

EXERCISE TWO

A Case Study on Asking Effective Questions

Instructions: Read the case study below entitled “The Discussion”. Once complete, answer the questions immediately following. Be prepared to share your answers at the exercise webinar.

Case Study Background: A BLM leadership instructor is teaching a lesson on stress. The instructor has finished delivering the introduction and begins the first main topic in the body of the lesson. The instructor has decided to use discussion as the primary delivery strategy since the audience already has some knowledge on stress. He begins by asking the students a question.

Case Study: “The Discussion”

The instructor asks, “*What is the definition of stress?*” The students look at each other while trying to formulate a possible answer to his question. After a couple of seconds, one student provides an answer to which the instructor responds, “*Good answer, but what might be another definition?*” Another student responds and again he says, “*Good answer*”. He then says, “*Those are all good definitions of stress. However, here is Wikipedia’s definition of stress*” (he shows them the definition on a PowerPoint slide). After he reviews the definition with the students he says, “*Now that you know the definition of stress, why are some people stressed out about certain things while others are not?*” Again, the students respond with various answers; however, after one of the student responses he states, “*That is absolutely correct, what do you mean by that?*” After the student provides her rationale for her answer, she asks the instructor a question, “*Is stress always bad thing?*” The instructor responds by looking at the students and saying, “*What do you all think, is stress always a bad thing?*” The students all shake their heads in a sideways motion; the instructor takes this as a *no* response to the question and asks, “*Why not?*”

After several students take their turns at explaining why they said *no*, the instructor asks, “*What might be some examples?*” After waiting at least 8-seconds for a response to the question and noticing the students looked confused, the instructor rephrases the question and asks, “*What might be some examples of situations where stress might be a good thing?*” The students immediately perk up and provide numerous responses to the question. However, the discussion quickly takes a turn for the worst when one student says, “*Stress can be a good thing in emergency situations. Like in a car accident when a 120-pound woman lifts the car to save her child who is pinned underneath*”. Immediately, another student blurts out, “*Is that what Elin Woods was trying to do when Tiger had his car accident a couple of years ago?*” The students erupt in laughter and then start talking about the incident involving Tiger. After a few seconds the instructor states, “*The Tiger incident is certainly interesting, but let me ask you a question Kyle (the student that blurted out the Tiger incident), why is it so important that you understand*

what stress is and how it impacts people?" Kyle thinks about the question for a moment then answers. The lesson continues without a hitch.

Case Study Questions:

1. What different types of questions did the instructor use during the discussion?
2. Specifically, what are some examples of the different types of questions used by the instructor in the discussion case study?
3. Did the instructor do an effective job of asking questions? Why or why not?
4. With regard to effective questioning techniques, how could the instructor have handled the off-topic conversation differently?
5. What would have happened if the instructor let the off-topic conversation continue?

6. What other types of questions could have been used? How could they have been used?