child tell their story

1. Who are characters and where does it take place?
2. What made event come about?
3. What happened?
4. What were the motivations/goals of main characters?
5. What were the attitudes/emotions of main characters?
6. What were the consequences and conclusion?

Language Assessment

- Vocabulary
- Comprehension
- Memory
- Attention span

Language Challenges: Pre-School Age (3-5 years)

- Literal and concrete
- Reluctant to admit they don't understand
- Yes bias
- Early language development
- Can recite but don't know (e.g., numbers)
- Kinship
- Pronouns
 - he/she
 - we/they
 - this/that/it
 - here/there
- Correct use of Prepositions
 - Inside/outside
 - Behind
 - Between
- Understanding of words that are "absolutes"
 - always/never
 - anyone/someone
 - any/anything/any where
 - Ever
- Distinction between ask and tell

Language Assessment: Pre-School Age (3-5 years)

- Clarity of speech and language use
 - Vocabulary
 - Sentences (short, long)
- Concepts (Who, what, where)
- Attention span
- Memory
- Colors, numbers
- Prepositions (On, Under, In, etc.,)

Other ways to confuse a child...

- More than one idea in a sentence
- Asking a question that requires advanced mastery of concepts
- Complex negation
- Asking “WHY?”

Faces Chart



Afraid



Confused



Surprised



Sad



Excited



Disgusted



Proud



Angry



Sick



Happy



Very Happy



Hungry



Lost



Shy



Sleepy



Embarrassed



Unhappy



Very Sad



Tired



Worried

Some Common Language Challenges and Language Solutions for Child Interviews

Note: The use of appropriate interviewing questions and other skills to support a child interview are essential to gathering dependable information from a child. The following is a summary of some of the language challenges and language solutions that should be used in conjunction with other interviewing skills.

Language Challenge: Ability to narrate what happened with adequate sequencing and details is an advanced language skill, may not be present until later latency or adolescence age.

Language Solution: Use frames, cues and information from interviewer's language assessment of child to adapt questions appropriately to support the child's recounting of what happened.

Language Challenge: Pre-school children are very literal

Language Solution: Be sure to learn the name child uses for any word that might be misunderstood (e.g., Child thinks of residence as "apartment" and asking about what happened in "house" is not understood by child to mean "apartment."

Language Challenge: Pre-school and latency age children have unique words for anatomy; may not know gender differences; may not know differences between 'ok' touch and 'not ok' touch

Language Solutions: Draw simple male and female pictures, have child identify name for each part, writing their name for parts on the drawing. Have child identify what it is ok to touch, not ok to touch. (Do not use term good/bad in reference to touch.)

Language Challenge: Pre-school children do not understand abstract concepts; latency age children will understand at some point in their language development (e.g., pretend/real; truth/lie; numbers; time/days/months/years)

Language Solutions: Ask child to demonstrate, not explain. Examples:

- Pretend/Real-- Point to stuffed animal or cartoon character on child's shirt and ask "Is that real?"
- Truth/lie-- Point to yourself and say, "I am a turtle. Is that true?"
- With pre-school children do not ask when or how many times something has happened. Stick with use of "first time" and "last time." For example,
 - *Tell me everything that happened the time you remember the most...*
 - *Tell me everything that happened the first time...*
 - *Tell me everything that happened the last time...*
 - *Was there another time?*
- Establish the child's knowledge of night and day, earlier and later. You can ask questions like "When do you eat breakfast?" Then ask "Is that daytime or nighttime or what?"
- Learn the child's knowledge of time frames of familiar things, ("How long is the 'Barney' show.")

- You can check a latency age child's ability to tell time by having them read a watch or clock, both conventional and digital.

Language Challenge: Pre-school and some latency age children may not know kinship relationships (may refer to several different persons as "auntie" "dad" "papa" etc.,)

Language Solution: Determine child's specific name for people in the home and who visit.

- Create simple drawing of home, people who live there and write names. Ask child to draw or write names if they are able.
- Draw a family tree (school-age children).

Language Challenge: Pre-school and some latency age children do not know correct use of pronouns Keeping track of pronouns in one sentence can be difficult for children, create misunderstandings and affect a child's credibility (e.g., he/she; we/they; this/that/it; here/there; anything; anyone).

Language Solution: Always use child's name or word for specific person, place, and/or object names instead of pronoun

- Always conduct a clarification check to ensure that child and interviewer are talking about same person, place or thing

Language Challenge: Pre-school and some latency age children and some adolescents cannot process more than one idea in a sentence.

