



POWERFUL QUESTIONS

evercoach
by mindvalley

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WELCOME, COACH



“

If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes.

”

Albert Einstein

One of the most powerful tools in a coach's toolkit is his / her ability to ask powerful questions.

Powerful questions are reflective inquiries that create insights and trigger greater awareness in your client. They inspire your client to think creatively, clearly, and critically.

The power of a question lies in the context in which it is asked. In this guide, we explore questions that when asked at the right time, have the power to open your client to a world of new possibilities.

Why Don't We Ask Better Questions?

If asking good questions is so critical, why don't most of us, including our clients, spend more time on discovering and framing them?

One of the fundamental reasons is that we live in a culture which lays major focus on knowing the right answers instead of asking the right questions. Our educational institutions have trained us for memorization of rote answers than for seeking new possibilities through questions.

Our deep attachment to finding an answer and not knowing, often blocks our creative capacity to generate fresh perspectives and new insights.

Given the unprecedented challenges we see in organizations, communities and in the world today, learning the skill of asking powerful questions is needed more than ever before.

The Power of Asking Questions As A Coach

“

A paradigm shift occurs when a question is asked inside the current paradigm that can only be answered from outside it.

”

Marilee Goldberg

The Art of the Question

One of your fundamental roles as a coach is to help your client identify the invisible blocks and internal barriers that are blocking their progress.

Questions are tools that help you launch a humble inquiry into the current mindset of your client. They help you have a reflective conversation while guiding your client to a new level of awareness about their barrier or roadblock.

This new level of awareness often leads to a powerful shift and paves the way for breakthrough thinking.

Here are 5 powerful ways in which questions can transform your coaching relationship;

1. INCREASE YOUR CLIENT'S AUTONOMY

Your client's life is a product of their own choices. By asking powerful questions, you invite them to reflect and elicit their own insights, make choices they want, and take charge of their destiny, instead of telling them what to do.

Questions evoke self-discovery, develop intrinsic motivation and increase confidence that ultimately develop greater autonomy for your client.

2. SUPPORT YOUR CLIENT'S COMPETENCE

People are completely capable of changing their own behavior.

Powerful questions challenge your client's assumptions about the world and rewire their brain to look at a current challenge differently.

As a coach, you don't want to focus on your client's problems or challenges, but rather on how they perceive them. Once you help them discover their limiting beliefs, you empower them to create change in their lives.

3. HELP THEM CONNECT THE DOTS

Questions often connect the dots and help them realize how everything is connected – The way they think, how they manage their emotions, and what motivates them to take action.

Once they see this connection, they will be more likely to holistically improve all areas of their life.

4. BRING CLARITY

Questions drive moments of insight by helping clients clarify the way they think and feel. They provoke new thoughts and perspectives by challenging existing assumptions of a given situation.

They often have the power to cut through all the mental chatter and get to the root of a given problem.

5. INCREASE CREATIVITY

“
You can't solve a problem with the same thinking that created it.
”
—
Albert Einstein

Most people never question their status quo. Powerful questions open new neural networks in our brain often associated with bursts of creativity and innovation.

What Makes A Question Powerful?

“
Questions can be like a lever you use to pry open the stuck lid on a paint can. If we have a short lever, we can only just crack open the lid on the can. But if we have a longer lever, or a more dynamic question, we can open that can up much wider and really stir things up. If the right question is applied, and it digs deep enough, then we can stir up all the creative solutions.
”
—
Fran Peavey

While you might not immediately know the characteristics of a powerful question, it's quite easy to recognize one when you hear it. A powerful question transcends boundaries and often generates energy in a conversation.

The power of a question in a coaching conversation lies in its **context and construction**.

QUESTIONS ARE CONSIDERED POWERFUL IF THEY;

- ✓ Arise from a place of Not knowing - where the coach has no answers
- ✓ Evoke Inquiry, for which the coach is seeking answers
- ✓ Respectful, yet they challenge the client to depart from their usual thinking
- ✓ Direct and Open ended instead of leading to a Yes / No response
- ✓ Spontaneous and in the moment instead of preplanned
- ✓ Dig deeper towards the mind of the client rather than the situation at hand
- ✓ Reframe a current challenge
- ✓ Humorous and create a shift in energy
- ✓ Create deep meaning and stay with the client and

Types of Powerful Questions

1. OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS.

The construction of a question plays a critical role in either opening your client's minds or narrowing possibilities. Open-ended questions begin with the following words: why, what, where, who, when and how. They lead to an answer that requires reflection and elicit insight.

