

Simone Peer, Inc.

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFIED COACH - ICF MENTORING/SUPERVISION

Questions That Evoke Discovery

Questions that evoke discovery invite coachees to think about things in a different way and/or to discover new thoughts about what's going on for them. Our job is to help shine a light on what they currently can't see, and the thinking loop they run in their mind that keeps bringing the same thoughts and solutions over and over and over again.

Knowing how to construct questions that get them out of the loop and into new territory evokes discovery and from there can come shifts and sustainable solutions.

Here are some questioning guidelines with a suggestion: **PRACTICE THEM.**

Asking questions that evoke discovery-

Open-ended questions that are focused on *WHO* the person is *in relation to* their challenge or situation connects the Coachee to the changes they are seeking, their values, tolerations, pain, joys, solutions, dreams, etc. These kinds of questions evoke discovery.

**** *Who do you need to be in order to do/have this?* (A common new coaches' question)**

Instead of asking *this* question, use it as the source to form a more powerful one.

Generally, if they knew, they would be doing/being it now, so be more specific with regard to what or how it might look, feel, or unfold for them.

Ask something that takes them into a bigger context of him/herself, into the possibilities and into their potential, not into strategy or direct self-examination (who do *you* need to be); it's too small for them at this stage of discovery i.e. mind-blowing leader vs team supervisor.

For example: instead of "Who do you need to be to lead this team?" go for something like:

Step into the shoes of a mind-blowing leader, what does s/he think that this team needs to succeed?

What is it about leading this team that is most important to you?

What's really standing in the way of you leading this team?

What's it really costing you to not lead this team effectively? (once the deeper costs are revealed, follow up with: *How much longer are you willing to prioritize (that -likely their unmet need or insecurity) over (this -what they really want) ?*

Information gathering is always about *the What* and Problem Solving. These questions begin with: who, what, when, how, and ask for details, information, etc. that will kick the problem solving machine in your brain into action, seeking more data that it can make sense of in order to process a viable solution. The problem is that it is your solution to your perception of what makes this situation a problem for you, not necessarily what is making this a problem for your client. Plus coming up with a solution is not your job; helping your client to figure out one for themselves is.

Information gathering also leads to more story full of unnecessary and oft times irrelevant details that can drive the conversation down rabbit holes and dead ends. Circular conversations ensue and you've got to go back to the beginning to figure out what this conversation is really about.

PREPARING COACHES TO MAKE IT, so THEY NEVER HAVE TO FAKE IT!

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Who Questions expand into Truth, Ideas & Possibilities of **WHO the client is**: how they think, learn, and create; how they think about and approach life, situations and potential; how they solve problems; what *their* operating system is; and what greater purpose, mission, or function they are here to BE in the world. Who Questions connect these aspects of the person to the situation or challenge they are facing and pulls their truth front and center; this helps them make more sense of what's really going on for them and what they actually need to do to be able to move forward. These questions are present & future focused and connect with Who the Coachee is, as well as their Truth and Purpose to their Solution.

These questions begin with the word “What,” use present tense, often include the word “you,” and are designed to connect the Who of the person to the situation. They don't begin with Who; they speak to *who a person is being in relation to what they're doing*.

For example:

What would it mean for you to (fill in the blank using what they want)?

...have a positive outlook on life?

...choose to make yourself important?

What would a stress-free option look (or be) like for you?

What would compel you to do what you say you want to do?

What would help you to know?

or find the obstacle in their way:

“What about leading this team is most challenging for you?”

“What made that so difficult for you?”

“What if you did have all the time in the world, what else, if anything, would still be in your way?”

Why Questions can be asked to deepen their understanding of reasoning, but they **may set up the coachee to have to defend or justify** their reasons for doing something (or not) and are also mostly past oriented. For the most part, stay away from *Why Questions*. Remove them from your vocabulary, so in the extremely rare moment one is appropriate, you'll know you are using it with precision and intent, and not out of laziness or habit.

Yes/No Questions have very little reason to be in a coaching conversation. There may be rare times that you didn't actually hear something and need to clarify a word or statement. There is a place at the end of the conversation where they are spot on. “Is there anything else that you need to discuss on this topic today? or Is this a good place for us to close?”

Other than those options, *Yes/No (Closed) Questions* are a way for the Coach to use the Client for validation and esteem. If everything you ask has to be validated by the client to ensure that you heard them right, then rather than communicating respect for the client -I want to be sure that I heard you, understood you, etc- what you're really saying is that my need to be validated, understood, right is more important than demonstrating I got you by saying what I heard and trusting you to correct me if I'm off. OWN what you heard and give it back to them in a way they can understand better, think differently about or do something different with.

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If you're wrong, or off, the client WILL tell you, and you move on from there! Coaches tend to want to confirm what they heard at the opening of the coaching session, so they can get an agreement set and then coach. The challenge with this is that the client usually needs to explore further to really get to the actual thing they want to get out of the session. Which means instead of clarifying what you heard and trying to box them into an outcome, you're better to home in on what's really the problem they need to resolve.

You do this by listening for what is *significant and emotionally charged* in what they just told you, reflect that back and ask a question that connects these things to what is appearing to be their problem.

For example:

"It sounds like this family feud has you caught between a rock and hard place, where speaking from your heart isn't safe and knowing how to proceed is complicated. What makes you responsible for how what you say is received?"

vs

"I heard you say that there's a family event coming up and that you've been asked to say a few things and you know that some of what you want to say is going to stir the pot on one side, but if you don't say it, you're not being fair to the ones whose event it is and who also deserve to be recognized, so you're not sure how to say what you want to say because you don't want to hurt feelings and you also don't want to not acknowledge the other for their hard work. Did I get that?"

"Yes"

"So then today you want to work on what to say at the event. Is that right?"

"Yes"

THEY ARE GOING TO SAY YES because you're the coach and they think that is the problem that they just don't know what to say that will work for everyone, but in fact, the real problem is that they are stuck in a people-pleasing loop (in this case), and what they might discover is that the person who would be offended is always offended, no matter what and everything with them means walking on eggshells and that's not this client's problem. The client realized they were not going to hold back the joy for self and the VIP's of the event and felt confident they had enough tact to do it gracefully. What they were going to say at the event, essentially, was irrelevant to the coaching; they needed to get over the people-pleasing pattern and find their voice, so they could live their truth and do it with their natural grace, not resentment.

What Else Questions as a stand alone only asks for more story and irrelevant details. When you sense there is more to uncover, craft this question to be more specific to home in on what they're really seeking to uncover. To keep it open, so you're not leading, you can add "if anything."

For example:

"What else, if anything, would make a difference here?"

"What else is missing from this picture for you?"

"What else, if anything, would you like to see in your job that isn't already there?"

"What else, if anything, is getting in the way of you taking action on this?"

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