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**A BETTER
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Letter from the Editor

OUR FALL ISSUE IS A BIT UNIQUE and existential: How and When to Ask Better Questions. How does this topic strike you and affect you? As we are not in an active conversation, I leave you to ponder your answer on your own!

Maryann Mack explores How to Ask Better Questions as a Parent in a vulnerable and open discussion about her conversations with her three young adult children. It truly is a how-to talk to your children that should be read well before starting a family.

Catherine Di Lorenzo also writes about asking better questions as a parent, which means being present and authentic while dialoging with your children, because they can tell when you are not genuine.

Michele Lublin writes about the Best Interview Questions to Ask a Prospective Employee and offers several helpful questions that anyone can utilize when interviewing candidates. And don't forget to trust your intuition about whether someone will be a good fit for your team.

Stephanie Everett discusses the Power of a Single Question, which is what does help look like (to you)? Her transition from practicing law to becoming a business coach inspires the sage advice she provides in her article.

Ashley Cusano shares the anxiety of the Socratic Method in law school and discusses the new, gentler method which can be applied to many situations.

Paula Ashcraft provides insight for small businesses with strategic questions that can lead to the accomplishment of common goals and deliverables.

My contribution is a review of the book by David Brooks, *How to Know a Person, The Art of Seeing*



Others Deeply and Being Deeply Seen. Suggested reading by my therapist friend, it is an impactful way of developing better and meaningful relationships, and I highly recommend you read it for your own personal development.

I hope you enjoy these articles as much as I do, and I hope you will share this issue with your team, family, and friends. I believe the articles will assist us in achieving better relationships and better outcomes in our professional and personal lives. **W**

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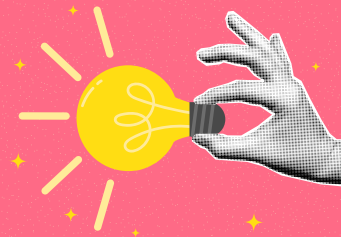
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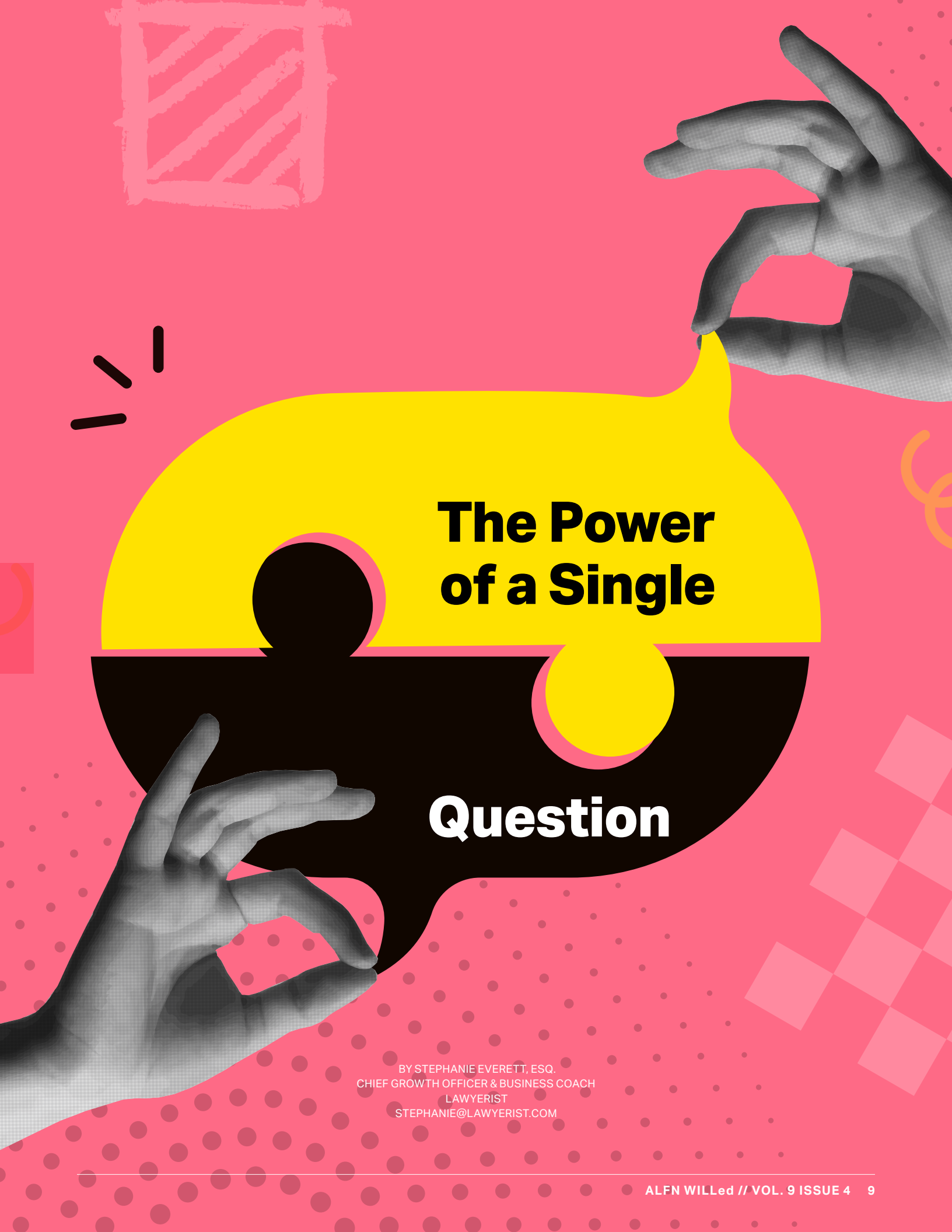
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The Power of a Single