WHY? - This question often helps get to the root of a particular challenge and questions underlying assumptions and beliefs they hold.

A word of caution on questions that start with "Why" - It has been psychologically proven that human beings become naturally defensive to questions that start with "Why". Hence a coach needs to carefully construct them and choose a curious tone to encourage inquiry in their client.

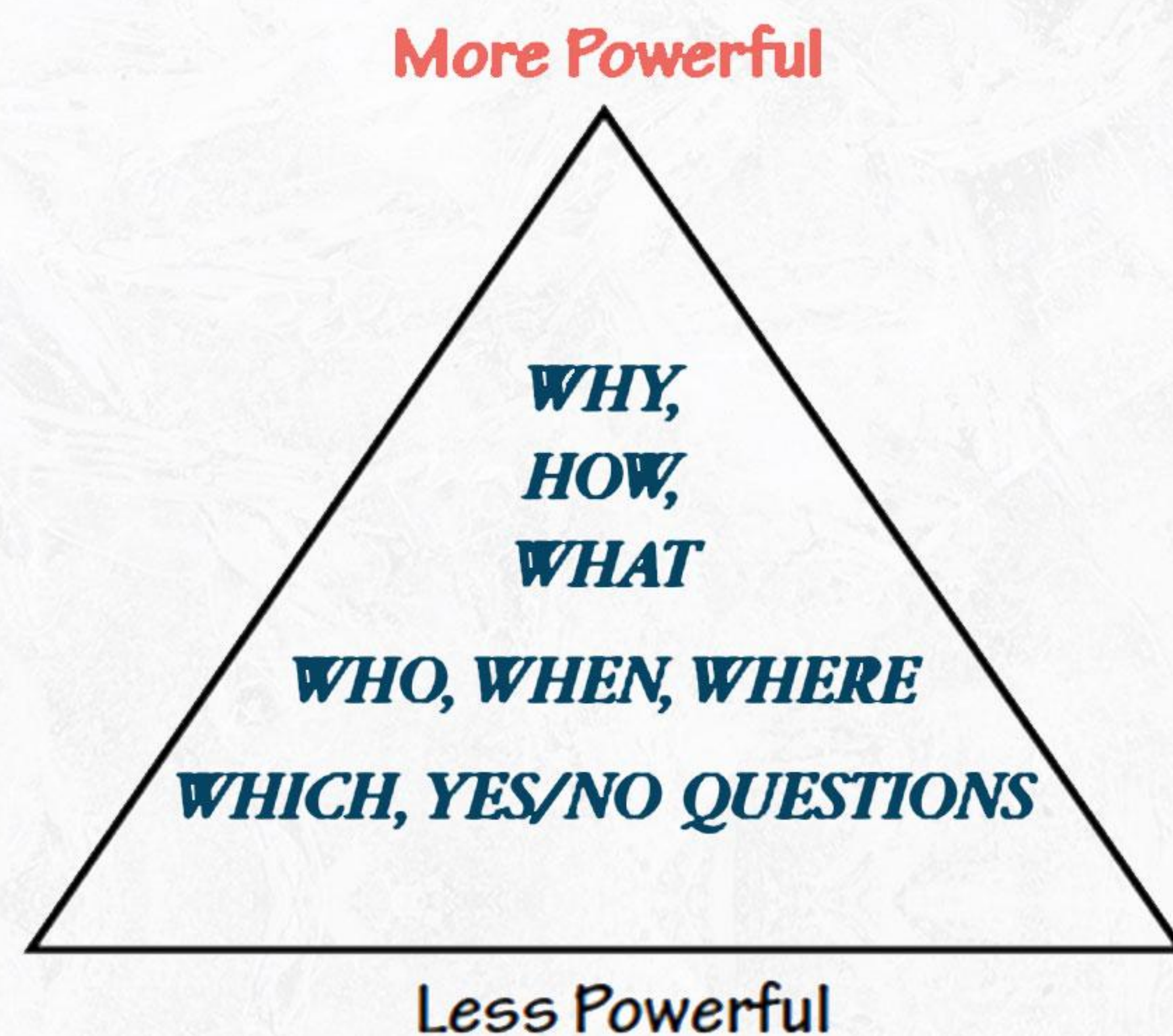
WHAT? – This is a great way to open up conversations and start to draw out important information from the client's way of seeing the world. It begins to raise their awareness

