

ASKING THE PROPER QUESTION!

By Lorraine Madden



Albert Einstein (n.d.) is quoted to have said “If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on the solution, I would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask, for once I know the proper question, I could solve the problem in less than five minutes”.

This blog is the first of a series of five that explores the art of asking the proper question. This blog introduces the importance of asking questions and offers some factors to consider. The second blog will explore two different types of questions: closed and open questions. The third focuses on asking solution focused questions. The fourth blog provides some examples of open ended, solution focused questions, and the fifth and final blog offers some final points to consider to enhance your questioning skills.

About asking questions

Much has been written about asking questions. We can read about the better question (Tighe, 2011); the powerful question (Greene & Grant, 2003; Starr, 2008); the magic wand question (O’Hanlon & Beadle, 2005); and the solution-focused question (Bannink, 2006), to name a few.

Questions are a critical component of our conversations (and relationships) with others. Asking questions helps us to acquire information, check facts, gain new insights, broaden perspectives, determine options, find solutions and build relationships. Asking questions of others and of ourselves is also an important feature of reflective practice.

In thinking about the questions you might use in a given situation, it can be helpful to reflect on your relationship with the person, the purpose of the conversation, and your intentions going into it, for yourself and the other person (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan & Switzler, 2002). This will help you determine the questions you might ask. Approaching the conversation with curiosity and an open mind will also inform your question choice.

References

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