



Trainer Skills Course for Anti-Trafficking Trainers

Lesson 5

Communication, Listening and Questioning Skills

Participant Notes





Introduction

People have been communicating in one form or another all of their lives. Unfortunately in this communication not everyone is understood all of the time. It is crucial for the trainer that he/she effectively communicates with all participants in his/her group, and that all of the participants understand what is being communicated to them.

One of the most important skills you will need as a Trainer is the ability to effectively communicate.

I. Verbal Communication

A. Words

The use of words is, of course, one of the ways in which people communicate, and words often communicate what the sender wishes to say, but this is not always the case. There are three aspects to words:

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MEANING

FEELINGS

Words are used by people to convey meaning. Example: if someone says "I saw two cars collide" the meaning is fairly clear.

Words, which do not match the meaning, intended. There are circumstances when people communicate words which are in conflict with what they really mean or feel. "I am fine" or "I'm dying" are two common examples of phrases used which a person might not take at face value.

Words, which have a different meaning for the receiver than for the sender. This is often associated with dialect or cultural habits. These can be vastly different between the north and south of a country (also the east and west), and can easily lead to confusion and misinterpretation.

For an effective communication to take place, the receiver must always check that the signal being received is the same one, which is being sent.

II. Non-Verbal Communication

The study of non-verbal communication has attracted a large number of theories to explain what it is, why we as human beings use it and what it all means. It is important to note, as Desmond Morris¹ does in his book *Manwatching* (1977), that humans distinguish themselves from most animals by thinking and building in addition to acting. This idea relates specifically to nonverbal communication, because as we will see, kinetic gestures are often "built," not instinctively known. In addition, kinetic actions may be less useful as singular actions than as groups

Experts on nonverbal communication agree that "body language" movements are partly instinctive, partly taught and partly imitative (Zunin, 1972). Unlike verbal interaction,

however, most kinetic gestures are rarely explicitly taught, but instead learned through an implicit process².

Ways to Improve Nonverbal Communication

It is not only what the trainer says in the classroom that is important, but also how he/she says it. This can make difference to the participants. Nonverbal messages are an essential component of communication in the training process. Trainers should be aware of non-verbal behaviour in the classroom for three major reasons:

- An awareness of nonverbal behaviour will allow the trainer to become a better receiver of participants' messages,
- The trainer will become a better sender of signals that reinforce learning.
- This mode of communication increases the degree of the perceived psychological closeness between the trainer and participants.

Some other major areas of non-verbal behaviours to explore are:

1. Eye Contact

Eye contact is an important channel of interpersonal communication that helps to regulate the flow of communication. It can signal interest in others and eye contact with audiences increases the speakers' credibility. Trainers who make eye contact open the flow of communication and convey interest, concern, warmth and credibility. However the comment made earlier regarding cultural differences with eye contact should be kept in mind at all times.

2. Facial Expressions

Smiling is a powerful cue that transmits:

- Happiness
- Friendliness
- Warmth
- Liking
- Affiliation

Therefore if the trainer smiles frequently he/she will be perceived as more likeable, friendly, warm and approachable. Smiling is often contagious and participants will react favourably and learn more.

3. Paralinguistic

Some aspects of this facet of non-verbal communication have already been mentioned, such as intonation. A full list of vocal elements would include:

- Tone
- Pitch
- Rhythm

- Timbre
- Loudness
- Inflection

For maximum training effectiveness, the trainer should learn to vary these six elements in his/her voice. One of the major criticisms is of trainers who speak monotonously. Listeners perceive these trainers as being boring and dull. Participants report that they learn less and lose interest more quickly when listening to trainers who have not learned to modulate their voices.

4. Humour

Humour has already been mentioned as part of the lesson on Group Dynamics. Great care must be taken when using humour in the classroom, and it is very often discouraged. However it does not change the fact that humour is often overlooked as a training tool. Laughter releases stress and tension for both the trainer and participants. The trainer should develop the ability to laugh at himself/herself and encourage participants to do the same. It can foster a friendly classroom environment that facilitates learning. Whenever a team has been successful, there has usually been the presence of humour within the team.

Obviously adequate knowledge of the subject matter is crucial to the success of the trainer; however it is not the only crucial element. To create a climate that facilitates learning and retention of the learned material the trainer has to possess good non-verbal and verbal skills. To improve his/her non-verbal skills, the trainer should try to record himself/herself speaking on videotape and ask a colleague to suggest refinements.