WHERE? – This is a way to help the client locate the origin of a problem or challenge, and see new opportunities to apply new ways of thinking, new behaviors and skills.

WHO? – Provides relatability to their problem or challenge. Invites them to look for models that they can follow or seek support from.

WHEN? – It invites to analyze the time of origin of a problem or challenge as well as define the time to take steps forward and take action.

HOW? – This invites them to think about the ways they can implement their ideas or suggestions around a problem or challenge with specific actions. Avoids procrastination and fear, and creates new solutions based on confidence and possibility.



As you move from the simple "yes / no" questions at the bottom of this pyramid towards the "why" question at the top, you will observe that you create space for a more reflective and deeper conversation with your clients.

For example;

- ✓ Are you satisfied with your job?
- ✓ When have you been most satisfied with your job?
- ✓ What is it about your job that you find most satisfying?
- ✓ How do you feel when you have a satisfying day at work?
- ✓ Why do you think you find your job so satisfying?

2. PROBING QUESTIONS.

Probing questions are used for gaining clarification. They also help you gather more information about something and invite deeper reflection before finding ways to move forward through action.

For example:

- ✓ How does this relate to what you just said?
- ✓ What did you mean by that?
- ✓ Is there an option that you have not yet considered?
- ✓ What are your options for solving the problem?

3. HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS

Hypothetical questions invite the client to consider an alternate scenario, creating more options when they are stuck.

For example:

- ✓ What would happen if...?
- ✓ Imagine you got that promotion at work, how would that change...?
- ✓ If you were able to purchase the house of your dreams, what would be different for you?

4. FUNNELING QUESTIONS:

Funneling questions is a technique that involves a coach starting with general questions, and then drilling down to a more specific point in each. Usually, this will elicit more detailed responses at each level. You can use it when you need to dig deeper on a particular subject.

For example:

- ✓ What is the behavior you want to modify?
- ✓ When did you start that behavior?
- ✓ Who do you think triggered that behavior in you?
- ✓ What meaning did you give at the time?

- ✓ What new meaning can you give?
- ✓ What is the first step you'd like to take to spark this change?

5. PARAPHRASING

Paraphrasing is about reflecting back what you heard from your client in the form of a question to see what you heard is really true for them. These types of questions also allow you to make sure you understand what the client is trying to say.

For example:

CLIENT: "I can't do that because I have no time"

COACH: Let me see if I heard you correctly, you say you have no time to do that task?

21 POWERFUL QUESTIONS TO TRANSFORM YOUR COACHING SESSIONS

“

In the word question, there is a beautiful word – quest. I love that word. We are all partners in a quest.

”

Elie Wiesel

From our experience of working with over 70+ master coaches and having trained 140,000 coaches globally, we gathered a list of questions that have proven to create fundamental shifts in their clients. These questions are not magic, but they are powerful!

When adapted to meet the needs of your client, company or organization, they can help you partner with your client to spark the process of transformation.

1. WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

This is almost a fail proof way to start your coaching conversation. The power of this question lies in the fact that it's neither too open and broad nor too narrow and confining.

It establishes great rapport at the start of your coaching session because you create the space for your client to share something they are actively thinking about. At the same time, asking this question helps you get to the heart of what matters most to them and paves the way for you to frame the objective for that session.

2. AND WHAT ELSE? ...

This question helps people go a level deeper into what your clients want to create, and get to the root of their current challenge. These three simple words create more wisdom, more insights and more possibilities.

