

## Handout 9: Handling Tricky Questions

Here are some examples of tricky questions you might be asked, and some possible answers to help turn the question around. It is important to think ahead about what sort of questions you might get asked, and how you would respond to them.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF	EFFECTIVE RESPONSE
<p><b>Is the question requiring me to exceed my knowledge, skills or experience?</b></p> <p>“Can you tell us about the research data about mental health in Australia?”</p>	<p>“There is a lot of research conducted into young people’s mental health, I have my own experiences of finding it difficult getting good support in my country town, which is reflected in the research”.</p>
<p><b>Does this question keep the spotlight on my experience, at the exclusion of others, and the full range of experiences?</b></p> <p>“Why do gay kids need their own services when it is increasingly acceptable to be gay? Your own story just demonstrated this?”</p>	<p>“I had a good experience coming out because my town had good support services. I know young people in towns without support groups where they have a really tough time dealing with homophobia and feel isolated. So my story highlights the difference between getting good support and having no support.”</p>
<p><b>Does this question require me to disclose things I am not comfortable to discuss publicly?</b></p> <p>“Why should rural students get a higher rate of Youth Allowance? How much do your parents earn?”</p>	<p>“The current rate of Youth Allowance requires rural students to live below the poverty line, particularly where they have to leave their home towns in order to pursue higher education, and when they have to travel long distances to attend school or university. This puts stress on families and young people throughout rural Australia”</p>
<p><b>Does this question discount my experience?</b></p> <p>“You’re a sixteen year old school kid, what would you know about biodiversity and our local frog population?”</p>	<p>“Since I first learnt about the importance of biodiversity in school, I have been noticing how there have been fewer and fewer frogs at the local creek. I saw a Ranger there last week and she said that there have been fewer frogs since the drainage was changed”</p>
<p><b>Does this question challenge my credibility?</b></p> <p>“What would you know about the legal status of asylum seekers? You are not a lawyer”.</p>	<p>“It is not illegal to seek asylum. Respected lawyers have been saying that for years. If you are uncertain, you could speak to them directly, like I have”.</p>

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF	EFFECTIVE RESPONSE
<p><b>Does this question enable me to include others in the discussion?</b></p> <p>“So what is it like to be in a wheelchair and live in Pinjarra? Tell us your story?”</p>	<p>“Well it is not just me who struggles with the lack of ramps and accessible public transport. It is also my friend who has to use crutches, my Grandpa who walks with a cane and even parents with prams. It affects us all”.</p>
<p><b>Can I re-phrase the question from the personal to the global?</b></p> <p>“Earlier you told us about how it took you 18 months to see a counsellor. Can you tell me more about how that felt and what you did”</p>	<p>“It did take 18 months of trying to work out who offered support and how to access it. But there are other important points to make that lots of people experience regardless of age. Like how are these services advertised? How long are waiting lists? How much do they cost? Issues of access and equity matter to all people facing mental health challenges”</p>
<p><b>How can I effectively speak on behalf of others?</b></p> <p>“You’re the Chair of the Youth Advisory Council, what do young people in Katherine care about?”</p>	<p>“The YAC did a consultation with 100 young people living here and they identified the need for more parks and recreation facilities as important. Many had stories of getting into trouble with the police for being in public spaces, but the reality is we have few places to hang out in. That is why we are lobbying for a youth centre”.</p>
<p><b>Do I think my response will have a positive impact?</b></p> <p>“Who do you blame for this problem?”</p>	<p>“This is about responsibility. We have a real problem with bullying at the moment and we feel that the relevant authorities need to step up and take responsibility for ensuring our safety. We want to help out and work with them”.</p>

Adapted from “*Teaching Sexual Health*”, copyright NSW Department of Education and Communities  
[http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/sexual\\_health/](http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/sexual_health/)