

Asking Better Questions

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ACR International Section and NAFCM webinar

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Asking Better Questions

- ◆ Asking Better Questions begins with thinking about the questions we ask.

- ◆ In today's webinar, there will be several points to respond. Please briefly type your thoughts into the text box. And take time read other's responses.
- ◆ For more information, see my book, Transforming Conflict into Consensus.
- ◆ There is also an academic article on Asking Better Questions appearing in the next Association for Conflict Resolution Journal.

We hear only those questions for which we are in a position to find answers. ~ Friedrich Nietzsche

For a long time of human history our knowledge was guided by pre-conceptions and belief systems. We were imposing our beliefs on the universe and it did not fit well.

Then we learned to observe the universe without presumption.

What we observe is not nature itself, but nature
exposed to our method of questioning.

- Werner Heisenberg

Life emerges from a combination of chemical elements
and does not exist in the individual elements.
Our mind emerges from our brain cells and gives rise to
intellect, thought, emotion and imagination.
Consciousness emerges from the mind.

More complex systems require more energy.
This is expressed as Watts/kilogram.

Our Sun .00019 Watts/kilogram

Planets .00088 Watts/kilogram

Animals and body ~ 1.3 Watts/kilogram

Human brain ~ 16 Watts/kilogram ~ more than
100,000 times the sun per unit weight

It is through science that we prove but through intuition that we discover. ~ Henri Poincare

The human brain is the most complex form in the universe and the highest achievement of evolution (10¹¹ neurons). The possible number of connections in the brain exceeds the total number of atoms in the universe 10¹¹ factorial > 10⁷⁸

Dr. Mehrdad Ehsani, Robert M. Kennedy Endowed professor at Texas A&M University. Co-author of 17 books, over 380 publications and over 20 patents.

Are Humans the only species capable of asking questions?

Enculturated ape Kanzi, Washoe, Sarah and a few others underwent extensive language training and while Sarah understood the question, she did not herself ask any questions — unlike the child who asks interminable questions...

The human brain, the highest form of evolution, was created to ask questions.

"What people think of as the moment of discovery is really the discovery of the question." ~ Jonas Salk

Thinking is central to all learning and there is no learning without thinking, but central to thinking is questioning.

It is our questions that fuel and drive our thinking.

Maieutics

Maieutics (/meɪˈjuːtiks/ or /maɪˈjuːtiks/) is a pedagogical method based on the idea that truth is latent in the mind of every human being due to innate reason but has to be "given birth" by answering intelligently proposed questions (or problems)

As mediators, our principal tool is a good question

What types of questions are there?

Questions about people - psychology, anthropology

Questions about nature - physics, chemistry

International Reflections

- ◆ Over the last 11 years I have taught these concepts to receptive groups in China, India, southeast Asia, Russia, Europe, the US and Canada. I worked and lived full time in China and India for the last 8 years.

He who asks a question is a fool for five minutes;
he who does not ask a question remains a fool forever. -
Chinese proverb

- ◆ I have noticed that different cultures approach questions in different ways.
- ◆ In China, questions are seen as a loss of face.
- ◆ In India and southeast Asia, questions are seen as intellectual curiosity.
- ◆ In Russia, questions are used to find the truth.
- ◆ In Europe and the US, questions are used to display the intelligence of the questioner.

- ◆ This framework teaches a way of asking questions that is both kind and honest, connecting the east with the west.

If you want better answers,
you need to ask better questions.

What does a good question do?

Please respond in a few words in the text box.

- ◆ What is the most difficult question to ask?

ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS

Balanced

1

|

2

Open ----- Closed

3

|

4

Positional

Better questions begin with
Balanced and Open

Here is an example of questions from the 4 quadrants:

How can we locate the missing book?(Q1)

Do you know who took the book? (Q2)

Why did you take his book? (Q3)

Did you take his book? (Q4)

School teaches us the answers,
life teaches us the questions.

Trip Barthel

4MAT

Front of the room

Feeling



Thinking

4MAT

Front of the room

Feeling

|
|

Doing

Watching

|
|

Thinking

4MAT

Front of the room

Feeling

Imagination | Connection

What if? | Why?

Doing ----- Watching

How? | What?

Speculation | Investigation

Thinking

Where all think alike,
no one thinks very much..

Walter Lippmann

A better question synthesizes what we know and opens up new possibilities.

- Connection - Why - questions that ask for a reason or purpose.
- Investigation - What - questions that request information or advice.
- Speculation - How - questions that promote understanding.
- Imagination - What if - questions that promote creativity.

What do we know?

Known knowns. things we know that we know.

Known unknowns. things that we know we don't know.

Unknown unknowns. things we don't know we don't know.

Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's taxonomy is a way of distinguishing the fundamental questions.

evaluation - creating - WHAT IF

synthesis - convergent - HOW

analysis - critical thinking - WHY

application - applying to new situations - HOW

comprehension and understanding - WHAT

knowledge and memory - WHAT

With every increase in knowledge, there occurs a greater increase in ignorance, and the gap between the two grows greater as time passes.

So, we need to continually ask better questions to keep up with the gap from knowledge to ignorance.

Better Questions

- Are emotionally intelligent - positivity is more creative and expansive
- Are balanced - multi-partial and favors all parties
- Are open - allows for a complete response
- Are kind and honest - connecting the east and west
- Are synthesizing - they combine different elements
- Are future focused - you can't change the past
- Are unifying - we need to work together
- Are called Frames

- ◆ 4 Questions to resolution:
- ◆ Can you tell us where you live?
- ◆ Can you tell us about your dog?
- ◆ What is acceptable behavior for a dog in your neighborhood?
- ◆ How can we work together to help a dog live according to what you feel is acceptable behavior?

All our knowledge results from questions, which is
another way of saying that questioning is our
most important intellectual tool. ~ Neil Postman

Robin wants to start a nightclub in an old warehouse near the edge of a residential area with several apartment buildings. Robin has purchased the property and has all of the necessary permits to begin construction on his nightclub. Tony, the representative of the residents of the apartments is concerned that a nightclub will play loud music and the patrons of the nightclub might drink too much and become a nuisance in the neighborhood.

What is a question you would want to ask both Robin and Tony?

The 9 Questions of Affirmative Facilitation from the book, Transforming Conflict into Consensus.

- What are the rules?
- Why do we care?
- What is the truth?
- What is the big picture?
- What are our choices?
- What are our values?
- How do we decide?
- How do we work together?
- What was the result?

- ◆ Thank you for joining us today

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What is the best question you could ask about racism?

economic inequality?

abortion?

gender orientation?

criminal justice?

Pick one topic and write a better question in the text box.

What if all children were created equal?

What if men and women treated one another with true compassion and respect?

What if we all acted based on our higher natures?

What if we could truly help others so there would be much less criminal activity?

How could we combine the best of capitalism and socialism?

Questions about nature - scientific

What if we could transmit data using quantum pairing?

What if we could unite all the natural forces?

Why does DNA split?