You can ask this question again and again, until you feel that your client has truly emptied their mind to you.

3. WHAT ARE YOU MOST GRATEFUL FOR, RIGHT NOW?

This is a great question to flood your clients with positive emotions at the start of your conversation. Positive emotions turn off their fight-or-flight response and lower any hidden stress or anxiety before the rest of your coaching conversation.

4. WHAT WOULD MAKE THIS AN EXTRAORDINARY CONVERSATION FOR YOU?

This question infuses great energy at the start of your conversation by opening your client up to outcomes that they think would be extraordinary. It also helps open their mind up to positive outcomes very early in the conversation.

5. How will you know that you have achieved this outcome? or What does achieving this look or feel like for you?

We all have different measures of success. This question will help you identify your client's measure of success for the outcome they are setting out to create.

Knowing also helps your client judge progress during the course of the conversation.

6. WHY IS THIS REALLY IMPORTANT FOR YOU?

This question helps you understand the values and aspirations of your client. Most coaching conversations operate at the level of what a client 'wants' but your client's response to this question will help you understand what they really 'need'

This question also helps your circle back to create accountability and an action plan towards the end of the session.

7. WHAT IS THE REAL CHALLENGE HERE FOR YOU?

This question will help you identify the biggest obstacle that is standing in the way of your client. Often it will come down to a limiting belief that lies in their blind spot. In some cases, the process of verbalizing their challenge creates clarity for your client.

It also brings your client's fears to the surface, so you can address them through coaching.

8. IF YOU KNEW YOU WOULDN'T FAIL, WHAT WOULD YOU TRY?

This is an invitation for your client to take action and overcome fear. It helps them think without the pressure of the challenges they currently face while fuelling their creative mind.

9. WHAT DO YOU WANT TO FOCUS ON TODAY?

This question helps you redefine their major area of focus / action for the conversation. It is an important step towards defining a very specific goal which once clear, can help you co-create an action plan with them

Most clients often enter conversations with challenges. This question helps your client take personal responsibility towards the challenge they wish to solve and prioritize based on what's most useful for them.

10. WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF?

This question allows your client to celebrate and shift their mind to a more positive state. It acts as a reminder that they are capable of achieving great things and opens them up to newer possibilities.

It's also a great way for you to learn the things that really matter for your client.

11. WHAT ARE SOME OPTIONS THAT YOU'D LIKE TO EXPLORE TOGETHER?

This reminds your clients that everything they do is their choice, and they are not bound to one only solution. It helps them create different pathways and strategies on the way to their goal, and know that the possibility of modifying their plans is always available.

12. WHAT WOULD YOU BE MOST EXCITED TO CREATE IN THE NEXT 3 YEARS? or IF YOU COULD CREATE ANYTHING YOU WANT IN THE NEXT 3 YEARS, WHAT WOULD THAT BE?

This is an invitation for your client to allow themselves to dream, to think big, to see beyond the possibilities of their current status of life, and ask themselves the question of where they want to be in the long run.

It is also the first step to creating their vision, so you can help them work on the short-term strategies that will take them to where they want to be.

12. WHAT WOULD YOU BE MOST EXCITED TO CREATE IN THE NEXT 3 YEARS?

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14. HOW WILL ACHIEVING THIS GOAL HELP YOU AND OTHERS AROUND YOU?

This gives your client meaning. It will remind them of why they chose their goal, and why they will take action, even when things get difficult along the way.

It will be their reference point to come back to when they need motivation, and it helps them think about the larger impact of their goal that transcends them.

15. WHAT HAPPENS ONCE YOU HAVE ACHIEVED THIS GOAL?

This question helps you judge if what your client is really after is a means goal or an end goal. Most clients do not realize they are chasing a means goal until after they have achieved it.

Asking this question helps your client visualize having achieved the goal and the feeling associated with it. This in fact is when most clients realize it's the feeling they are chasing, and often not the goal itself.

16. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF YOU DID NOT ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?

This question is designed to make your client reflect on the cost of their inaction.

When your client puts into balance what they can win vs what they can lose, it will propel them to move past their fear. Sometimes, it also helps your client reevaluate the impact of that goal in their lives.