Question

BY STEPHANIE EVERETT, ESQ.
CHIEF GROWTH OFFICER & BUSINESS COACH
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I'VE ALWAYS BEEN IN the business of asking questions. In my early days as a lawyer, questions were my tools of the trade—sharp, precise, and designed to cut to the core of any issue. But when I transitioned to coaching, I realized something profound: people don't always need answers handed to them. In fact, much like the human body can reject a transplanted organ that doesn't belong, people often push back against advice that doesn't resonate with their own beliefs. That's when I learned that the true art of helping isn't in giving advice but in guiding others to uncover their own solutions by asking, "What does help look like?"

WHY WE RESIST ADVICE

Think about the last time someone offered you unsolicited advice. Whether it was about your career, personal life, or even a small daily task, there's a good chance your immediate reaction wasn't gratitude but resistance. It's a natural human response—when advice feels imposed, it often feels irrelevant, unhelpful, or even dismissive of the complexities of our situation. Like an organ in a transplant, advice that doesn't align with our own perceptions and desires gets rejected.

This resistance happens because advice, however well-intentioned, can feel like a judgment. It implies that there's a right way and a wrong way, and subtly suggests that you've been steering in the wrong direction. Nobody likes feeling that they've made a misstep or that their approach isn't valid.

THE POWER OF QUESTIONS

This is where questions come in. My favorite, go-to question is quite simple: "What does help look like?" Instead of imposing an external solution, this question invites

the other person into a conversation about their needs, preferences, and values. It empowers them to articulate their own vision of what support means to them, rather than having it defined by someone else. It's the difference between telling someone what they should do and helping them discover what they want to do.

When I first started using this approach as a coach, the shift was immediate and powerful. I wasn't just guiding my clients; I was partnering with them. By asking what help looked like to them, I was acknowledging their expertise in their own lives and giving them the space to lead the conversation. This simple question opened a world of deeper understanding and more meaningful support, both in my coaching sessions and in my own life.

APPLYING THE QUESTION IN PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS

In legal practice, it's easy to assume that as the expert, you know what's best for your clients. After all, they're coming to you for your knowledge and experience. But just as in coaching, asking "What does help look like?" can transform your client relationships. It shifts the dynamic from one of authority to one of collaboration, where the client feels heard, respected, and involved in the process.

For instance, a client may come to you with a legal problem that seems straightforward on the surface. As a lawyer, your instinct might be to dive into problem-solving mode, offering solutions based on your expertise. But what if you paused to ask, "What does help look like to you in this situation?" You might discover that the client's priorities aren't just about winning a case but about minimizing stress, preserving relationships, or avoiding public exposure. Understanding these deeper needs can guide you in crafting a strategy that truly aligns with what the client values most.

This question also builds trust. Clients often feel vulnerable when they come to a lawyer—they're handing over control of a situation that matters deeply to them. By asking what help looks like, you're not just gathering information; you're showing empathy and respect for their perspective. It demonstrates that you're not just there to execute a legal maneuver but to support them in a way that feels right to them.

