



# CHANGE TOOLKIT

## Tool: 3-Level Questioning Technique

Used in:  
**GAIN ENTRY**  
**FACT FIND**

### What is it?

This is a technique to help draw more information out of people by using a structured approach to open questions. Open questions are ones that require more than a simple Yes/No answer (which are referred to as closed questions).

The 3-Level question technique is about listening. It can help us hear what a person is really saying when they are in full flow and telling us about things, or it can guide us in how we ask our questions so that we get a better understanding of someone else's perspective.

The technique is based on the idea that how something looks and feels to each of us depends on our perspective, and that our perspective is likely to be unique and is the product of our views, beliefs and experiences. By asking three different types – or levels – of question we can build up our understanding of someone else's unique perspective:

|                |         |  |
|----------------|---------|--|
| <b>Level 1</b> | Data    | The 'facts' as they appear to the other person |
| <b>Level 2</b> | Meaning | What these facts mean to the other person      |
| <b>Level 3</b> | Values  | Why does the other person feel this way        |

As we move through the levels, an increasing degree of rapport and trust is needed because we are moving from a discussion of simple data through how a person feels about it to finally probing what values or attitudes lie behind their response.

### Why use it in a change process?

As a **Change Agent**, you need to step away from your own perception of the changes at hand and gain an understanding of other people's. Not only do you need to understand how the change appears to them, but how it makes them feel and why.

This technique is particularly helpful in during the **Fact Find** stage as it can help you explain change to different groups in the right words, address the right underlying issues, and identify 'what's in it for me' triggers. By getting into the deeper levels of question, you can use this technique to help people understand their own responses to change. It supports them to see why the 'facts' of the change appear different to them from the 'authorised version' and why they feel the way they do about change.

As well as using it in structured interviews, you can use the technique when people you are supporting through change are talking to you in more general situations. Listen to their language, and start to see things from their unique perspective.

### My Notes

## What do I need to do?

1. To use 3LT in a structured interview session use the table below to plan your open questions.
2. Start with the simple Level 1 questions (who, what, where, when and how much) to understand what people are experiencing and how things appear to them.
3. Next identify the main issues you wish to explore and revisit them, using the more searching Level 2 questions. This will tell you about what the other person's response is, but not why.
4. To understand the 'why' you need to move to Level 3, again using questions like those in the table.
5. Try and go through this process for each issue in turn rather than moving through all issues at one level first and then all issues at another level, as the conversation will seem more natural and organic that way.
6. Make sure you keep detailed notes of your meetings, so that you can refer back to them later.
7. Don't forget that listening carefully to people is hard work. Allow yourself sufficient time between interviews to reflect on what you've learned.
8. Consider what the information that you've received tells you about where people are on the change curve and what you might need to do to help them move forward from their current position.

| Level 1                          | Level 2   | Level 3  |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Information and Data Collection. | Meaning / Implication / Feeling / Attraction / Interest | Attitudes/Values/Beliefs                                     |
| How do things appear?            | How do you feel about that?                             | Why do you think this is?                                    |
| What?                            | What do you think/feel about.....?                      | Why do you feel like that?                                   |
| Who? And When?                   | What does..... mean for/to you?                         | Why is that important?                                       |
| Why?                             | What are the implications of ....?                      | Why does that concern you?                                   |
| How? and Where?                  | What do you get out of .....                            | What would you like to get out of your involvement with....? |
| When? and How often?             | What interests you about ....?                          | Which of these issues is most important to you?              |