17. WHAT IS THE SMALLEST STEP YOU CAN TAKE TODAY TOWARDS YOUR GOAL?

Small steps take the fear away, as they are easy to take. They also help your clients get in motion, moving forward towards what they want.

This is the perfect question to help your client reinforce their autonomy and competence. Once they get into the habit of taking small consistent steps, your client's confidence also gets stronger.

18. WHAT EXACTLY ARE YOU SAYING YES TO? OR WHAT ARE YOU REALLY COMMITTING TO?

This question helps your clients double clarify their commitment, and hold themselves accountable to their choices. Too often, clients half heartedly agree to taking action on something without completely understanding what they have agreed to. This often leads to a conversation where you hear, "I never said I was going to do that."

Asking this question brings the commitment out from the shadows and into the open.

19. BY SAYING YES TO THIS, WHAT ARE YOU SAYING NO TO?

The question helps your client consider the implications of their commitment on other areas of their life.

One of the biggest reasons why clients are unable to take consistent action is because they have not considered what upholding that commitment would need in terms of space, time, energy and focus. This question helps them define those strong boundaries in partnership with you.

20. HOW CAN I HELP?

This question helps your client clarify exactly what support they need from you. But most importantly, it ensures that you do not jump into action assuming what they need. It keeps you curious while giving you the chance to accept your client's request or guide them in a direction that would be helpful to them.

21. WHAT WAS MOST USEFUL FOR YOU FROM THIS CONVERSATION?

This is the most powerful way to end your coaching conversation. The magic of this question lies in the fact that drives what neuroscientists call double loop learning which suggests that people learn best when they have a chance to recall and reflect on what just happened. Through this process they start creating new neural pathways which is when Aha moments are born.

The Biggest Mistakes To Avoid While Asking Questions

1 ASKING CLOSED-ENDED QUESTIONS:

These are questions who can be typically answered with a "Yes" or "No", and as their name implies, they close up the conversation between you and your client, along with the possibility to expand on their thinking and introspection.

EXAMPLE

01

Your client wants to reconnect with his father

Instead of;

Does the decision to call your father make you feel good?

Reframe to;

How do you think speaking with your father makes you feel?

What do you expect to feel after speaking with your father?

EXAMPLE

02

Your client wants to feel more balance between his life and work

Instead of;

Is finding work-life balance important for you?

Reframe to;

What does balance look and feel like for you?

2 OFFERING ADVICE IN DISGUISE

A coach is often able to see their client's blind spots during a conversation and assumes that they also know the best solution for them. Consciously or unconsciously the end up asking a leading question - which is really a solution disguised as a question. This should be avoided at all costs

The client wants to increase their client list.

Instead of;

Have you thought about writing a blog about productivity to increase your client list?

Reframe to;

What are three options that you have considered to help you increase your client list?

The client wants to sleep better at night.

Instead of;

Have you ever tried lavender tea to help you sleep better?

Reframe to;

What can you add to your daily routine to help you sleep better?

3 ASKING QUESTIONS WITHOUT A CLEAR DIRECTION OR OBJECTIVE

This happens when the coach is so eager to help the client get to an answer, that they keep asking random questions, without creating enough space for the client to answer any of them.

This leaves your client feeling confused, and the conversation flow is lost.

Your client wants to get healthier

Instead of;

Coach: *What physical activities have you considered?*

Client: *I enjoy walking outdoors, and I am finding out about gyms.*

Coach: *Have you tried meditating? Or seeing a holistic nutritionist?*

Client: *Well, not yet...*

Coach: *What about your exercise routine?*

Client: *I haven't been able to keep that up either*

First stop, breathe, think, and then start with a question that opens up the conversation. Then you let the conversation guide what you ask next.

Reframe to;

Coach: *What does being healthy mean for you?*

Client: *It means I feel good overall, I can sleep good at night and have sustained energy throughout the day.*

Coach: *What are some routines that you can incorporate in your daily habits to help you feel good?*

Client: *I can go back to exercising in the mornings.*

Coach: *What would that look like for you?*

Client: *I enjoy walking outside in the morning, for at least 20 minutes, it helps me clear my mind.*

4 NOT CREATING SPACES FOR INSIGHT

One of the biggest mistakes that new coaches make is trying to fill every minute of the conversation with questions. They think that when there is a space of silence it means that they are not doing a good job as a coach, and they must formulate the next question.