FOSTERING BETTER TEAM DYNAMICS

The benefits of asking "What does help look like?" extend beyond client interactions and can significantly impact team dynamics. Legal environments are notorious for high stress and high stakes, which can lead to com-

But just as in coaching, asking "What does help look like?" can transform your client relationships. It shifts the dynamic from one of authority to one of collaboration, where the client feels heard, respected, and involved in the process.





munication breakdowns and misaligned efforts. When team members feel unheard or misunderstood, productivity and morale suffer.

By integrating this question into team interactions, you create a culture of support and openness. Imagine a junior team member struggling with a heavy workload. Instead of assuming they need a pep talk or a time management course, ask, “What does help look like for you right now?” You might find that what they need is as simple as clearer priorities, a short break, or a sounding board for a particularly tricky case. This approach not only addresses the immediate need but also builds a foundation of trust and respect within the team.

CREATING A CULTURE OF SUPPORT

Incorporating the question “What does help look like?” into your firm’s culture can foster an environment where people feel safe to express their needs and seek assistance. It breaks down the barriers that often prevent honest communication about challenges and struggles. When team members know that they won’t be judged or dismissed for asking for help, they’re more likely to be proactive in addressing issues before they become crises.

This culture of support isn’t just good for morale; it’s good for business. Teams that communicate openly and support each other are more efficient, more innovative, and better equipped to handle the inevitable ups and downs of legal work. It’s a win-win situation where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute their best.

A SMALL SHIFT WITH BIG IMPACT

Asking “What does help look like?” might seem like a small shift, but its impact can be profound. It’s a question that respects the autonomy and expertise of the person you’re asking—whether it is a client, a colleague, or even yourself. It turns helping from a one-way street into a collaborative journey, where solutions are co-created and more likely to be embraced.

In the end, this question isn’t just about finding the right answers—it’s about building connections, fostering understanding, and creating a more supportive and responsive environment. Whether you’re navigating the courtroom, coaching a client, or simply trying to be a better leader, remember that the best way to help isn’t always to have the answers. Sometimes, the best way to help is to ask the right questions. **W**

THE
NEW SOCRATIC METHOD



PROFESSOR KINGSFIELD in the movie, *The Paper Chase*, famously advised his class, “You teach yourselves the law, but I train your mind. You come in here with a skull of mush; you leave thinking like a lawyer.” Many WILled readers hold firsthand experience with Professor Kingsfield’s version of the Socratic Method. As wide-eyed, type-A first-year law school students, we spent late nights reading, highlighting, and noting pages of case law to enter the following day’s class full of anxiety. We awaited the intimidating professor to call on us for a 10-minute-long interrogation and rolled our eyes at the classroom ‘gunner’ eagerly volunteering to be the next victim.

Walking into my first law school class, I ran through the statistical possibility of being chosen as the lucky winner of the Socratic Method lottery. I concluded that the chances of being selected were slim-to-none and a swift five minutes later, any hopes for a career in statistics were dashed. Long story short, I survived the firestorm of berating questions including whether I had even read the case, albeit leaving deflated and embarrassed, with tears in my eyes.

The theory behind the Socratic Method is for a teacher’s questions and the following dialogue to lead the students to question their underlying assumptions and reach a logical conclusion. But does the traditional Socratic Method work? In hindsight, it certainly has its benefits. I learned the importance of thorough preparation, anticipating questions, and handling confrontation— all necessary skills for any successful career.



The fundamentals of the Socratic Method can be effective; however, the evolution to its notorious reputation of causing fear and anxiety leads me to believe there is a better way to achieve similar results.

While not every law school professor follows the aggressive form of the Socratic Method, my experience negatively affected my first year. I was hesitant to volunteer in class and constantly questioned my ability to succeed in law. The fundamentals of the Socratic Method can be effective; however, the evolution to its notorious reputation of causing fear and anxiety leads me to believe there is a better way to achieve similar results.

Enter the New Socratic Method.

The New Socratic Method utilizes Socrates' core principles without intimidation tactics, leading to thoughtful questioning, and critical thinking skills we can all use in our daily lives as leaders, employees, and community members.

