

## #5 Questioning Techniques (pp.166-167)

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Bacon, T. R. & Spear, K.I. (2003). *Adaptive Coaching: The Art and Practice of a Client-Centered Approach to Performance Improvement.* Mountain View, CA: Davies-Black.

### Part 4:8 The Real Issues: Questioning

Albert Einstein said, “I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious.” Although not intended as such, this quotation describes the finest coaches. They are passionately curious about the people they are helping, and they exercise their curiosity by asking probing questions. A good question can open a closed door. It can stir people’s memories; stimulate them to think about things in ways they’ve never thought about them before; and provoke insight and change by causing them to examine their aspirations, motivations, choices, assumptions, priorities, and behavior. Questions are the most important tools in a coach’s toolbox and the skill with which coaches use questions reveals the difference between the novice coach and the master. As Egyptian author Naguib Mahfouz said, “You can tell whether a man is clever by his answers. You can tell whether a man is wise by his questions.” Wise coaches have a repertoire of questions and know which kind of question to ask at any point in the dialogue to stimulate the client and move the dialogue toward insight.

Much has been written about the difference between *open* and *closed* questions. Open questions are those that encourage the respondent to provide expansive answers; closed questions are those that can be answered in one word or two. It is useful to understand the types of questions that can help clients explore themselves and their motivations more deeply, or challenge and provoke them to question their own perspective, or encourage them to dream. These include motivation questions, ideal outcome questions, implication questions, sensory questions, and Columbo questions.

#### **Motivation Questions:**

- What led you to do that?
- What were the factors in your decision?
- What would you prefer? Why?
- What is most important to you?
- If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently?

### **Ideal Outcome Questions:**

- What are your goals and aspirations?
- What is the best possible outcome?
- What would you ideally like to see?
- What would the best circumstances be?
- Where would you like to be in a year? Two years?
- If there were no constraints, what would be possible?

### **Implication Questions:**

- What would happen if...?
- What are the implications of...?
- How serious would it be if...?
- How bad/good could it be if...?

### **Sensory Questions:**

- How do you see...?
- How do you envision...?
- How does that sound to you?
- What does that feel like?
- What are your feelings about...?

### **Columbo Questions:**

- How does that work?
- Do you think they will go along with that? What's in it for them?
- Why would you approach it that way?
- I don't understand. Help me out with that.
- Please explain or tell me more about...