



Coaching Questions by Don Phin, Esq.

I have coached numerous executives over the years. Great coaches ask great questions...and then do a great job of listening. Then they seek to clarify. And then listen again...and clarify again...until an awareness comes to light. What follows are some suggestions. When coaching the best question to ask is the one most helpful in that moment.

- What's on your mind?
- What is important right now?
- How does this affect...
- What I heard you say was...is that accurate?
- And what else?
- It feels like we have been here before...yes?
- What would _____ say about this?
- I noticed that... are you aware of this?
- What other method could you consider?
- Have you considered there may be more than one right answer?
- How would you explain how this happened to a lay person?
- What is the real challenge here?
- What feels unfair about it?
- Whose judgement concerns you?
- What do you really want from this?
- What do you know to be true about this?
- What would you have to believe to...
- What would you know if...?
- What would you have to do if...?
- What if you did know?
- For what purpose?
- What have you told yourself about this?
- What have others told you about it?
- When have you been most excited about...?
- Is there anyone else you or I should be talking to about this?
- How does this make you a better person?
- How does this make the people around you better?
- How could you do it differently?
- Where do you see yourself in _____ years from now?
- Who else is affected by your decision to _____?

- How would you know if this approach is working?
- What results or impacts would you have to see?
- If you say yes to this, what will you have to say no to?
- What do you have to stop doing?
- What was most useful to you?
- What really matters most?
- How do others feel about this?
- What are the obstacles in the way? How can you remove them?
- Have you thought this out to the end?
- What is the next safest step you can take?
- Are you willing to risk being disliked?

Conceptually these approaches help as well:

- Seeking permission (or as I say inviting them).
- Story telling (a great way to inspire people)
- Listening (for at least five minutes without interruption or judgment)
- Empathic resonance (I understand, I feel your pain)
- Pattern recognition (When have you seen this happen to you before? What does this remind you of?)
- Mental simulations (exercises)
- Types of inquiry, questions (for example there is a big difference between “How did you manage to screw that up?” and “What can be done to make sure that doesn’t happen again?”)
- Intuition (Are we listening to our subconscious? What’s it saying?)
- Creating stories about others (We all have our stories about each other. Is the one we’ve imposed on that other person really accurate?)
- Rational analysis (Let’s try to figure this out)
- Identification of and education about emotions, thought, defenses, etc. (How do you react to criticism?)
- Challenges (I am not so sure that I understand that. Can you explain further?)
- Silence (Gives us time to hear ourselves think)
- Clarifications (First seek to understand, then to be understood)
- Supportive interventions (Suggestions, praise and other types of comments)
- Confrontations (I get a sense that what I am hearing is not entirely accurate)
- Interpretations (What does this mean to you? How did it look like a picture or sound like a story?)
- Reframing (Well, what if you thought about it this way instead?)
- Connection (Have you observed a connection between x and y? Or between x and anything else?)
- Reconstructions (Let’s go back and create a different story out of these same facts)
- Sensations (What do you hear, see feel, etc, when...)

Here’s to some great coaching,



Don