Language Solution: Use short questions-- one person, one verb one object. Use specific names, not pronouns. Use child's words and terms.

Language Challenge: Across all age groups, difficulty in understanding and correctly answering questions with negatives (e.g., Didn't he? Did you not say? Wasn't your mother at home?). Negative questions tend to elicit a 'no' response.

Language Solution: Word questions in a neutral way, e.g., "You said that 'dad' did (child words). Who in your family saw (child words for what dad did)?"

Lab Activity 5: Demonstrating Language Solutions

WRITTEN EXAMPLES OF LANGUAGE SOLUTIONS

Instructions: Provide a written solution for the following problematic questions. The solution may also require more than one question. Underline the problematic part of the sentence. Write a more appropriate question (solution) and a good follow-up question to obtain additional information.

1. "He yelled at you."

Solution:

Follow-up:

2. "What happened before and after you fell down?"

Solution:

Follow-up:

3. "You did not get spanked for telling a lie."

Solution:

Follow-up:

4. "You went to the emergency room and do you remember why?"

Solution:

Follow-up:

5. "Before you ate dinner she told you to wash your hands?"

Solution:

Follow-up:

6. "Are you saying that you fell off your bike or did your dad tell you to say that?"

Solution:

Follow-up:

7. “Did you ever tell somebody that your babysitter did those things and she scared you?”

Solution:

Follow-up:

8. “The last time your dad was smoking that stuff, was it yesterday or last week?”

Solution:

Follow-up:

9. “Do you know who Ms. Jones is?”

Solution:

Follow-up:

10. Didn't you think he would send you to your room for that?

Solution:

Follow-up:

Lab Activity 6: What to ask a Four-Year-Old

Instructions: Develop 3-5 questions for each of the following categories. One person in group should record group answers on the newsprint provided.

1. What are the child's physical skills? Are there any indicators of concern?
2. What are the child's socio-emotional skills? Are there any indicators of concern?
3. What are the child's cognitive skills? Are there any indicators of concern?
4. What is the child's relationship with his/her parent or caregiver?
5. How is the child disciplined?

Language Skills: Latency Age (6-11)

Challenges:

- Significant differences in maturity.
- Thinking is still concrete.
- Experience embarrassment/shame/guilt
- Moral responsibility
- Loyalty to family
- Developing memory strategies

Language Assessment:

- Knowledge of DOB, address, city/state of residence, kinship
- Style of speech, including affect
- Narrative details & vocabulary
- Understanding of time
- Ability to describe feelings

Lab Activity 7: What to ask a Nine-Year-Old

- Develop 3-5 correctly worded OPEN questions for each of the following categories that you would ask a 9-year-old in order to learn information about the child's functioning.
- One person should also record answers on the newsprint provided.

1. What are the child's physical skills? Are there any indicators of concern?

2. What are the child's socio-emotional skills? Are there any indicators of concern?

3. What are the child's cognitive skills? Are there any indicators of concern?

4. What is the child's relationship with his/her parent or caregiver?

5. How is the child disciplined?

Interviewing Considerations for Adolescents (12-18)

- Adolescents may have a gender preference for interviewer
- Allow the victim to control pace if at all possible
- Acknowledge disclosure may make things worse before they get better
- Recognize consensual sexual history confuses the issue
- Recognize they may be younger emotionally than they appear physically
- Accept their need for accountability

Lab Activity 8: What to ask a Fifteen-Year-Old

- Develop 3-5 correctly worded OPEN questions for each of the following categories that you would ask a 15-year-old in order to learn information about the child's functioning.
- One person should also record your answers on the newsprint provided.

1. What are the child's physical skills? Are there any indicators of concern?

2. What are the child's socio-emotional skills? Are there any indicators of concern?

3. What are the child's cognitive skills? Are there any indicators of concern?

4. What is the child's relationship with his/her parent or caregiver?

5. How is the child disciplined?

Unit 4.4: Learning about Maltreatment and Safety

Lab Activity 9: Asking Child about Adult Functioning, Parenting and Discipline

Instructions: In your groups identify questions for each of the following topics. One person should record questions on newsprint.

1. Home environment
2. Care routines
3. People in child's life
4. Discipline/Physical abuse/Family violence
5. Substance abuse

‘Menu’ of Different Questions for Children about Care Routines and Family Conditions

Note: Must be adapted as necessary based on language assessment.