According to the Cognitive Immunology Research Collaborative, the New Socratic Method involves three main tenets:

1

CLARIFY

To provoke thoughtful conversation with meaningful results, a discussion moderator should attempt to understand the viewpoint and impetus behind an answer. Summarize the response by beginning with phrases such as, "What I hear you saying is..." and "Could you tell me more about that point?" Ensure the speaker has an opportunity to fully explain the rationale behind their thought process.

2

VALIDATE

The New Socratic Method places emphasis on emotional intelligence. Stress is placed on the importance of sharing a wide range of perspectives and validating

another's viewpoints. Be mindful of your reactions and set aside judgment. We are all human, however, understanding and controlling your own emotions can be instrumental in achieving productive results. Rather than immediately questioning another's statement, demonstrate an appreciation for the response by using phrases such as, "That certainly makes sense," and "I understand where you are coming from." Validation creates an atmosphere that allows individuals to feel comfortable in sharing their ideas and promotes extensive dialogue.

3

EXAMINE

Socrates' intention behind his method was to invite individuals to self-reflect and develop their ideas beyond their own concerns and worldview. Challenge the respondent to question their outlook and assumptions. A discussion moderator should call upon the speak-

er to consider alternatives to their theories without discrediting their initial thoughts. Ask questions such as "How do you know this is accurate?" and "What about this alternative?" Connect the discussion to areas outside the focus of the discussion by asking how their thoughts would apply to another field of study or other real-world scenario.

Think about these practices when you're engaging in discussions, especially during difficult situations. Utilizing these methods of the New Socratic Method in conversation allows for the sharing and enhancement of ideas without discouraging participation. Doing so may avoid unnecessary confrontation.

Critical thinking skills are of the utmost importance for all aspects of life. While Professor Kingsfield may disagree, consideration for the tone and manner we teach critical thinking skills can create lifelong learners and enhance dialogue in classroom, professional, and community settings. **W**

The New Socratic Method utilizes Socrates' core principles without intimidation tactics, leading to thoughtful questioning, and critical thinking skills we can all use in our daily lives as leaders, employees, and community members.



STRATEGIC PLANNING

Small Business

ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS TO ACHIEVE COMMON GROUND,
CLEAR OBJECTIVES, AND INSPIRED ACTION



STRATEGIC PLANNING

is critical for the growth and success of any business, especially critical for small businesses. The leader often spends countless hours prior to gathering the team, preparing insightful questions designed to set clear objectives for the quarter and beyond. This process is often fraught with overwhelming feelings exposing vulnerabilities that need to be tackled head-on. As the meeting date approaches, all the important questions come to mind. How will we accomplish our objectives with fewer resources and tighter budgets? How do we compete with larger companies that have much bigger budgets? How do we align the team to find common ground, set clear objectives, and inspire action? As leaders, this stage can bring insurmountable anxiety, making us feel that we must come to the table with all the answers.



One important element often overlooked in this process is the art of asking the right questions of your team. Asking better questions doesn't just clarify your strategy; it helps identify workflow challenges, motivates the team, and creates a shared sense of purpose. Let's explore a few strategies that will lead to effective planning and solutions that can be applied in any small business.

LET'S START WITH THE WHY FINDING COMMON GROUND

Every plan requires a strong foundation which begins with a shared vision. Before you can get to the "what" and "how," ask questions to uncover a deeper "why" behind your business's mission and the team's role in it.

Key Question: *Why do we do what we do, and why does it matter to us?*

This question will help the team tap into emotions to find common ground to align individual motivations with the company's broader objectives. Once common ground is established, you're ready to roll up your sleeves with a deeper connection to the team and get to work!

CLARIFYING OBJECTIVES DEFINING CLEAR MEASURABLE GOALS

If you've ever read anything about strategic planning, you know defining measurable goals is a basic principle of all successful planning sessions. Easier said than done, though, when everyone gathers to put pen to paper and define actionable goals that the team can easily measure.

Key Question: *What specific out-*



comes are we aiming for, and how will we measure our success?

Asking in this way forces us to think tangibly and drill down into the specifics with purpose. This part of the planning session typically takes the longest but can be the most rewarding. As the team begins to translate thoughts into words against the blank canvas of the

whiteboard, the energy becomes contagious. Creative flow fills the strategy session with purpose and a few passion-filled conversations.