III. The Communication Model

Communication is the sending and receiving of signals.

A. Transactions

Communications is really a process band, and this is sometimes referred to as a transaction. Most transactions last only for a short time, so it is important that this time is used to make the transaction meaningful. A trainer therefore needs to look at what makes up a transaction and how to help one run smoothly.

B. Frame of Reference

Trainers while communicating, place what is known as “frame of reference” around the situation that faces them. This frame of reference or “way to the world” is influenced by many factors.

If the participant was asked to think back of the time before he/she commenced his/her current profession and to think of the things that influenced the way in which he/she saw the world in that period of his/her life, he/she may list some of the following:

- General knowledge
- Education

- Religion
- Family and Upbringing
- Exposure to the media
- Experience in life
- Personal goals and ambitions
- Current physical and mental state
- Peer pressure

If the participant were to think of the frame of reference that influences him/her now, he/she may include:

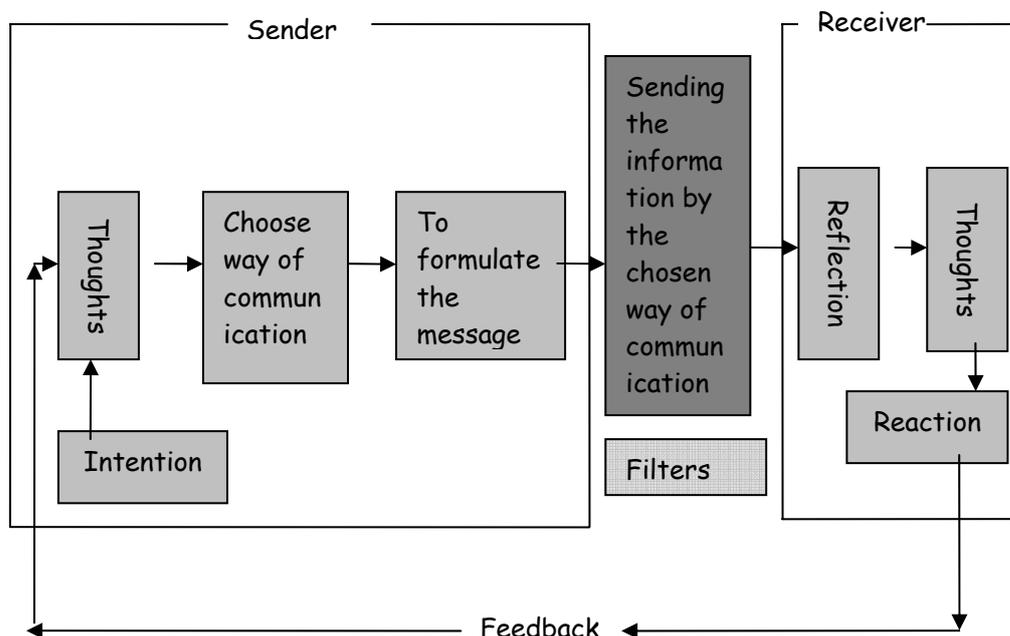
- Professional Knowledge
- Law and Procedure
- Police Policy
- Colleagues Views
- Local Knowledge of the area in which they work

When the trainer is communicating with his/her participants using the frame of reference, it is most likely that the participants will sub-consciously be influenced by their most recent experiences and the factors that mostly influence them at present.

C. Simple Communication Process

A simple communication model, or process, is consisted of a **Sender** (Trainer) and a **Receiver** (Participant). Unfortunately there is much interference to what may be said by the Trainer as to what was actually heard by the Participant.

The Communication Model



If there is feedback from the receiver back to the sender it is a 2 way communication, and when there is no feedback it is one way- communication.

The message that a sender transmits may undergo major change before it gets to the receiver. The sender may non-verbally transmit to the receiver that he is bored, thus the message is not important. Facial expression, tone of voice or body language can affect the message. His/her own filters may modify the interpretation as to whether it is important or not.

Therefore the question stays: “Is what is being said, always what is actually heard?” Alternatively: “Is what is being said always understood?” One person, the **sender**, puts over a message to another person, the **receiver**. Then this person (receiver) becomes the **sender** of a return message to the one who is now the **receiver**. If the communication does not work, this can be due to a fault in any part of that circuit. It may be that the **sender** is not really sending – or that the **receiver** is not receiving. The message a sender transmits may undergo major changes before it gets to the receiver. This can be due to any number of factors, shown here as **filters**.