Questions about the home environment:

- Who lives at your house?
- Who comes to visit?
- Tell me what your house is like.
- Where do you sleep?
- Where do others sleep? Do you have a bed?
- Who cleans?
- Where do the pets go to the bathroom?
- Who does the laundry?
- What do you like/dislike about your house?

Questions about care routines:

- Who takes care of you?
- How do they do it?
- Are there things you like about how they do it?
- Are there any things you don’t like?
- Who puts you to bed? What time?
- Who cooks?
- What meals do you eat?
- What do you eat?
- Are there any times when there’s no food?
- What do you do then?
- When ____ isn’t there, who takes care of you? (If the child describes being alone, ask ...)
- Is there someone you can call?
- How long are you alone?
- Are there any younger kids you look out for?
- Who helps you get dressed?
- Who sees you get to school?
- Who takes care of you when you’re sick or hurt?
- Tell me about bath time.

Questions about people:

- Tell me about _____.
- What is _____ like?
- Are there things you and _____ do together?
- Do you do things alone with _____?
- Are there things you like about _____?
- Are there things you don't like about _____? What?
- Are there things _____ does to you that you don't like?
- Are there things _____ does to your body that you don't like?
- To what part?
- Does _____ hurt you in any way? How?
- Who hurts your feelings?
- Who are the people who live in your house?
- Does someone else come to the house a lot? Do they spend the night?
- Do you have any secrets with grownups?

Questions about discipline/physical abuse/violence:

- What happens when you (or anybody else) misbehave?
- What happens when _____ gets mad?
- Tell me about scary things people do at your house.
- Tell me how your parents settle arguments.
- Can you tell me how your mom got the bruise?
- Are there any other ways they treat you when you misbehave?
- What ways do they punish at your house?
- To spank, do they use a hand or something else?
- What does that feel like?
- How long does it hurt?
- Does it ever leave a mark?
- Is it a red mark or a bruise?
- Usually how long does it take for it to go away?
- Do your parents ever disagree about how you get punished?
- Did you ever have to go to the doctor because of a punishment?

Questions about substance abuse:

- What is your favorite drink?
- What do your parents like to drink?
- Does anyone at your house smoke? What do they smoke?
- Tell me how your parents relax.
- Tell me about anything your parents drink or take that makes them act different.
- Who are your parent's friends? What happens when they come over?
- Do your parents drink things you can't?
- Do your parents eat/take things you can't?

Learning about Maltreatment

Learning about maltreatment:

- Contributes information to know if child is safe or not safe
- Provides legal evidence for sheltering a child (probable cause)
- Provides legal evidence for dependency petition (preponderance of evidence)
- As a “First Responder,” your performance is critical to the rest of any criminal investigation

Memory research:

- Children have memories of events
- Specific questions yield information
- Errors in memory increase with the wrong questions about details

Script Memory

The memory of a repeated event, such as your morning routine, bedtime routine or going to McDonalds. Central, common features can be recalled, but the details of any one specific time might be blurred.

Episodic Memory

Remembering a specific event. If the event is personally significant, even preschoolers can remember it and more reliable details can be retrieved.

Guidelines for Age-Appropriate Interview Questions

Age	Who	What	Where	When	#of Times	Circumstances
3						
4-6						
7-8						
9-10						
11-12						

Appropriate Cues vs. Leading Questions

Leading Question

- Your dad really didn't break your arm, did he?

Appropriate Cue

- Tell me how your arm got broken.

Leading Question

- There are secrets in your family, aren't there?

Appropriate Cue

- I am wondering if there are secrets in your family?

Child Sexual Abuse Needs to be Explored When

- Child may have made intentional disclosure before interview
- Reporter may have concerns about sexualized behaviors, no disclosure
- Perpetrator violence towards adult spouse/partner
- Child lives with other child(ren) who have been sexually abused

Questions about Possible Sexual Abuse

- Use child's drawings and words from language assessment.
- Conduct "Touch Inquiry"
 - Ask questions to clarify whether any 'not ok' touches have happened.
- Who, what, where, when...
- Obtain sensory details.

Touch Inquiry

- Establishes where the child believes it is ok and not ok to get touches.
- You need to remain open to the possibility that the child does not know what is "ok or not ok."
- Do not use the terms "good touch" or "bad touch."
- It is not your job as an investigator to explain to the child the difference between good touch and bad touch. This would have the possible effect of "leading" the child's answers.

Considerations Regarding Disclosures/Child Statements

- Who did the child disclose to first? Next?
- Documentation in case notes of details provided by child.
- The questions asked by the interviewer to elicit the response are crucial to document in case notes for possible criminal proceedings.