IDENTIFYING WORKFLOW CHALLENGES AND UNDERSTANDING PAIN POINTS

A plan is only as good as its execution. Bottlenecks, miscommunica-

tion, and inefficiencies often derail even the most well-thought-out strategies. To avoid this, ask questions that bring challenges to light. Be prepared that some challenges brought forward may be perceived challenges. Understand that individual perception is at the core of their reality. Spending extra time at this stage is energy well spent and will benefit the plan's success.

Key Question: What obstacles are preventing us from working more efficiently?

Sitting in stillness and quietly listening allows for open dialog, creating an ideal environment for all voices to be heard. Trust the process! Passionate-fueled conversations are certain to reveal workflow issues, which may help identify larger problems like outdated technology, unclear roles, and inefficient processes that may be slowing down the team. Once identified you can work collaboratively to find solutions.

SOLVING PROBLEMS AND CREATING ACTIONABLE SOLUTIONS

Peeling back layers of the organizational onion opens the channel for ideas and next steps in creating practical solutions. Just like chopping an onion, this stage can get dicey and uncomfortable. Having plenty of breaks and candy on the table will definitely help!

Key Question: *What is the one thing we can change in the next month to improve workflow or solve this problem?*

This question encourages focused attention on immediate action and eliminates the overwhelming feelings that naturally arise when a series of challenges are presented. The phrase “don’t try to boil the ocean,” is a perfect analogy for this stage, which can feel overwhelming. Small actionable and measurable goals provide short-term wins while building confidence and momentum.

MOTIVATING AND INSPIRING **CULTIVATING OWNERSHIP** **AND INNOVATION**

If you’ve ever watched the movie *Old School* you may recall the scene where Will Ferrell’s character attempts to get the party to follow him down the street, barely clothed, by shouting “Everyone follow me!” He alone had a vision of the party running down the street only to realize that nobody was following. Motivation is the key to executing a plan, but it can’t just come from leadership. Inspiration and motivation must be felt by the entire team.

Key Question: *How can you personally contribute to achieving our goals in a meaningful way?*

Holding team members accountable while empowering them fosters creative thinking about their roles and how their contributions directly correlate to the overall success of the organization.



FOSTERING A COLLABORATIVE **ENVIRONMENT** **CREATING OPEN CHANNELS FOR** **CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK**

Don’t allow the plan to go static. Revisit often and be prepared to pivot to new priorities. Shifting strategic priorities will address any critical challenges or opportunities that arise after the planning session. Asking questions frequently in an environment that promotes reflection, and collaboration will ensure the team remains aligned and that

the plan evolves.

Key Question: *What have we learned in this process and how can we adapt our strategy based on these lessons?*

Regularly checking in with the team is important. Every voice matters. Planning is equal parts collaboration, motivation, and defining clear objectives. In a small business every decision counts. The quality of questions directly influences a successful strategy planning session.

Happy Planning! **W**



THE QUESTIONING LEADER

HOW ASKING THE RIGHT
QUESTIONS FUELS INNOVATION
AND GROWTH



A SURVEY ON FEBRUARY 24, 2024, showed that 79% of employees quit their jobs due to a lack of appreciation. In contrast, in 2017 a survey found that 20% plan to retire in the next year, with 23% quitting for a variety of reasons. Certainly, the pandemic and working remotely contributed to that in conjunction with people reprioritizing family time over work time and seeking a balance between the two of them. Asking the right questions will help foster growth, innovation, and engagement within a team. Effective leadership is the cornerstone of any successful organization. A good boss is more than a manager who oversees day-to-day tasks; they are a guide who nurtures talent, builds relationships, and fosters an environment where individuals and teams can thrive.

Asking the right questions allows the manager to build a deeper connection with team members. People know when you are listening to them and when they are being heard and asked questions specific to individual goals and challenges that help with accountability, tracking goals, and staying focused. Having your leadership buy into your growth and future is also important. When participating in team discussions and meetings, a good leader makes the most of being able to facilitate collaboration and collective problem-solving with the team. Asking questions to guide the conversation toward constructive outcomes is key so everyone has input discussions that focus on, “us the team - not me the individual.” Working toward a common goal of resolving an issue together gives everyone the opportunity to learn from team members, you also get personal buy-in that makes implementation smoother and gives you a higher chance of success. There will occasionally be conflict or crisis situations, and a good leader is going to help de-escalate tensions and find solutions. A key time for someone who is building a career is during performance reviews or feedback sessions. Having leadership who



encourages self-assessment and personal growth will not only supply you with a plan but also a support system in the office that knows what your big goal is and will challenge you to get there.