One of these filters may be noise. Noise can take three different forms.

- **Physical noise** (aircraft, generators, traffic etc)
- **Psychological noise** (frame of reference, prejudices, stereotypes, closed mindedness)
- **Semantic noise** (where the words of the message are simply not understood)

It could also be the way the sender looks. Speaking to a very attractive person of the opposite sex can affect what a person says and hears. The clothes a person wears and the

way he/she walks, stands and sits all send out messages – they are all part of communication. They are all filters.

THE CLEARER AND MORE EFFECTIVE A TRAINER'S COMMUNICATION PROCESS IS, THE GREATER SUCCESS HE/SHE WILL HAVE IN TRAINING THE PARTICIPANT.

D. Communicate For Understanding

When the trainer is communicating with his/her participant, he/she must provide the participant with all the information. Providing some information may give the participant a rough idea of what the trainer is trying to teach, but without full information he/she may have to guess what the trainer wants to say. This is not communication.

IV. Listening

One of the most important skills needed in training is the ability to communicate, as without a process of communication it is impossible for the trainer to teach participants what they need to know.

One of the most important communication skills is the ability to listen; a skill neglected by many people. It is easy to jump to conclusions and assume that we know what another person is experiencing or needs. People are often selective in their listening and filter out essential information. Trainers must try to show concern and understanding in the way they listen.

Listening is an active action and is something that the trainer should be constantly doing. A good trainer is a good listener, and a good listener engages in **active listening**.

A person can become an active listener if he/she:

- **Listens** for feelings as well as facts.
- Makes and maintains **eye contact**.
- **Paraphrases** or **summarizes** back to the speaker what he/she has heard him/her say.
- **Creates an atmosphere** for listening by minimising interference (ex. moving to a quieter location, asking people to speak only one at a time, or turning off a TV or radio...)
- **Is asking questions** to clarify what is being said and to encourage the speaker.

When he/she is listening to someone, a person should not:

- **Rehearse** what he/she is going to say next. He/she cannot pay attention.
- **Judge** what he/she is hearing. This action will close the communication.
- **Look at his/her watch** or look away or any other **distracting behaviour**. They will appear disinterested.
- **Interrupt** what is being said.
- **Complete** the sentence.
- **Assume** that they already know what is going to be said.
- **Show non-verbal signs**, like yawning or fidgeting which also shows lack of interest.

A. The Listening Model

- **Hear** The ability to listen as to what is being said.
- **Evaluate** The time when the whole content is listened to and considered.
- **Respond** The appropriate response is given.

A bad listener will evaluate without properly hearing all the content and respond too soon before he/she has all the facts. For a trainer, the need to listen to everything what the participant is saying before making a response is vital.

B. Paraphrasing

When a person paraphrases, he/she is repeating back to the speaker what he/she has heard him/her say and is checking out the accuracy of his/her listening. Paraphrasing is not repeating back word by word what was heard, but is merely telling the speaker in his/her own words what he/she understands as to what has been said by the speaker.

V. Questioning

Questioning is an important skill for trainers, but this skill is often taken for granted. Like most skills, however, it can be developed with some knowledge of theory and technique, followed by plenty of practice. Trainers require good questioning skills to get the best from their participants and check out their learning and understanding as they go through a lesson, and also to stimulate discussion through facilitation.

As with most educational issues, there are many different theories put forward as the best way in which to do things, and the subject of questioning is no exception. In identifying the most suitable theories for this lesson, the participant should note that some of the information given overlaps between different theories.

VI. Most Common Types of Questions

A. Open Questions

We must use words that encourage the person to answer the question fully without the opportunity to answer with just a yes or no.

Open questions begin with the words:

WHAT WHY WHEN WHERE WHO HOW

or phrases such as: **IN WHAT WAY.....?**

Starting any question with one of these words or phrases usually invites an explanation. Consequently, they are possibly the best type of questions to ask if you wish to obtain new information. They are also effective in encouraging interviewees to provide an account in their own words. The result provides a more accurate picture to build upon and usually reveals stronger evidence than answers to closed, narrow or leading

questions. An open question normally produces a considerable amount of information and sometimes interviewees may wander from the point. As a result, your full attention is necessary and you will need to observe, listen to and check everything.