Questions to Discuss Possible Sexual Abuse

Note: Must be adapted (or not asked) based on language assessment.

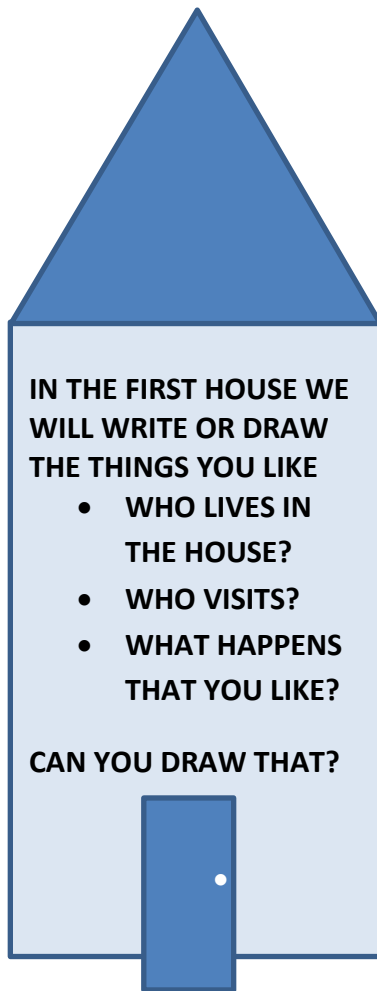
Questions pertaining to the penis:

- Do you know what the private parts are on a boy/girl? How did you learn this?
- What do you call this part? (***IMPORTANT*** Use the child's name for the part for further questioning.)
- Who has one?
- What is it for?
- Is it ever used for something besides _____?
- Did you ever see one?
- Whose?
- When?
- What was he doing?
- Did you ever see it another time?
- Did you ever have to do something to one?
- Did someone ever do something to you with one?
- How did he do that?
- Do you remember whether the penis was sticking up or hanging down? (Kids often get confused over the question of "hard" or "soft.")
- Did anything come out of the end of it?
- What did the stuff look like?
- What color was it?
- What did it taste like?

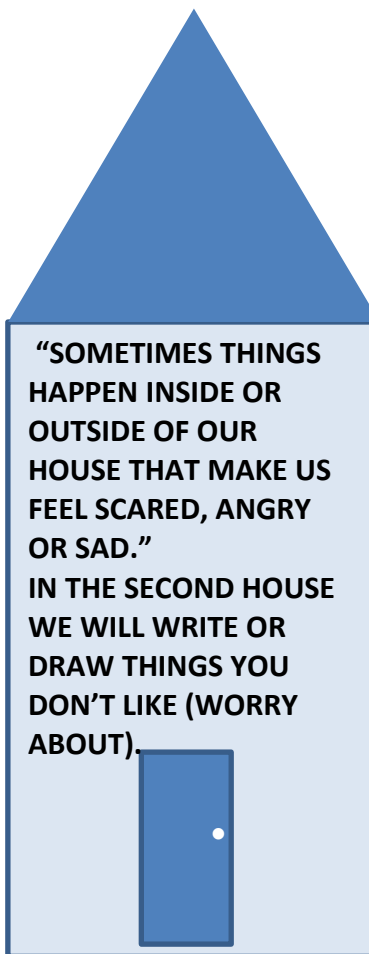
Questions pertaining to the vagina:

- What do you call this part? (Use child's word.) Who has a _____?
- Do you have one?
- What is it for?
- Did something ever happen to yours?
- Did someone ever hurt you there?
- Did someone ever do anything to your _____?
- What did they do?
- Who was it?
- What did _____ use when _____ did it?
- What part of his/her body did he/she use?
- Was it on top of your clothes or underneath?
- Was it on the outside of your _____ or inside?
- Do you remember what it felt like?

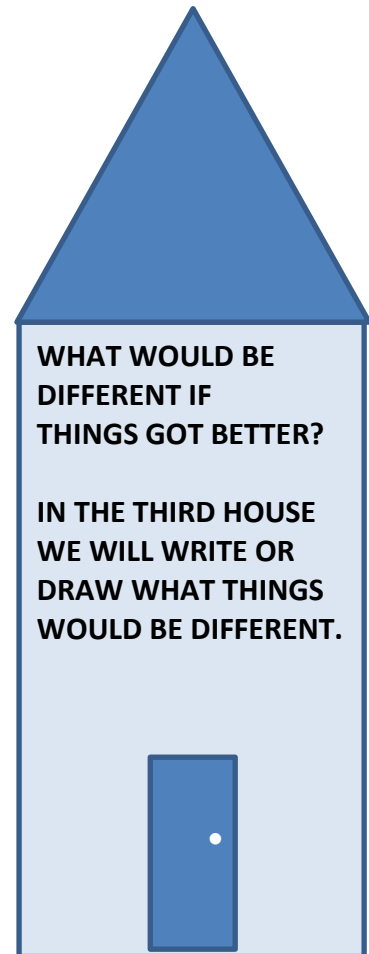
“Three Houses”
developed by Nikki Weld and Sonja Parker.