It's easy to say, "ask more questions," but the truth is there is a strategy involved to get the feedback you need to guide the discussion. As you know there are a lot of opinions and thoughts on this subject, just venture over to the self-improvement section of your bookstore and you can find a book on any topic related to your personal life and career. Four strategies to use when wanting to ask better questions will work, easy peasy, and can be implemented immediately in communication with your team. It sounds cliché but practice active listening. Pay attention to the responses and ask follow-up questions. Avoid interrupting or leading the conversation. A leader facilitates the team. Be curious and non-judgmental. If you want people to feel free to share, this is the only way. Once your tone or eyes say what your mouth isn't, you will lose people's trust and they will not share with you again, or at least be guarded which can derail the entire solution and process. Avoid yes/no questions. Open-ended questions will allow you to learn more and gather more insights. Finally, know your audience! Ask

questions that are mindful of cultural and personality differences. Take into consideration the situation and the individuals involved when asking questions. Stay away from asking leading or loaded questions, or you will never know if what you are hearing is what you want or what they really think. Don't ask a lot of questions at one time. Ask one question, get an answer, and ask another. All the meetings and communication in the world will not help you if you fail to follow up, it's important to respond thoughtfully to answers to show genuine interest and engagement.

By asking better questions everyone can participate, and leadership is respected because they are engaged and listening. Sometimes you can't change the solution, but if you are working on it together it's a lot easier. Additionally, it will impact your team in the best way possible, by having them share and contribute to the team's challenges, and by building trust & respect in each other. If you are not already, consider employing this style of communication for your team. You get initial benefits in learning more about your team each time you go through this exercise, and the cumulative benefits are more openness and sharing from the team as well as being able to reason through challenges together. **W**



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BEST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO ASK A PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEE



BY MICHELE LUBLIN
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30 MINUTES. Frequently, you have this time to assess a candidate and decide whether they will make a good addition to your company. How do you decide? Aside from the generic and frequently asked 'What interested you in this position?' and 'What are your greatest weaknesses and opportunities for improvement?', what questions should you ask a prospective employee when interviewing to work for your company to get a good picture?

While researching this article,¹ I did a general Google search on 'best interview questions to ask a prospective employee.' I received links to a myriad of articles from many different perspectives. However, while reading them, I came across one I believe was a terrific approach, and as a result, I will summarize the article and provide a link so you can read it in its entirety.

