



Sacred Depths Certification

Principles of Powerful Breakthrough Questions

“ *At the heart of masterful coaching and real transformation is masterful questioning.* ”

The most masterful coaching questions have the ability to:

- Create awareness, breakthroughs, and new habits
- Help client access their own intuition
- Activate creativity, brainstorming, and problem solving
- Empower clients to take responsibility for themselves
- Create integrity and foster commitment
- Help client articulate their own judgments
- Activate learning
- Create connection to self

Consulting vs Questioning

Too often, practitioners consult at moments when what is needed is questioning.

- Consulting is an important part of the service we provide because we have expertise, wisdom, and experience. And our clients want our opinions on things.
- A big mistake practitioners make is to default to consulting more than is helpful or supportive.
- This leads to missed opportunities to ask questions that will actually create more energy, motivation, excitement, insights, breakthroughs, and ideas.
- In situations that require questioning, when we default to consulting our clients miss out on an opportunity to answer a question that can create the biggest difference for them.
- Learning can be more optimal when it comes through self-discovery, self-inquiry, self-proclamation, and having clients answer questions for themselves.

Guiding principle at the heart of any coaching session is human beings are curious and curiosity leads to learning.

Why practitioners default to consulting

- Discomfort with a learning process or a fear it will take too long for the client to learn.
- Practitioner has a need to sound smart, or to impress client (i.e. playing field is not equal).
- A tendency to take over-responsibility for others/clients.
- If Practitioner is someone who HEROs other people. In other words, they regularly rescue people
- A tendency to not trust that the client ALWAYS knows best (for his/herself)
- A habit of doing consulting and not in the pattern of asking questions.

Principles of Powerful Questions

There is no formula for amazing questions. Masterful questioning is truly an art and does not exist in a vacuum. Masterful practitioners are working all their skills, all at the same time.

1. Avoid getting attached to a particular answer or outcome.
 - It will kill curiosity and kill the level playing field.
 - If you ask a leading question or become attached to a specific answer, the conversation stops and energetically you won't know where to go next if you get an answer you weren't expecting.
 - Follow intuition and natural curiosity.
 - The best questions come from deep listening to clients. As you listen, you'll start to get curious about certain things. Your intuition is going to bring up something or your curiosity will get piqued.
 - See any insight or download you receive during a session, not as a fact but as curiosity, a place to ask questions.
2. A good question is rooted in:
 - Listening to client and being attuned to their needs
 - Listening to your own intuition and curiosity
 - Keeping track of bigger picture agenda
 - Your own experience
3. Remember client ALWAYS has a choice
 - Questions can help open up choices for the client
 - Don't be attached to outcome OR to getting client to a solution.
 - If a client presents a situation and she is acting as if she already doesn't have a choice, don't rush to problem solve, give her choices.
 - Part of that choice is to ask her what she wants to receive around the issue. Maybe she just wants to be heard, or wants to know it's normal, or maybe she does want a solution.
 - Other questions you can ask:
 - > Where is the growth opportunity for you here?
 - > Where do you have choice in the situation?
 - > Is it true 100% of the time that...?

4. Be willing to be lovingly bold
 - Often times, questions are not as powerful as they could be because we are afraid to be bold. We're scared the client will get upset or be offended.
 - Being lovingly bold requires inner work. Have to totally respect your client, yourself, and not be afraid of client getting a little angry or a little triggered.
5. Language can help create masterful questions
 - Most of the time, the questions that are succinct, clear, and direct, are the most powerful.
 - 9 times out of 10, ask one question at a time, don't stack questions.
 - Use client's terminology, when asking questions. If you're deeply listening, you'll pick up on language that's meaningful for the client. Notice if they're using a particular term frequently, or you notice an energy there, use that term.
 - When clients hear their words mirrored back to them, they feel heard and feel like you're curious and interested in them and their world.
 - Use language that helps them learn through already established filters (e.g., if client is a yoga teacher, use yoga metaphors when asking questions.)
6. As a general, use open-ended questions, not multiple choice, or yes/no questions
 - There are times when a yes/no or multiple-choice question is appropriate. When a client is a ripe moment of making a decision, internal or external, the yes or no can be a powerful affirmation for the client in that moment.
 - Make sure questions aren't leading questions.
 - Avoid making assumptions and baking those assumptions into your questions.
7. Slow down the line of questions and connect the dots
 - Giving an example can help slow the line of questioning down
 - Discern the right moment for exploring inner feelings, motivations, limits/obstacles vs the moments to ask questions about action and moving forward.
8. Think about word choices when asking questions
 - The right word can make all the difference for a client.
 - What would feel empowering for you? vs. What would feel pleasurable for you?
 - How do you know who your friends are? vs. How do you know who your trusted friends are?
 - What can you do to move forward vs. What will you do to move forward here?
 - How would you like to resolve this? vs. What would be in integrity here? vs. how can you set aligned boundaries for yourself?
 - One of the best ways to get precise with word choices is to be conscious of client's goals, priorities, values and needs.

9. Questions should sometimes challenge and stretch client
 - In any good coaching session, there is going to be some tension.
 - Some of your questions should stump your client.
10. Be conscious of what level of learning and transformation a client needs in that moment
 - The four levels of learning and transformation someone has to go through:
 - > Mind: cognitive grasp of material
 - > Heart: an emotional attachment to the learning
 - > Spirit: client needs to see this new learning connected to something bigger than themselves
 - > Body: client needs to feel it in their body/make a body memory.
11. Use your questions to make connections on patterns, events, habits, or ways of being you notice in your client's behavior.
 - Most powerful job of a coach is to help clients make connections for themselves.
 - When you are able to help client to make these connections a breakthrough can happen in that moment.
12. Know when something is meant to remain in the mystery for the time being.
 - A mistake practitioners make is, when they can't help a client get the clarity they're seeking, it might mean the answer is not ready to be uncovered. Practitioners miss this truth.
 - Avoid being attached to getting to the answer, embrace the mystery and know the mystery can be productive.



At Home Work

When working with clients, slow down a bit in sessions. Take a moment to craft questions based on the principles discussed in class.



Partner Sessions

In partner sessions, do the same AND afterwards, breakdown the questions asked to see if you could have gone deeper with your question asking.