House of Good Things



House of Worries



**House of
Wishes/Dreams**

Lab Activity 10: Asking Child about Details

Instructions: Based on the guidelines for age appropriate interview questions (refer back to 'Age/Guidelines' slide) as well as what you have learned about child language skills, indicate which ages the question is appropriate for, and as necessary given child language skills, rework the questions.

1. Did anything happen when your step-dad watched you?

Three-year-old:

Four-year-old:

Seven-year-old:

Nine-year-old:

Eleven-year-old:

2. Do you remember the last time this happened?

Three-year-old:

Four-year-old:

Seven-year-old:

Nine-year-old:

Eleven-year-old:

3. Do you know how old you were when it started?

Three-year-old:

Four-year-old:

Seven-year-old:

Nine-year-old:

Eleven-year-old:

4. Did it happen one time, two times, or lots of times?

Three-year-old:

Four-year-old:

Seven-year-old:

Nine-year-old:

Eleven-year-old:

5. Where did it happen?

Three-year-old:

Four-year-old:

Seven-year-old:

Nine-year-old:

Eleven-year-old:

6. Where was your mom when it happened?

Three-year-old:

Four-year-old:

Seven-year-old:

Nine-year-old:

Eleven-year-old:

7. Where were the other kids?

Three-year-old:

Four-year-old:

Seven-year-old:

Nine-year-old:

Eleven-year-old:

8. Did it happen in the day or night or both?

Three-year-old:

Four-year-old:

Seven-year-old:

Nine-year-old:

Eleven-year-old:

Unit 4.5: Child Interviewing Skills Practice

Child Interviewing Skills Checklist

1. Opening Phase of Interview

- a. Build rapport
 - Introduce self and job in simple way
 - Explain interview purpose and what will happen after
 - Give child chance to ask questions
- b. Provide interview instructions
 - Don't know instruction
 - Don't understand instruction
 - You're wrong instruction
 - Ignorant interviewer
 - Promise to tell the truth
 - Use of positive reinforcement
- c. Conduct language assessment
 - Style and attention span
 - Pretend vs. real (truth/lie)
 - Child words (Names) for family members
 - Child words for anatomy
 - Comprehension of abstract concepts (time, numbers)
 - Ability to provide descriptive details

2. Information collection

- a. Use clear language
 - Interviewing style matched to child's style
 - Use of "easy" words
 - Use of child words
 - Clarify child use of words
 - Use specific names instead of pronouns
- b. Use attending behaviors, especially psychological following

- c. Ask appropriate questions
 - Avoid use of sentences with more than one idea
 - Alert child with new “frame” when shifting topics
 - Help child organize the telling of his/her story
 - Ask child to demonstrate rather than explain abstract concepts
 - Clarify meaning of important words and information
 - Avoid use of “negatives”
- d. Provide child with positive reinforcement for instruction use through-out the interview
- e. Guide interview and questions from general to specific

3. Interview Closing

- a. Discuss next steps
- b. Answer any questions child had
- c. Affirm child for sharing information

Lab Activity 11: Demonstrating Child Interviewing Skills

HOTLINE INTAKE FOR INTERVIEW WITH MATT

The hotline intake alleges that mother recently tested positive for methamphetamine and admitted to using during her monthly visit with her probation officer. Mom has her three children, Jesse (age 9), Matt (age 5) and Luke (age 2) living with her. These children were under mom's care while she was using and under the influence. Mom lives alone, although the reporter knows that maternal grandmother helps care for the children. Mom is currently unemployed. It appears that Jesse takes care of his brothers often. Matt is an active 5 year-old and appears to be smart for his age. Matt has not been in day care or pre-K for the last week as he did not have his physical completed or the required paperwork. He is excited about starting school. Luke is not yet speaking or potty trained.

