



Did You Know...?

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The Right Question— A Powerful Tool for Informed Decision Making

We need good information to make informed decisions that will help our child succeed. The best way to get information is to ask questions and listen to the answers. Asking “the right question” will help get specific information and may help to open discussions about possibilities. It is helpful to know when to use close-ended or open ended questions.



Closed-Ended Questions are answered with a simple "yes" or "no" or with a one word answer.

Open-Ended Questions require more explanation. They cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" or a one-word answer. These questions usually begin with words like who, what, where, why or how.

Formulating questions is a skill. The Right Question Project (RQP) provides a technique to help us learn to formulate our own questions so that we can be an active partner in decision-making. People who learn how to formulate their own questions are no longer dependent upon someone else to decide what they need to know. Instead, they are better able to think and act for themselves. They are able to hold themselves and the systems they deal with more accountable.

RQP is a question formulation technique. Asking the right question can quickly lead to new ideas. Thinking about questions before we ask them may be a short cut to better results. The process serves as a simple powerful tool to:

- Develop action plans
- Explore complex issues
- Help people participate
- Help people discover their own power to help themselves.



To use this tool, let us begin with the definition of decision. *A decision is a choice of one option amongst two or more options.* We make decisions throughout the entire day. There are also times that others make decisions which affect our lives. The more we know about the decision making process, the better equipped we will be to advocate for ourselves and our families. Let's see how the process used to make decisions works for deciding "What will I to cook for dinner?"

1. Identify the options I have available (Chicken, ground beef, frozen dinners or left over pizza).
2. I consider all the options.
 - How much time do I have?
 - What are my family's nutrition needs?
 - What ingredients do I have on hand?
 - What did I feed my family for dinner last night? What would my family like best?
3. I select the option that I considered to be the best option. This is my decision! My role in this decision is support, monitor and choose for my family.

Use the RQP Tool to Ask the Right Question

Think about an issue that is important to you and your family. Next, use the RQP technique for formulating questions that will be right for your situation. The steps in this process were developed by The Right Question Project, Inc. We encourage you to work with a friend or family member as you practice using this tool.



1. **Brainstorm Questions About Your Topic**—Come up with a list of as many questions as you can think of about your topic or issue.
2. **Prioritize**—Choose three questions you want to explore further.
 - a. Which questions are open-ended? Which questions are close-ended?
 - b. What are the advantages and disadvantages of close-ended questions?
 - c. What are the advantages and disadvantages of open-ended questions?
 - d. Look over your list of questions.
 - Would you like to change any of them to make them close-ended or open-ended?
 - Which questions can you use right now?
 - Which ones will be helpful later? (You can make a file for "great questions to ask later"!)
3. **Branch Off**—Now, choose just *one* of your three questions. Brainstorm more questions about it.
4. **Prioritize Again**—Look over the questions you have and choose three you now want to address now. Use these questions as you plan to take action to address your issue.

Setting your priorities by "thinking in questions" is a great way to prepare to be a part of the decision making process.

What happens when others make decisions that affect me or my family?

You can use RQP to help you "think in questions" that will lead you to informed decisions and better understand decisions that are made.



- The decisions should be based on legitimate reasons. Using RQP can help you ask questions about the rules, the regulations, the policy in place and criteria used for the decision.
- The systems that affect your family (schools, government, health or medical) should have a clearly defined process for decision making. Ask: Who is the person(s) that will make the decision? Where will the decision be made? When will the decision be made?
- The most important questions you can ask the ones about your role in the decision making process. Ask: How do I know the decision involves my participation? What is my role in the decision making? How does it provide for me the opportunity to express my opinion? How will I express my opinion if I disagree with the decision?

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