



Leader
as Coach

MANAGEMENT TRAINING
BY IMASTERY

Inspired Questions for Coaching Conversations

Asking open-ended questions is key in facilitating coaching conversations. For many of us, asking more open questions, especially to lead the other person to their own insight is quite different to our current and well-established ways of communicating.

Open-ended questions typically begin with words such as what, when, who and how. Phrases such as “Tell me about ...” that implicitly ask for a more detailed response are also helpful. An open question or phrase is designed to encourage a full, meaningful answer using the other person’s own knowledge and feelings. Avoid questions that arouse defensiveness and imply criticism; WHY questions can do this.

The words and phrases we use when we communicate impact how we are perceived as well as the outcome of the conversation. Most of us have formed habits around the way we talk and have never really noticed how our word choices sound to others. You may find it useful to place greater attention to how you say things and specifically try to notice the words you use. You may also find benefit in developing your own list of words, phrases and questions that assist you to communicate more effectively. Writing things down increases our attention and supports reflection and growth.

We trust that the following list of open questions support your conversations.

Understanding a situation

- I am interested to know more about ...
- I am interested to understand how the situation is for you ...
- Help me to understand that a little better from your perspective ...

Helping others to see the benefits

- Supposing ... how could this work in your favour?
- What are your thoughts on how you might benefit from ...?
- I notice that you have worked really hard on ... I wonder if you would be willing to focus more on ...
- How might it benefit you if ...?

Exploring a challenge/ dilemma and problem solving

- What prompted you to take that action?
- How do you feel about your progress with ...?
- What are the major challenges with ...?
- If you could replay that last ... what might you do differently?
- What are your thoughts on what would happen if ...?
- What do you think causes you to / not to ...?
- From your perspective what do you think are some of the root causes of ...?
- What are your thoughts on how you can ensure that in the future you can ...?
- What else bothers you? And what else? Tell me more about that.
- How would you describe the problem in one or two sentences?
- What advice might you give to a friend in your situation?
- Imagine having a conversation with a wise person you know. What might they advise?
- You have good ideas. Let's explore what your good ideas are.
- What quiet hunches do you have that offer solutions?
- How close are you to a solution?
- Which pathway to a solution would be best to follow here?
- In what ways might ... not work for you? And what changes could you make, so that it might work?
- If you knew the answer what would it be?

Questions about the question

- That is an interesting question, why do you ask that?
- Mmm, that is interesting, what do you mean by asking that question?
- What questions do you have for me?

Questions clarifying how to follow-up

- How would you like me to follow-up with you?
- How do you prefer to receive feedback? What's an example of helpful feedback that you've previously received?
- What follow-up would help you to keep to the timeline/project plan that you have set for yourself?
- What work would you like me to check and at what milestones?
- What milestones can we celebrate and when?
- How can I best support you with this goal/plan/objective?
- What aspects of your work would you like more or less direction from me?

Individual check-ins

- How are you?
- What progress do you notice?
- What are you working on this week?
- What are your top priorities?
- Which priorities are most important and meaningful to you?
- How can I help?
- How is life outside of work for you at the moment?
- How do you feel your work-life balance is right now?
- What, if anything, was useful about our conversation just now?

Remote working

- What elements of working remotely do you enjoy?
- What supports you to keep work-life boundaries when working remotely?
- What do you do to recharge each day?
- What's your setup like for working remotely? What, if anything, do you feel you're missing?
- What are your common distractions when working remotely? How do you manage these?
- What's most challenging for you in your daily work routine?
- How well do you feel you know your co-workers?
- What helps you feel connected to others and counteract the potential loneliness of working remotely?
- To what extent do you feel the organisation supports remote work? How could we improve?

Project debriefs

- What did we set out to accomplish? What were our objectives?
- What happened?
- What went well?
- What surprised us?
- What insights would be useful to acknowledge about how the team worked together?
- What knowledge, skills, ideas, insights and relationships will we take from this event?
- What needs documenting and sharing for future reference?
- What was useful about this reflection and debrief?

Reflective questions for goal setting and career planning

- What elements of your work do you find most interesting and rewarding?
- What do you think are the key skills for your role? How would you rate yourself for each of them?
- In what ways do you contribute to the team and to the organisation?
- What is the key function of your role? What are you paid to do?
- What's an area of your work you want to improve?
- What aspect of your job would you like more help or coaching on?
- Ideally, what do you want to be doing in 2 years, 3 years, 5 years?
- What are your goals, objectives or plans for the next 3 months, 6 months, 12 months?
- To what extent do you feel challenged at work? What are you learning? What are you doing differently?
- What skills would you like to develop right now?
- Who in the organisation would you like to learn from? What do you want to learn?
- What additional training or education would you like?
- What roles in the organisation would you like to learn more about?
- What key resources (and/or knowledge) might you need to achieve the desired outcome?

Useful phrasing

- Thinking out loud ...
 - And how are you?
 - How are things for you at the moment?
 - I am curious to know more ...
 - Mmm... and if you did know?
 - In the unlikely event ...
 - In the unlikely event that ... what would that mean?
 - I understand that you have a lot on / that you are very busy
 - Thank you
 - Instead of “Let me tell you ...”, say “In my experience ...”
 - Instead of “What you need to do is ...”, say “What works for me is ...”
 - Instead of “You shouldn’t ...”, say “My sense is ...”
 - Instead of “Don’t forget ...”, say “Remember ...”
 - Instead of “Is there anything else?” ask “What else?”
 - What else would be useful to talk through?
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To learn more about iMastery’s coaching, masterclasses and keynotes please get in touch.

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