

They asked again. What happens next?

A practical way to respond to repeated questions while building understanding and keeping help accessible.

If there is an immediate safety concern: respond directly, provide the needed supervision, and get help. Save reflective questions for a safe moment.

01 Find the uncertain part.

Start with: "What would help clarify this for you?"

Listen for a missing explanation, a changed situation, a forgotten step, or a need to check a decision. These are possibilities to explore, not labels to assign.

02 Make the thinking visible.

When time allows: "Talk me through what you understand so far."

Ask one question, then listen. Explain the missing piece. If they do not know where to start, model your own reasoning rather than continuing to quiz them.

03 Agree on the next supported step.

Close with: "What will you do next, and when should you get me?"

Agree on the task, required supervision, a reliable resource, and when to check back. Have them explain the agreed plan in their own words to check understanding.

When you are stretched: "I need to finish this safely. If this can wait, let's check back after handoff. If it cannot, get me or our agreed backup now." Set a specific return point and follow through.

Choose one phrase to try on your next shift. No additional worksheet required.

The same question can need a different response.

Illustrative teaching examples; adapt them to your learner, supervision responsibilities, and local policies.

EXAMPLE A

They remember the steps, but cannot explain why.

“Let’s connect the steps to what we are trying to accomplish. I’ll explain my thinking, then we’ll work through another example.”

EXAMPLE B

The situation has changed.

“What is different from the last time we discussed this?” Review the new information together before assuming it is the same question.

EXAMPLE C

The same gap persists after teaching and practice.

“We’ve revisited this several times. Let’s identify where it is breaking down and make a specific practice plan.” Involve the educator when needed and use your existing orientation process.

If you lose your cool, own your response and reopen the conversation.

“I was frustrated. I’m sorry. I want you to keep bringing questions to me. Let’s work out what is unclear.”

References

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