Child Interviewing Skills Observation (Lab)

Person Conducting Observation _____

Person Observed _____

Instructions:

This tool is for purposes of recording information about skills used during a child interview. The observations should “catch” behaviorally specific details of some positive and negative examples. It is not expected to capture any analysis of every interviewing skill observed, only the highlights. Observations on all five of the instructions must be included.

1. Opening Phase of Interview

- a. Build rapport
 - Introduce self and job in simple way
 - Explain interview purpose and what will happen after
 - Give child chance to ask questions
- b. Provide interview instructions
 - Don't know instruction
 - Don't understand instruction
 - You're wrong instruction

- Ignorant interviewer
- Promise to tell the truth
- Use of positive reinforcement
- c. Conduct language assessment
 - Style and attention span
 - Pretend versus real (truth/lie)
 - Child words (Names) for family members
 - Child words for anatomy
 - Comprehension of abstract concepts (time, numbers)
 - Ability to provide descriptive details

2. Information collection

- a. Use clear language
 - Interviewing style matched to child's style

- Use of “easy” words
 - Use of child words
 - Clarify child use of words
 - Use specific names instead of pronouns
- b. Use attending behaviors especially psychological following
- c. Ask appropriate questions
- Avoid use of sentences with more than one idea
 - Alert child with new “frame” when shifting topics
 - Help child organize the telling of his/her story
 - Ask child to demonstrate rather than explain abstract concepts

- Clarify meaning of important words and information
- Avoid use of “negatives”
- d. Provide child with positive reinforcement for instruction use through-out the interview
- e. Guide interview and questions from general to specific

3. Interview Closing

- a. Discuss next steps
- b. Answer any questions child had
- c. Affirm child for sharing information

Field Activities for Child Interview

1. Conduct a field observation of a child interview, documenting your observations on the “Child Interviewing Skills Observations” in your participant guide. Remember to develop a working agreement with the person you observe. Any of the following types of professionals may be observed:
 - CPI
 - Case Manager
 - Adoptions Specialist
 - Independent Living Specialist
 - Child Protection Team/Children’s Advocacy Center forensic interviewer (this would need to be worked out with your supervisor)

Try to “catch” detailed examples of effective skills observed, and some examples of missed opportunities. The goal is not to capture a detailed analysis of all skills observed, just highlights. Bring your written observation to Lab 5 as we will begin with a debriefing.

2. Conduct a child interview that is observed by another participant from this class, a field support consultant, or other individual as agreed by your trainer and supervisor. The person who observes you is expected to record their observations and conduct a feedback session with you.
3. The interview may be any of the following:
 - A child who is part of your extended family network, or a family friend.
 - A child in foster care (this would need to be worked out with your supervisor)

The purpose of the interview is to use all of your child interviewing skills, including practice of the instructions and language assessment, to learn from the child about the following:

- a. Child functioning
 - b. Home environment
 - c. Care routines
 - d. People in child’s life
 - e. Discipline
4. Following the interview, you will develop a written summary of what you learned from the child, using the “Summary of Child Interview” provided. The summary will require that you organize what you have learned into the information domains of child functioning, adult functioning, parenting, and discipline. You will be turning in your written summary to the trainer when you return to Lab 5.

Child Interviewing Skills Observation (Field)

Person Conducting Observation _____

Person Observed _____

Instructions:

This tool is for purposes of recording information about skills used during a child interview. The observations should “catch” behaviorally specific details of some positive and negative examples. It is not expected to capture any analysis of every interviewing skill observed, only the highlights. Observations on all five of the instructions must be included.

1. Opening Phase of Interview

- a. Build rapport
 - Introduce self and job in simple way
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2. Information collection

- a. Use clear language
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- Avoid use of sentences with more than one idea
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- Help child organize the telling of his/her story
- Ask child to demonstrate rather than explain abstract concepts
- Clarify meaning of important words and information
- Avoid use of “negatives”

d. Provide child with positive reinforcement for instruction use through-out the interview

e. Guide interview and questions from general to specific

3. Interview Closing

a. Discuss next steps

b. Answer any questions child had

c. Affirm child for sharing information

Summary of Child Interview I Conducted

Interviewer Name: _____

Name of Person Observing: _____

Age and gender of child (Do not provide name) _____

Written Summary of Information Learned from Child:

a. Child functioning

b. Adult functioning

c. Parenting

d. Discipline

e. Information that I didn't learn, and wished I had asked the child:

Assessment of Child Interviewing Skills

Based on feedback from the person who observed me and my own self-assessment, these are the child interviewing skills that:

I am beginning to be proficient with:

I will need much practice with: