

## ASKING THE PROPER QUESTION! Part 2

This blog is the second in a series of five that explores the art of asking the proper question. Having introduced the importance of asking questions in our initial blog, I will now explore two different types of questions.

### Different types of questions

Closed and open questions are two types of questions you may already be familiar with (Greene & Grant, 2003). Closed questions are typically used to obtain factual information and to check for accuracy. For example: Where do you live? Have you received coaching before? So what I am hearing you say is that reading isn't your preferred way of learning. Have I got that right? While they have a purpose, closed questions don't facilitate an interesting, thought provoking conversation in the same way that open questions can.

Open questions have the potential to promote learning and discovery, share thoughts and feelings, generate new ideas and possibilities and even facilitate positive change. However, in asking open questions, we need to take care we are asking the 'better' question (Tighe, 2011).

In finding the better question, much of the literature suggests we refrain from asking 'why' questions (See Tighe, 2011; Starr, 2008; Greene & Grant, 2003). Despite our intentions, 'why' questions can be interpreted as accusing, critical and judgmental. Asking why questions can force people to feel a need to justify themselves or defend their position. In addition, why questions tend to keep us stuck in the problem, which is not always helpful in generating solutions that keep us moving forward (Greene & Grant, 2003). Alternatively, questions more likely to open up a conversation in a way that promotes greater respect, interest and curiosity are those beginning with what, when, where, how and which (Tighe, 2011).

Consider the following questions and your reaction to them:

- Why did you do that?

Compared with:

- What was the outcome you were hoping for?
- How did that approach help you achieve your goal?
- What did you learn by doing it that way?

### References

Greene, J. & Grant, A. M. (2003). *Solution-focused Coaching: Managing people in a complex world*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Starr, J. (2008). *The Coaching Manual*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Tighe, L. (2011). *The Answer: Improve Your Life By Asking Better Questions*. [eBook].  
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