Open Questions are used very frequently by trainers:

- To ascertain facts from a witness
- To ascertain facts from a suspect
- When asking for a description
- When completing a statement
- When any detailed information is required

B. Closed Questions

'Are you.....? Was it.....? 'Did you.....? How many.....?

Questions which start like these examples invite only a short, confined or even one word reply. Closed questions have limited use within training and teaching, as they may not encourage the participant to give a thoughtful, full answer. For this reason, closed questions should be used selectively and where possible, followed up by an open question.

Closed Questions are useful:

- When a yes or no answer is required from a witness or suspect
- Where a selection between alternatives is required, for example, 'Was it an old Mercedes or a new Mercedes?'
- When verifying identity
- When ascertaining a quantity
- When clarifying a point
- When confirming or contradicting understanding of what was said.

C. Reflective Questions

The trainer repeats or rephrases the participants last words with a questioning inflexion in the voice. This type of questioning is useful to clarify understanding and sometimes to encourage the participant to say more. For example "So what you are saying is.....?"

D. Value Loaded

A question, which conveys the values of the person asking the question. It influences person's thoughts and makes it difficult for the participant to identify his/her own values. For example "How do you feel about having a woman as your commanding officer?"

E. Multiple Questions

A multiple question appears to be one question, but in fact contains several questions. It is likely to confuse both the participant and the trainer. An example of this would be "Tell me what you think about corruption, is it common, do you think it should be stopped?" The participant may well answer only the last part of the question or just the

easiest part. This type of questioning should be avoided and it usually shows that the trainer has not properly thought through the questions to be asked.

F. Leading Questions

A leading question assumes the answer which it expects to receive. For example:

"That was what you meant to say, wasn't it?"

"You understand don't you?"

"You don't mind, do you?"

G. Overhead

A question that is asked to the whole class or group not directed to any one person and is intended to provoke a discussion or reaction. For example, "What are your feelings about arresting very young people for stealing?" and "What do you think about legalising the use of soft drugs?"

VII. Principles of Questioning

Trainers constantly use questions of various types in all of their work, and a sound understanding of some principles for setting and using questions will assist them in their task.

A. Questions need to be clear and unambiguous

The trainer should not pose questions until they are not explained and could be answered by the participants at the present level of learning.

B. Establishing the start point for the input

The guiding rule is to teach from the known to the unknown. All participants will have a base point of knowledge. Start with what they do know and build gradually to teach them what they do not know.

C. Questions to induce learning directly

This means helping participants to work things out for themselves. A trainer can ask participants to give their experiences of the dangers from the use of motor vehicles. Further questions could deal with the need for different qualifications for drivers of different types of vehicles and bring out the participant's knowledge in relation to this. Again using their existing knowledge the subject matter could be further expanded by more questions of what they know.

D. Questions checking recall

The trainer needs to know the answers and acceptable variations before asking the question.

E. Questions to Avoid

These are the ones that can be answered "Yes" or "No" unless the trainer is going to follow it up with questions of "Why", "When" etc. The trainer should also avoid

questions, which contain the answer, as a shrewd participant may well work out the answer from the question. Questions that call for a participant to use knowledge and reason out a situation are very effective.

When asking questions that need immediate answer, it is worth considering some techniques for making questions more effective. To ensure that all the participants consider the question and mentally prepare an answer, the trainer should ask the question to the whole group, wait a few seconds for them to consider the question and then nominate a selected participant to give an answer. This is summarised as:

POSE
PAUSE
POUNCE

F. Watch for participants who volunteer answers

The trainer should avoid always choosing them and try to ensure that all of the participants are tested. The trainer should also change the pattern of questioning spread around the participants so that participants cannot predict who is next.

G. Self-Test Questions

These can be supplied to the participant to test himself/herself whilst studying, or use them at the start of a learning session as a way of checking the level of understanding. They can be done by individuals or in groups. The answers can be self checked by

VIII. Questions from Participants

It is important that the trainer treats participants' questions with respect. The trainer should be approachable, firm and fair. If he/she does not know the answer, then he/she should say so. If he/she promises to find out the answer, then he/she must do so. Sometimes a participant will ask a question that is not relevant at the time. The trainer should tell the participant the situation and resurrect the question later or ensure that the participant understands the point. One thing that is not recommended when a participant asks a question is to assign that participant the task of looking up the answer.

