

Tools and Techniques

Many tools and techniques are available as you learn how to identify your wish child's heartfelt wish. As you gain experience in your role, you'll become more comfortable choosing and applying the most appropriate tools in a natural way. Remember that there are no right or wrong ways to work with a wish child, rather there are different approaches that work well with some children compared to others.

Listening:

Definition Listening is the process of hearing, understanding and thinking about what you heard when talking to the wish child.

Overview Listening is key to all effective communication - especially with children. By carefully listening, you will pay attention to the child's story as well as the words they use, voice tone and body language.

Application and Tips It's important to show that you're listening by summarizing what the child has shared with you. You'll also want to defer judgment on what the child is saying and respond appropriately and respectfully, regardless of the child's message. There are always hidden elements of communication that you will need to be sensitive to.

Some tips for being a good listener include:

- Give your full attention to the child who is speaking. Don't look out the window or pay attention to anything else in the room.
- Focus your mind. If you feel your mind wandering, change the position of your body and refocus on the child's words.
- Let the child finish before you begin to talk. When you interrupt, it looks like you aren't listening, even if you are.
- Listen for main ideas or common themes, if possible. These are the important points that the child wants to get across.
- Ask some questions. If you are not sure you understand what the child has said, just ask. It's a good idea to repeat in your own words what was said so that you can make sure your understanding is correct. See the Echo Method of Framing for more ideas.
- Give feedback, too. Sit up straight and look directly at the child. Now and then, nod to show that you understand. At appropriate points you may also smile, laugh or be silent. Remember to listen with your face as well as your ears!

Notes With practice, you can learn to listen and think about what you're hearing, really understand it and provide feedback to the child.

You vs. I/Me Statements:

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| Definition | Statements that utilize “I” or “me” focus the conversation on yourself rather than on the wish child. |
| Overview | Most people can’t talk for long without changing the conversation to themselves. Remember that “I” is a talking word, not a listening word and that when talking with a wish child avoid using “I” or “me” whenever possible. |
| Application | <p>Making a conscious effort to avoid “I/me” statements and phrases will allow your wish child to explore his or her wish without your influence. Often times, these statements are not intentional. For example, you may catch yourself saying things like: “Me, too,” “I’ve always wanted to go there,” “I have that exact same thing” or “My favorite part when I did that was...”</p> <p>Children are very impressionable. If you make a suggestion when talking about your own likes/dislikes, the child may inadvertently start to think about wishes you’re suggesting, rather than exploring his or her thoughts.</p> <p>One way to get away from “I/me” statements is to have some set ways of responding to information the child provides. For example, when trying to discover the wish child’s interests, consider using phrases like:</p> <p>“What exactly did you mean about that?”</p> <p>“Why do you like that?”</p> <p>“What were you thinking when you said that?”</p> <p>“Can you give me an example of that?”</p> |

Echo Method of Framing:

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| Definition | The Echo Method of Framing is a way of responding to a child's responses to help elicit additional information from the child. |
| Overview | This method is similar to "mirroring," where the speaker imitates the gesture, speech pattern or attitude of another to help build rapport. The key to using this technique is to pause long enough to allow the wish child to respond while using varying levels of inflection in your voice to elicit additional responses from the wish child. |
| Application | <p>To use this technique, ask a question and then allow the wish child to respond. Next, reply by restating the wish child's response using one or more keywords – "echoing" the response.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p>Volunteer: Tell me about your favorite food.</p> <p>Wish Child: My ultimate favorite food is pizza.</p> <p>Volunteer: Pizza?</p> <p>Wish Child: Yes, I love pizza – especially pepperoni, sausage and green olive.</p> <p>Volunteer: What is your favorite place to go and eat pizza?</p> <p>Wish Child: I love to go to California Pizza Kitchen because they have so many different types!!</p> |
| Notes | Pay attention to the child's nonverbal gestures and tone of voice as well as what the child is saying. By mirroring those gestures and voice levels, you can help the child feel more connected and at ease as you talk. |

Reflective Questioning:

Definition Reflective questions are designed to make wish children think and examine themselves before responding.