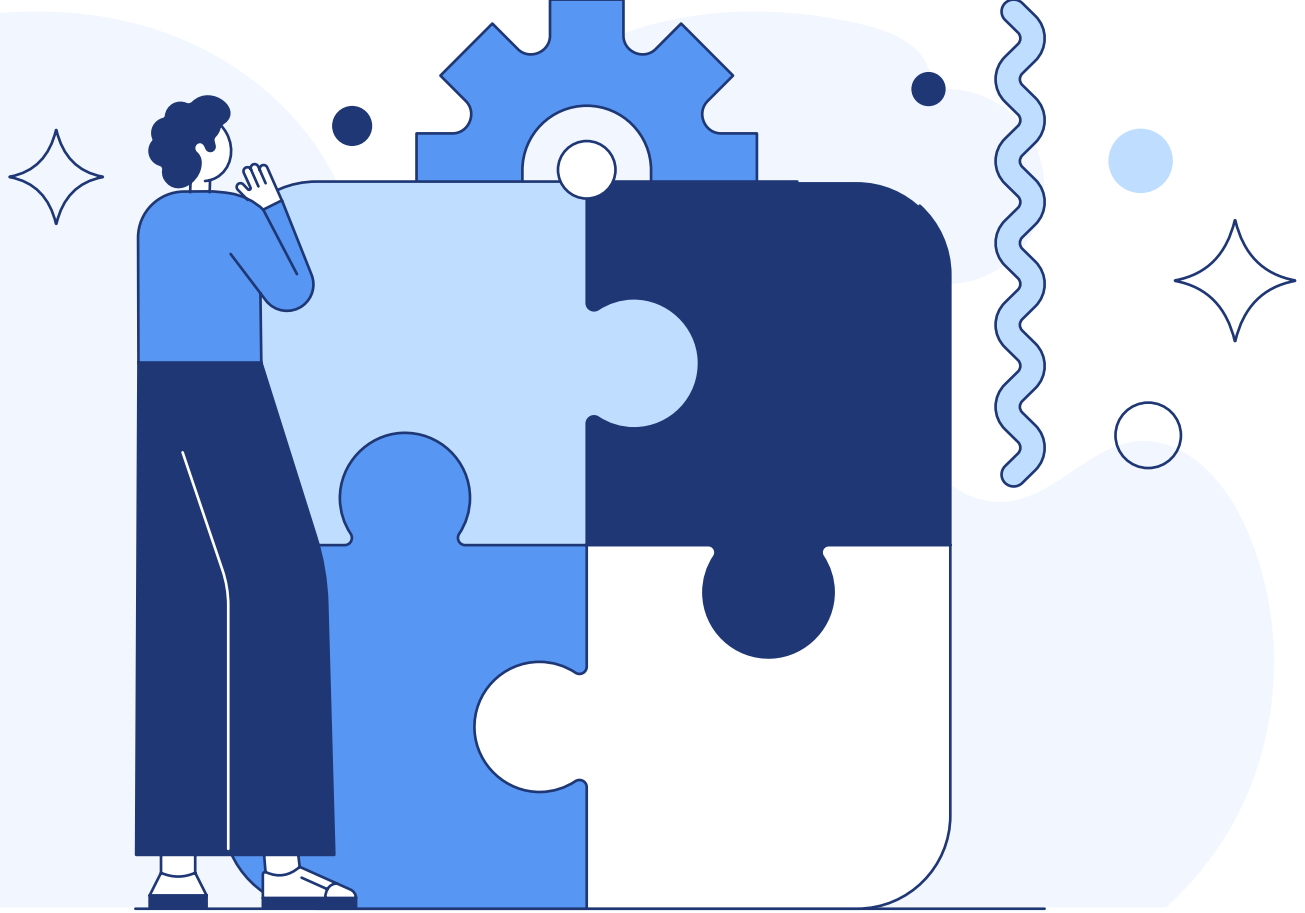
The article, *25 Best Interview Questions You MUST Ask Candidates* by Vanessa Van Edwards, <https://www.scienceofpeople.com/interview-questions/>¹, separated the questions into six distinct types:

1. Opening Questions, primarily to set the tone and relax the candidate (and yourself)
2. Motivation-Based Questions, to determine why they applied

3. Situational Questions, to check out their analytical and problem-solving skills
4. Skills-Based Questions, to assess their true fit for this position
5. Behavioral Questions, to understand how they respond in different scenarios
6. Closing Questions, those questions to ask at the end

The author recommends asking at least one question of each type to get the best understanding of the prospect. Here are some of the questions she recommends asking of each type.

¹ Van Edwards, Vanessa, "25 Best Interview Questions You MUST Ask Candidates," Science of People, 2024, <https://www.scienceofpeople.com/interview-questions/>



OPENING QUESTIONS

These are conversation starters:

1. What's your personal passion project?
2. Have you ever read a book that changed your life?
3. What is something that you used to believe, but no longer do?
4. If you had to pick any character in a book, movie, or TV show who is most similar to you, who would you choose? Why?

She goes on in this section, and the others, to provide example answers you may hear and how she would determine whether it's a thumbs up for the response. In addition, she includes a link to *The Big 5 Personality Test*, a free assessment of a prospect's personality strengths. This is a test link to share with a prospect and then you can discuss their results in the interview. I took the test myself and it had interesting questions and results. Here's the link: <https://www.scienceofpeople.com/personality/>.

MOTIVATION-BASED QUESTIONS

These questions help predict job satisfaction and whether the application is for 'just another job' or one that truly interests the candidate. Again, the author provides sample answers and how she would rate them.

1. Why should we hire you?
2. Why did you apply for this position?
3. What's your expected salary?
4. Is your work personality different from your home personality or your social personality? In what ways?

I've used a different version of the first question that makes the prospect think hard, 'Why shouldn't I hire you?' It's a twist on an often-asked question that often results in a perplexed look as they try to figure out how to answer this. It tells me a lot about them if they answer quickly, just as much as if they take a few minutes to respond. Try it in your next interview and see what you think.