A. Answering Questions

There are several ways in which the trainer can answer questions from participants

1. Directly answer the question

In general it is not recommended to answer a participants question directly if the trainer wishes to foster the participants thinking or problem solving skills. However if the question asks for information that the other participants are not likely to have, or questioning the trainer's opinion, then directly answering the question is appropriate. Directly answering the question takes less time than attempting to have a participant or the group comes up with the answers. If the trainer directly answers the question then it should be kept brief and exact. The trainer can also check to see if the question has been answered by saying something like "Does that answer your question?"

2. Postpone answering the question

Participants are more likely to learn and remember if the trainer answers their questions when they ask them. Nevertheless on certain occasions the trainer may decide to put off answering a question for instance, when he/she is very short of time, especially if the answer is complex, or when the material will be covered in an upcoming class, or when the answer is of interest to only a few participants. When the material is covered later, the trainer should call it to the participants' attention and give the answer. If the answer is not covered in the course, then the trainer could offer to answer it after class or make an appointment to discuss the question later. This also tells the group of your willingness to try and answer their questions. Generally the trainer should answer more questions than he/she postpones or else the participants may ask fewer and fewer questions.

3. Discourage inappropriate questions

Usually participants ask questions because they wish to learn but sometimes a participant will ask a question to sidetrack the group, to get attention or even to embarrass the trainer. Handling such questions presents a dilemma. If the trainer treats them like other questions, it may encourage the participant to ask more of the same, but if the trainer turns that participant down abruptly, then he/she may discourage not only that participant but also the rest of the group from asking any kind of question. In reacting it is probably best to tactfully indicate what about the question is inappropriate.

It is not uncommon for a group to have at least one participant who appears to be antagonistic toward the trainer or hostile to the subject matter and who asks questions that serve only to express the participant's disagreements, which often have little general interest to the rest of the group. Because such questions usually stem from emotional rather than intellectual concerns, answering only on a cognitive level serves little purpose. It is probably best to see that participant outside of class and explain what seems to be going on from the trainer's point of view. Often such a talk is sufficient to enable the participant at least to censor the questions he or she asks in the classroom, although it may do little to solve the underlying problem.

4. Admit when the answer is not known

If the trainer does not know the answer to a participant's question, then say so. Although one of the roles of a trainer is to be the "expert" and "information source", admitting that he/she does not know the answer to a question will probably not damage the confidence of the group in the trainer. On the other hand, if the trainer fakes it, there is a good chance that the participants will find out and the trainer's credibility will be seriously damaged. The trainer should assume the responsibility for finding the answer to the question and reporting back with the answer to the group.

Some of the things that a trainer can do when asked a question other than directly answering it are:

5. Repeat the question, paraphrasing it

This serves two purposes: it ensures that the entire class heard the question. More importantly, it lets the questioner check the trainers understanding of his or her question. When the trainer has not completely understood often the participant will rephrase or elaborate upon the question. In doing so the participant is often “thinking out loud” and may come to his or her own conclusions without further help. This process also gives the other participants time to think about the question and possible answers to it.

6. Redirect the question

The trainer might ask another participant (one who might know the answer) to respond. The trainer might redirect the question to the class in general, asking for an answer or comment, or an elaboration upon the issue. This procedure not only encourages more participation by the class but it also implies that peers are a resource for learning

7. Ask Probing Questions

The trainer might respond to the participant’s question by directing his/her attention to a particular aspect of the issue the participant has raised or drawing his/her attention to some previously learned material that is relevant to answering the question or by going beyond what the participant has said in some way. The intent of probing questions is to draw the participant’s attention to things that may be only implied in his/her answer, and so help the participant answer their own question.

8. Promote a discussion amongst the participants

The three previous suggestions usually involve communication between two people, the trainer and one participant, with the rest of the group simply listening. It may be that the trainer will want to involve the majority of participants in trying to answer some questions, for example, where there is considerable difference of opinion about the answer.

B. Creating an Accepting Atmosphere

If encouraging participants to ask questions is desirable behaviour in the classrooms, then it is also desirable that the trainer creates an atmosphere where participants are not afraid to ask questions for fear of embarrassment, etc.

1. Ask for questions

If the trainer wants the participants to ask questions, give them opportunities to do so. Pause after making an important point or explaining a topic, or say "Any questions?" or "Are you with me?" or "Do you want me to say more?" However, such statements must be more than rhetorical or used as a technique for you to get your thoughts together before going to the next point. Give the participants time to formulate their questions before you move on. Look at the participants to make sure you do not miss someone with his or her hand up.