Overview While there are no right or wrong responses to reflective questions, these types of questions can result in very personal responses. Reflective questioning encourages the wish child to “think deep” as they explore their ideas for a wish experience. The responses can help you gather detailed information on what the wish child values and considers important.

Application Asking a child what the most important part of the wish would be or why it is important that a certain participant be included in the wish is reflective questioning.

One way to approach reflective questioning is to start with an open-ended question. After the initial question, follow up with questions that will continue to elicit more information or deeper thoughts. Always hold back when you are tempted to give advice or provide an answer yourself. One of the keys to this technique is patience.

Typical reflective questions for younger children include:

- “Why is <color> your favorite?”
- “What is the most special thing about having a <item> in your wish?”
- “If you had a super power, what would it be?”
- “If you could be an animal for a day, what would you be? Why?”

Typical reflective questions for older children include:

- “If you could save a memory, put it in your pocket and pull it out for a rainy day, what would it be?”
- “If you were on an island, what three things would you bring with you?”
- “If you could eat one thing for the rest of your life, what would it be?”
- “If you could invite anyone over for dinner (past, present or future), who would it be? Why?”

Notes Always make sure that the wish child understands your question and be prepared to re-phrase it in a slightly different way. Children have varying levels of verbal skills, even when they are the same age and gender. Always use terminology that is appropriate for the child and their cultural background.

Open-Ended Questions:

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| Definition | Open-ended questions are questions that do not have a clear “yes” or “no” response. Similar to reflective questions, they encourage the wish child to think carefully before responding. |
| Overview | Questions with only “yes” or “no” responses result in an interview that may seem very closed off and impersonal. Open ended questions encourage the wish child to respond with in-depth answers, so it is important to not only to listen, but to skillfully guide the conversation. |
| Application | Focus on questions that will make wish children reveal more about what they are actually thinking. As an example, avoid asking questions like “Do you like ice cream?” and instead ask “What kind of desserts do you like?” to encourage a conversation. |

Consider questions that start with these phrases:

- “Why do you ...?”
- “How do you ...?”
- “Tell me about ...”

Avoid questions that start with these closed-ended verbs:

- “Did you ...?”
- “Will you ...?”
- “Would you ...?”

While you want to give wish children a chance to elaborate on their answers, you may need to refocus their attention at certain points as you guide the conversation. You can use phrases like: “Remember when you were talking about ...” or “A little while ago, you mentioned Could you tell me more about it?” to shift the child’s focus back to areas where you would like to know more.

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| Notes | In this type of interview, as in any interview, always consider the child’s emotional state when asking open-ended questions. There is no right or wrong way to use open-ended questions, but the child’s emotional state provides one way to gauge what you should ask and how you should ask it. |
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Wish Granting Toolbox:

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| Definition | The Wish Granting Toolbox includes additional tools that will help you learn more about your wish child and his or her wish. |
| Overview | Available resources may vary slightly by chapter. However, all volunteers have access to items such as paperwork for the initial wish visit in English, Spanish and Arabic, resources for getting to the heart of the wish and conducting the initial wish visit, enhancement ideas. In addition, items such as paper, markers and crayons, electronic devices can be incredibly helpful when working with various ages. |
| Application | <p>Some specific resources that will be helpful include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Idea Book – a special coloring book used to color/draw with the child; although geared toward wish children age 12 and younger, many volunteers find that all ages enjoy using it.• Guide to Various Ages – a resource that clarifies the social and emotional skills, language and communication skills, tips for interacting and icebreaker ideas for the various ages of children we serve.• Games – these may include games available through your chapter office or items you can bring to the initial wish visit. For example, playing “Which would you rather” which involves taking the wish child’s wish ideas and asking the child which wish idea they would rather have, i.e., “Would you rather go on this trip or meet your favorite singer.”• Internet – Exploring websites or talking to the wish child regarding their favorite websites may elicit additional wish ideas. In addition, viewing social media sites like Pinterest may help you understand the child’s wish ideas. |
| Notes | Note that your toolbox is a living resource and that additional tools, documents and ideas will continue to be added as you develop in your role. |