

## The 4 S's Interview

Developmental Relationships Element

Express Care  Challenge Growth  Provide Support  Share Power  Expand Possibilities

Objective

The 4 S's Interview is a way to get to know students by understanding and validating four important aspects of their lives, each of which starts with the letter S.

Materials/Preparation Copy of the 4 S's Interview Questions & Notes for the Interviewer Quiet, private space	
Duration: 30 minutes	Activity Type: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Individual <input type="checkbox"/> Group

Steps

1. Before conducting the interview, consider and keep in mind the following:
  - a. Conduct the interview in an informal and warm way. While you can make brief notes to remember what the student says, avoid typing answers or making the experience feel like a test.
  - b. Your two primary objectives in getting to know the student's sparks, strengths, struggles, and supports are to make the student feel understood and validated. Research shows that feeling understood and validated by another person are the strongest contributors to establishing a sense of relatedness between people (Reis et al., 2000; Reis et al., 2010).
  - c. During the interview, respond to the student in ways that convey you are really listening, such as asking a follow-up question that explores an answer a bit more deeply. After the interview, find ways to refer back to the things you learned about the student throughout your interaction with her or him.
2. Relay the following instructions to the student and begin the interview:
  - a. I am going to ask you a few questions about four things that start with the letter S: sparks, strengths, struggles, and supports. Sparks are your talents, deep interests, and activities that you love doing. Strengths are your skills, values, habits, and other things about you that help you do well in life. Struggles are the things that you worry about and that cause you problems. Supports are the people and programs and even places that help you get through your struggles and succeed at things.
  - b. I am asking these questions only to get to know you better. I will even share with you some of my own 4 S's from time to time. I may write down a few things so I can remember what you say, but this is not a test in any way. There are no right answers and you can share your honest feelings.

Reflection/Debrief

After the conversation, tell the student that from time to time (or at each check-in) you will do activities that help further explore and share the 4 S's: sparks, strengths, struggles, and supports.

Ask the student if he or she has any questions for you. Thank the young person for sharing part of her or his story with you.

# 4 S's Interview Questions & Notes

## Sparks Questions

1. What is something you really enjoy doing – that gives you pleasure and that you almost lose track of time when you do it?
2. Is there a subject that you are interested in learning more about?
3. What subject in school are you are most interested in? It doesn't matter if you are good at it or not.

## Strengths Questions

4. What are some of the best things about you?
5. What are you good at doing?
6. Are there any values or rules that you try to live by? What do you think is important in life?

## Struggles Questions

7. Are there things that you worry about or are afraid of?
8. Are there places you don't like to go or people you don't like to be around?
9. Is there anything you wish you could change about yourself?

## Supports Questions

10. Who are the people that matter most to you?
11. Who can you talk to when you have a problem?
12. Are there programs you participate in or places you go that help you do things you want to do or need to do?