Summary of Techniques for Promoting Youth- or Young Adult-Driven Conversations

Basic Techniques: Key strategies for ensuring that the young person takes the lead in the conversation from moment to moment

**Technique 1. Open-Ended Questions**

Questions that prompt for something beyond a yes/no or multiple-choice answer. Open-ended questions encourage the young person to expand on or explore their thoughts and ideas.

- Asking open-ended questions with a genuine sense of curiosity
- Other types of statements that have the inflection of questions or otherwise serve as questions

**Technique 2. Reflections**

Statements from the provider that act as a summary of what the young person has communicated. Shows that the provider is actively listening, or trying to understand the key point, emotion, or non-verbal cue the youth/family member is communicating.

- A brief recap of what was said
- A clarification statement to ensure understanding or invite elaboration
- A summary that is stated in a way that invites correction or elaboration

---

[Sources and further reading]
Promoting Control: Techniques for ensuring that a young person has a sense of control and comfort regarding the conversation as a whole

**Technique 3. All the Other Stuff**

The provider invites the young person to make a decision – or share in decision making – about "all the other stuff" beyond what is essential for guiding the conversation. This could include decisions about the pace or setting of the conversation, or how certain activities get done during the conversation.

- Invitation to the young person to make a decision
- No invitations to make decisions or contribute to decision making when occasions arise
- Provider makes all of the decisions
- Provider says the young person can make a decision but it's clear the provider really wants a particular option, or has already made the decision

**Technique 4. What and Why**

The provider accurately and economically describes the purpose of the activity or process that is going to happen during the conversation, and how the conversation will unfold.

- A concise explanation about the purpose of the conversation/main sections of the conversation
- A review of the steps of an activity or worksheet
- Periodic re-orientation so the young person knows what's going on
- Checking in to see if the young person has questions or needs any clarification about the activity/conversation
- A wrap-up at the end or the conversation or a section of the conversation
- No plan for the conversation
- No explanation of the activity/steps/purpose of the conversation
- No pauses to allow for questions/ensure that the young person is clear about what is happening
- The provider does not do what they said they were going to do, and does not explain why

**Technique 5. Takeaways**

Takeaways represent the outcomes of the conversation that will be used and built on in the future. The takeaways should be recorded in the words that the young person prefers and approves, and the takeaways should be reviewed at the end of the conversation to ensure the young person's thoughts and ideas were recorded correctly.
Keeping it On Track while Keeping it Real: Techniques for creating a balance between exploring what is important and meaningful to the young person, while also accomplishing the purposes of the conversation

**Technique 6. Keeping it on Track**

The provider effectively steers the conversation so the purpose of the meeting is accomplished. The provider has a clear plan in mind (e.g., curriculum, worksheet, tool, set of steps) for the conversation.

- The provider understands the key steps and purpose/s of a given conversation, and is able to guide the conversation smoothly so these steps and purpose/s are accomplished
- When the conversation digresses, the provider captures key content of the digression
- After a digression, the provider gets conversation back on track in a way that feels comfortable to the young person
- The provider does have a clear sense of the purpose of the conversation, or does not guide the conversation in any particular way
- The provider gets confused about the steps that are part of the conversation, or about how to complete them
- The provider is not able to bring the conversation back when it gets off track
- When the conversation digresses, the provider ignores the content and/or wrenches the conversation back on track without acknowledging key content

- The takeaways encapsulate key things that were discussed or decided during the meeting
- The provider checks to make sure that they are writing down the young person’s preferred words/ideas
- The provider checks to see if the young person would like to write during the conversation
- The provider reviews what they wrote down with the young person to ensure accuracy
- The provider gives a copy of the takeaways to the young person to keep or lets them know where they can access a copy
- Not having any takeaways
- The provider does not check to ensure that the takeaways include the young person’s preferred words and ideas
- The provider records their own words/ideas
- The provider does not ask the young person to review the takeaways for accuracy
- The provider does not give a copy of the takeaways to the young person or tell them where they can get a copy
- The product or record of the meeting is so long or confusing that the takeaways are hard to find
- The provider uses the takeaways for a purpose other than what was described to the young person

- The takeaways encapsulate key things that were discussed or decided during the meeting
- The provider checks to make sure that they are writing down the young person’s preferred words/ideas
- The provider checks to see if the young person would like to write during the conversation
- The provider reviews what they wrote down with the young person to ensure accuracy
- The provider gives a copy of the takeaways to the young person to keep or lets them know where they can access a copy
Technique 7. Go With It

The provider offers the young person a chance to explore and expand on what’s meaningful to them during the conversation.

- The provider supports and encourages the young person talk about and explore what is meaningful to them, even if it’s a “digression” from the purpose of the meeting.
- The provider is interested in what the young person finds important or meaningful.
- The provider quickly or clumsily redirects the conversation when there is a “digression” without giving the young person/family member time to share or expand on their ideas.
- The provider ignores/does not acknowledge content that is meaningful to the young person/family member.

Technique 8. Super Host

The provider creates an atmosphere that makes the young person or family member comfortable, and that keeps the focus of the conversation on them.

- The provider structures the conversation so that the young person/family member does most of the talking throughout the conversation.
- The provider may use appropriate humor to keep the atmosphere comfortable.
- The provider may share “tidbits” from their perspective, but immediately turns the focus back to the young person.
- The provider keeps explanations short.
- The provider keeps quiet for an appropriate amount of time when the young person is silent or thinking.
- The provider monopolizes the conversation by speaking for an extended period.
- The provider lectures, speaks patronizingly, or badgers the young person to try to get them to accept the provider’s perspective.
- The provider does not pick up on cues that the young person is uncomfortable or shutting down.
- The provider does not give the young person enough time to think or process before asking more questions or changing the subject.

The contents of this product were developed under a grant with funding from the National Institute of Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research, and from the Center for Mental Health Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, United States Department of Health and Human Services (NIDILRR grant 90RT5030). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this product do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.

Research and Training Center for Pathways to Positive Futures

https://pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu