“Coaching is the art of creating an environment, through conversation and a way of being”

Tim Gallwey- “The inner Game”

At the core of effective coaching is the asking of powerful questions and “staying curious a little longer” (Bungay-Stanier).  There are a ton of great questions available for coaches, and I have found it helpful to develop a bank of some of my favourite questions that I keep with me during coaching conversations.  Of course, the trick is not to sound ‘rehearsed’ or mechanical, and the more I ‘play’ with these questions, the more they come to me naturally during coaching conversations.

One of the coaching experts who has greatly influenced my questioning skills is Michael Bungay Stanier from Box of Crayons.  I have had the opportunity to see him speak a few times (conferences and webinars) and he never disappoints.  Check out his short video about his “5 Disciplines for asking a great question” found [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TImj8rrEASU&feature=youtu.be)

In his book, “The Coaching Habit:  Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You Lead Forever” (a great short read!) he offers 5 Questions for coaches:

1. What’s on your mind?
2. What’s the real challenge (here for you)?
3. And What Else (the AWE question)?
4. What do you Want?
5. What was most useful (for you today)?

If you are interested in seeing Michael Bungay-Stanier unpack these questions- check out this [great post](https://worldhatchlearning.wordpress.com/2017/08/30/7-questions-to-help-you-coach-better-videos-from-the-coaching-habit-book-by-michael-bungay-stanier-coaching-tools-from-the-coaching-habit-book-series-pt-2/) with short videos discussing each question.

I also recommend reading Chapter 5 in the book “Coaching for Performance” from executive coaching industry pioneer, Sir John Whitmore (16 October 1937 – 28 April 2017) around developing effective questions.

In the process of developing effective questions, I have also found it useful to be aware of some key conversational roadblocks:

1. “Why” questions. They tend to make people defensive.  
2. Quick reassurance, saying things like, “Don’t worry about that.”  
3. Advising — “I think the best thing for you is to do…….”  
4. Digging for information and forcing someone to talk about something they would rather not talk about.  
5. Patronizing — “You poor thing, I know just how you feel.”  
6. Preaching — “You should. . .” Or, “You shouldn’t. . .”  
7. Interrupting — Shows you aren’t interested in what someone is saying.

***Essentially there are 4 main types of questions:***

**1. Leading Questions**

For example, “Would you like to talk about it?” “What happened then?” Could you tell me more?”

**2. Open-ended Questions**

Use open-ended questions to expand the discussion — for example, lead with: “How? What? Where? Who? Which?”

**3. Closed-ended Questions**

Use closed ended questions to prompt for specifics — for example, lead with: “Is? Are? Do? Did? Can? Could? Would?”

**4. Reflective Questions**

Can help people understand more about what they said — for example, someone tells you, “I’m worried I won’t remember. . . ” Reflective Q: “It sounds like you would like some help remembering?”