Pausing and asking for questions is an effective training device to use routinely; but if the trainer is aware that some participants are confused, it becomes compulsory. When some participants are frowning or shaking their heads, saying something like "Some of

you seem puzzled, what don't you understand?" should solicit questions that will help you clear up the misunderstanding. Some trainers feel that they have done their duty by professing the material to the participants. There is an argument that unless trainers help their participants to learn, they are not really training.

2. Do not put down the participants

The trainer should avoid anything which would embarrass the participant who asks the question. Here are a few trainer responses well calculated to insure that the participant asking the question will not ask any more questions. We have suggested possible alternatives.

Examples:

Poor: You should know that we covered that in....

Better: What about ... that we covered ... weeks ago? How does that fit in?

Poor: You are completely wrong.

Better: How would you reconcile what you're saying with... (something previously covered)?

Poor: I entirely disagree.

Better: I'm not sure I agree, (or I think I disagree) because ...

Rather than responding with a value judgment to a participant's question or comment, ask a probing question. The trainer may help the participant arrive at the correct answer, or an acceptable one; in which case, rather than proving the participant "wrong", the trainer has helped him or her to be "right."

IX. Effective Techniques of Questioning.

The trainer should plan key questions to provide structure and direction to the lesson he/she is taking. Spontaneous questions that emerge are fine, but the overall direction of the discussion has been largely planned.

The trainer should:

- Phrase the questions clearly and specifically to avoid vague and ambiguous questions
- Adapt questions to the levels of the participant's abilities
- Ask questions logically and sequentially
- Ask questions at various levels
- Follow up on participants responses

The trainer can elicit longer, more meaningful and more frequent responses from participants after an initial response by:

- Maintaining a deliberate silence
- Making a declarative statement
- Making a reflective statement giving sense of what the participant said
- Declaring perplexity over the response that was given

- Encouraging other participants to comment on what was said.

X. The Use of Questioning During Training

Questioning participants during a training session can be done for a variety of reasons. This section will discuss four different reasons for using questions in a training session, and how each type requires a different method and style.

A. Ice Breakers

Questions are often used as part of ice-breaking exercises. This allows participants to get to know each other better and to feel more comfortable in the group. The questions best suited for this type of exercise are non-threatening, open ended questions. Non-threatening questions allow people to establish a relationship without worrying about offending others or embarrassing oneself. Open-ended questions allow people to talk a length of time that is comfortable, and encourage more than "one word" answers. It is often helpful to let people answer these questions in small groups before asking them to answer them in front of the entire class.

B. Determining Prior Knowledge

Questions can be used to help a trainer determine how much prior knowledge participants in a training session have. However, questioning is not necessarily the most effective means of accomplishing this task. In many cases, discussions with supervisors or pre-tests allow the trainer to gain a more complete picture of how much knowledge participants bring with them to the training session. If the trainer decides to use some questions as he/she begins the session, he/she can use the following tips.

1. Ask specific questions which require specific answers.
2. Don't let one or two people answer all the questions - it may intimidate other participants, and it won't really give you a good overview of the knowledge of the entire group.
3. Be aware that people may feel like they should know things they don't, and that they may be embarrassed to admit that they don't know something. People need to feel comfortable in the learning process to ensure that optimal learning will occur.

C. Confirmation of Comprehension

Questioning can be used to confirm that participants understood what the trainer wanted to teach. Some of the issues applicable to the previous section (Determination of Prior Knowledge) are also relevant to this use of questioning. However, it can be good to use more open-ended questions, like "Explain to me in your own words how this process works." Also, when the trainer asks a question, they should always remember **Pose, Pause and Pounce**, and not call on someone until after people have had time to think about it. As with any type of questioning, it is important that the participants understand and believe that the trainer is not going to try to embarrass or harass them with questioning.

D. Probing Questions

The final opportunity for questioning in this section is a reminder of the probing question. This is used to help a participant discover the answer to a question or problem. When someone asks a question, it can sometimes be helpful to respond with a question in return. If the person can answer your question, it may help him/her to figure out the answer to his/her own question. This is more effective than simply telling someone an answer, as they have to process it more by trying to figure it out themselves.

Effective use of questioning is essential to the success of training. While ineffective questioning can cause people to be embarrassed, and not interested in learning. Proper questioning can help learners to be excited about the material at hand and want to know more.