In fact just the opposite is true! When a client is reflecting on an insight, silence is just what they need to turn their new insight into reality.

Silence is in fact one of the most powerful unspoken questions.

5 INSERTING YOUR OWN ASSUMPTIONS

Here is when your client is expressing something that is going on in their world, and you use your own world view as a filter to go deeper, incorporating your personal assumptions in the process.

Remember that your role as a coach is to discover how your client sees their own world, not to impose the way you do.

Staying neutral and objective in a coaching conversation is key.

Use the words that they use to describe their situation, not your own assumptions of what they mean to say.

EXAMPLE

01

Your client comes upset to your session. They are having a challenge at work.

Instead of;

Client: *I am feeling frustrated in my current role as a customer service agent.*

Coach: *Have you considered looking for a new role that you don't hate?*

Client: *I never said I hated my job, I just feel frustrated!*

Reframe to;

Client: *I am feeling frustrated in my current role as a customer service agent.*

Coach: *What is happening that makes you feel frustrated?*

Client: *I am having an issue with a coworker. I feel like I do all the work, and then he takes all the credit.*

Coach: *Tell me more about that.*

6 TO INTERRUPT OR NOT TO INTERRUPT?

As a coach, you know that you should create a safe space for your client to express the way they see their world, and voice out their challenges.

New coaches make the mistake of interrupting the client in the middle of an idea, while others allow their clients to ramble for long period.

But as a coach, how do you know when to interrupt?

If you asked a question, and your client is silent for a bit, you don't want to interrupt, as they are probably reflecting on an insight and this is huge for them.

Also don't interrupt when they are answering a question that is relevant for the goal of your conversation (If the answer is leading to a point of discovery).

If you feel a dire need to interrupt when it's not the right time a simple hack is to place your tongue on the roof of your mouth and give your client enough time to think and elaborate.

On the other hand, if your client starts to talk about a subject that veers off the conversation away from the session's objective, and it doesn't add any value to their self-discovery, or goals, you can redirect back the conversation.

Here's how you can frame this for your client;

As we were discussing X, I heard you say ..., tell me more about that.
I appreciate that you want to share more about X, but I would love to go back to the previous subject we were discussing, so we can make the most of our time today.

7 THE CHALLENGING WHY

While open ended questions are powerful tools, their construction and tone can make a world of difference.

While questions that start with a What, Where, Who, When, or How, you invite inquiry, questions that start a question with "Why", when asked in the wrong tone create a defensive judgmental reaction in your client. Hence a coach needs to carefully construct them and choose a curious tone to encourage inquiry in their client.

Feel it yourself.

- ✓ Why did you quit your job? (judging) vs
What led you to quit your job? (exploring)
- ✓ Why did you skip going to the gym this week? (judging) vs
How did you feel this week without exercising? (exploring)
- ✓ Why haven't you had the important conversation with your spouse yet? (judging) vs
When are you planning to have the important conversation with your spouse?
(exploring)

WHAT'S NEXT?

A Message From Ajit Nawalkha,
Co-Founder of Evercoach by Mindvalley



Once you're armed with these 21 powerful questions, you're well on your way.. but the road doesn't stop there.

Imagine being able to make sure EVERY single coaching session a huge success... regardless of your own coaching experience.

How would that change your business and build your reputation as a coach?

If that sounds impossible to you right now, I know the feeling.

Back in the day - most of my coaching conversations were a dud. I would speak to a client for a bit.. Only to reach an inevitable, painful dead end.

But today, 5 years later, I know the exact recipe that makes a coaching session a huge success, and leaves clients with profound insights and an irresistible desire for more.

Interested to know how it works?

Click below to learn all about the advanced strategy I've used to move beyond mediocre sessions and to create extraordinary results with ease and flow. Every single time.

[Click here to learn more](#)