



Skill Builder – Week 4-6

Meta-Questions and Benchmarking

The goal of this skill builder is to help you increase the amount of meta-questions you ask in a coaching session, with greater purpose when you ask them.

Here's what Michael Hall wrote about Meta-Questions in the book *Coaching Conversations*:

“Meta-Questions are to a Developmental and Transformational Coach what a paint brush and canvas are to an artist. Artfully designed, these questions invite clients to step-back from their internal and external experiences to explore the meanings they have in “the back” of their mind and the effectiveness of those meanings in achieving their desired experiences or outcomes.

You can use meta-questions to purposefully awaken a client to his or her highest visions and intentions, probe and tease out empowering and limiting frames of mind, provoke to find leverage for change and co-create transformation through building empowering new frames of mind.

Think of the following questions as 26 ways to move around the diamond of consciousness and see, hear, feel and explore the many facets of perception and focus. These facets of focus give you multiple ways into a Matrix. So if you use one word or term and it doesn't elicit more information, then use another. When you coach to the Matrix, question in each of these categories. Here is a set of meta-questions.



1. Meanings:

What does that mean to you?

2. Beliefs:

What ideas do you validate and confirm that now limit you?

3. Frames:

What is your frame of reference about criteria?

4. Generalizations:

What is your summary conclusion about goal setting?

5. Realizations:

Now that you know that your worth is unconditional, what does that realization lead to?

6. Permissions:

What do you not have permission to do or feel that limits you?

7. Feelings:

When you think of that idea, what do you feel?

8. Appreciation:

What do you most appreciate about X as a value?

9. Value / Importance:

What do you value about that? What's important about it?

10. Interest:



What fascinates you about this and makes you really curious?

11. Decision / Choice / Will:

When you consider this fully, what's your decision about it?

12. Intention / Want / Desire / Strategy:

The intent that really drives your motivation about that state is what?

13. Outcome / Goal:

What is your goal or outcome for that belief?

14. Expectation / Anticipation:

When you consider that premise, what do you anticipate?

15. Connection:

So what is connected with this idea in the back of your mind?

16. Causation:

In your estimate, what causes you to act that way when X happens?

17. Culture:

How has your mind and emotions been cultivated regarding how to greet the opposite sex?

18. Presupposition / Assumption / Implication:

To believe that requires that you assume what about women?

19. History / Memory / Referent:

What are you using as your referential index for believing that?

20. Rules / Demands / Shoulds / Musts / Authorize:



What are the rules of the games for this in your mind?

21. Definition / Language / Class / Categorizes:

So when a person does that, you put it in the category of Y?

22. Understanding / Know / Knowledge:

What do you know that gives you that confidence?

23. Identity / Identify / Self / Self-definition:

What identity about yourself supports you doing that?

24. Paradigm / Model / Map / Schema:

What is your mental map about handling negative emotions?

25. Metaphor / Symbol / Poem / Story:

If that belief was a story, what would be the theme of the story?

26. Principle / Concept / Abstraction:

What is the principle that governs self-healing?

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OK, so now you have a list of Meta-Questions. You can study them, memorize them, and these are great steps to familiarize yourself with the Meta-Questions. And yet, most Meta-Coaches still struggle with asking Meta-Questions, so I will be sharing with you some ideas of when you can ask them, and WHY.

Let's take a look at the S.C.O.R.E. model as it integrates with the WFO/WFP and the Axes of Change to see where we can ask Meta-Questions.



So we initially start out with the Present State and the Desired State, and asking exploration questions as well as clarity questions to get an idea of what is going on. What is this all about.



As we explore the present state, we can ask Meta-Questions to uncover the frames that are holding the client in that present state. What are some of the beliefs, meanings, interpretations, etc.

Listening for answers, you listen not only to the frames...but you can also listen for patterns presented. This is what might give you a clue as to the leverage point for change.

When you are uncovering this, you have a great opportunity to ask a few more Meta-Questions: you can ask a simple question (after you've made an acknowledgement): "So what is this about?" (If you've heard the pattern, you may even comment "It sounds like this is about wanting to keep your options open rather than choosing". Or you can ask "What are you now aware of? What do you now realize?"

Essentially, asking a Meta-Question at this stage (having uncovered the strategy and the frames that hold the strategy in place) invites your client to step back and reflect.

Another option you have, is to check the quality of the frames. This plays into the Motivation axis of the Axes of Change model. "Does this serve you? Do you want to keep this?" And if you're talking about the desired state: "Why is this important to you? Would you like this? What difference does it make in your life when you have this?"

Going with the Axes of Change, you will also want to focus on creating awareness (which is what you do when you uncover frames about the current or desired situation), so your client knows WHAT to change. This is when you ask probing questions to help your client make a decision of what to work on and check the ecology of that.



Asking all these kinds of questions also help you get down the WFO funnel. And of course, later on in the WFO you get questions like “What’s stopping you?”, “What internal resources do you need?”, and “Have you made a decision?”, “Is it still compelling?”. That’s 4 Meta-Questions right there! Plus, as a last question, you’ll have the evidence questions of “How will you know?”. Also a Meta-Question.

So let’s recap this for a moment. When you ask Meta-Questions, you do so for the following reasons:

1. What holds the present state in place? Uncover frames.
2. Relationship to key words
3. Awareness
4. Finding the leverage point
5. Check quality → Choice / Decision
6. Bring resources necessary
7. Discover resources
8. Motivation
9. Co-Creation
10. Celebration
11. Confronting



Skill Building

- How would you map out all the different kinds of Meta-Questions you can ask in a coaching conversation, for different purposes? Please make a visual map (mind map, drawing, using the coach models, etc) so that you have easy access to the questions and when to ask them. How are you going to integrate this in your coaching conversations?
- Have at least 5 conversations over the coming weeks where you practice asking Meta-Questions. Ask a friend to have a conversation with you, talk to a potential client, or a family member. It doesn't matter so much who you talk to, I'd like you to start integrating Meta-Questions with the WFO/WFP and clarity questions. When you send your visual representation of the Meta-Questions, please share how those conversations went.
- Benchmarking is a great way to integrate your Meta-Coaching skills. Here's a link to a coaching session for you to benchmark. As you write down the meta-questions, please also note what effect or purpose the meta-question has.
 - <https://vimeo.com/63869897>
 - <http://vimeo.com/63989290>