Communication: The art of consultation

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What is a consultation?
What do *ideal* peer consultants do?
Features of an Ideal Peer Consultation

- Actively listen
- Ask questions to clarify the question
- Pinpoint the issue
- Present options
- Allow students to come up with a decision
- Remain patient and calm during the entire encounter

➤ A consultant is "someone who has influence over an individual, group, or organization, but who has no direct authority to implement changes." (Peter Block)
As peer leaders seek to support the development of their mentees, the following sequence of questions can serve as a useful guide:

**What?**

**So what?**

**Now what?**

By applying these questions, the emphasis is placed on prompting students to actively guide their own processes of discovery.
Active Listening

Scenario!

20 questions
Active Listening

• Body language (PT & Tutee)

• Paraphrase key points

• Ask questions that build on top of given information and that move the conversation forward and towards a goal set by the tutee

• Frame questions in a positive, non-threatening manner

• Maintain eye contact
1. What?  
Clarity the Question

Sometimes the question is not clear.

Scenarios:

➢ I don’t understand this student’s accent
➢ The question is confusing
➢ The question is ‘too big’
  ➢ I missed class will you please teach me everything
  ➢ I have no idea what’s going on and the test is tomorrow
How to deal with confusing questions

➢ Break down the question with them into smaller parts to help them and yourself understand it better
➢ Ask tutees questions that help them understand the question they are trying to ask
➢ Tell them to write the important facts on a piece of paper
➢ Ask them the process to go about answering the question that they believe is right
➢ Never be rude when answering their question
2. So what?
Negotiate Boundaries

➢ As a peer consultant, what kind of questions do you expect to answer in a consultation?

➢ Do you have to answer every question?
2. So what?

Negotiate Boundaries

➢ What do I do when I don’t know the answer?

➢ What do I do with the student who asks me to help them with a question from a past test?

➢ What do I do with the student who just doesn’t ‘get it’ or is not into your explanation?

➢ What do I do if I have to leave and the student insists on me staying?
2. So what? Negotiate Boundaries

➢ What if a student is coming on to me?

➢ What if the student failed a midterm and is asking you whether they should drop the course or keep it?

➢ What if a student is asking for information regarding petitions because they failed a course and they want it to disappear from their transcript?
2. So what? Present Options

➢ Refer to the Resources Module

➢ Why is it important to be cautious when you are presenting your own personal experience?

➢ Provide multiple options
2. So what?
Present Options

➢ If you do not know the answer, then refer the student to ______
➢ If the student is dealing with a personal issue, refer them to the ______
➢ If the student has course-specific or degree-specific questions, refer them to ______
➢ Allow the student to come to their own decision!

➢ How would you like to feel when you walk away from a consultation?

➢ How do we make that happen?
Consultation Framework

• Clarify the question

• Negotiate boundaries

• Explain

• Closure
➢ The Peer Tutor is just finishing up with the student and done giving them advice.
➢ Scenario number one: The PT just ends it there and doesn’t ask any questions to ensure their understanding even though the student looks very confused
   - What is wrong with this situation?
   - How can we correct it?
   - Present the correct scenario
Take it or leave it …

- Peer Leaders and students share responsibility for setting the agenda
- Students remain the decision makers
- “Take it or leave it”? 
Reflecting on your relationship

- When they work well, student-peer leader relationships foster a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction in both parties.

- How would you feel if you left the consultation knowing it did not work well?

- Don’t give up easily!
Alessandro and Jordan provide an example.
What did you learn?

Please jot down 3 things that you learned from this presentation
Thank You!

Any questions, comments or feedback?