Why shouldn't I hire you?' It's a twist on an often-asked question that often results in a perplexed look as they try to figure out how to answer this.

SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS

The author says these questions 'can't be googled beforehand.' With the increased availability of Artificial Intelligence apps like ChatGPT, I think you can put together responses ahead of time. Regardless of that ability, I believe these questions will provide insight into how they respond to different situations.

1. If you suddenly had 3 deadlines to finish in one day, but could only finish 2 of them, what would you do?
2. How do you deal with stressful situations?
3. Imagine you're the manager and your new subordinate keeps disrespecting you, what would you do? (for management roles)
4. What are the traits of your ideal manager or boss?

SKILLS-BASED QUESTIONS

As the name implies, these are the questions about the skills required for the job duties. While sometimes you may prefer to hire someone with more skills, sometimes you are looking for a 'willing and able' individual.

1. What is your proudest professional moment?
2. Why are you qualified for this position?
3. What are your biggest strengths?
4. What would you say is your biggest weakness? (In my opinion, what is your biggest opportunity for improvement, may be the better question.)



BEHAVIORAL QUESTIONS

Behavioral questions assess a candidate's personality, motivations, and values. The hope is to determine how they will react in different work scenarios.

1. Tell me about a time you took a risk, and it succeeded.
2. Tell me about a time you took a risk, and it failed.
3. Tell me about your best and worst days at work.
(This question is from the CEO at Evernote.)

Since these questions are so important, the author provides a link to more behavioral questions you can ask. <https://www.scienceofpeople.com/behavioral-interview-questions/>

CLOSING QUESTIONS

Since an interview's first and last questions stand out to the candidate, this is a great opportunity to lighten the mood and close out on a high note. Even though these are closing questions, they can be perceived

as very difficult to answer. Here are some suggested questions.

1. What important truth do very few people agree with you on? (Definitely read why the author selected this question to include here.)
2. What did you take away from our meeting today?
3. Do you have any other questions for us? (An essential question to ask before closing out the interview as it provides the candidate with a last chance for insight.)

The author provides additional links in her article to videos and additional questions to support her list of the 25 best questions to ask. Regardless of the questions you ask, and the ones you receive, trust your gut instinct on whether an employee will fit into your company's culture. If something is bothering you about a candidate, ask more questions even after the interview is complete. A bad hire will hurt way more than continuing to seek the best fit. **W**

A photograph of a woman with long brown hair, wearing a black and white striped long-sleeved shirt and olive green pants, sitting on a wooden bench outdoors. She is smiling and hugging a young girl with braided hair, who is wearing a blue polka-dot shirt and yellow pants. The background shows a house with a window and some outdoor furniture. The scene is bathed in warm, golden light, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

How and When to Ask Better Questions as a Parent

—
Insights on How to Prepare
Your Children for Adulthood
—

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THIS PAST SUMMER, I had a poignant experience in Lilydale, New York, where a medium relayed a message from my grandmother, who had passed away in the 1980s. Nana's message conveyed that she sees a lot of herself in me and appreciates seeing the open, loving relationship I have with my children - something she was not able to express with her own. I'm so grateful to have received Nana's message. It affirms my belief that the best approach to parenting is to create an environment where your children feel comfortable talking with you, know that they are loved, and feel safe sharing their thoughts and emotions.

As a parent of two sons and a daughter, now in their late 20s-early 30s and thriving in their careers, writing this article provided a reflection on the conversations I've shared with them over the years. Creating an environment where they felt comfortable expressing themselves and knowing they were loved have always been priorities

for me. To this day, my goal as a parent has been to help my children develop confidence, emotional intelligence, and the skills they need to succeed. I'm happy to share my insight and experiences as a parent.

KNOW THAT ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Everyone is unique, with their own personalities, thoughts, and preferences. As parents, understanding the limited control over shaping their child's outcome may come as a surprise. When my daughter was young, I was so excited to read her my favorite stories, dress her in clothes that I loved for her to wear and have her eat foods I thought she would like. Over the years, I came to accept that she would not have the same passion for the Laura Ingalls Wilder books that I adored as a child. The perfect dress that I set out for her to wear would go unworn. And to this day, she has never had a bite of a scrambled egg. The key takeaway here is that parents must remain flexible and trust their instincts when it comes to asking questions, always considering the individuality of your child, their needs, and personality.





WHEN TO ASK QUESTIONS

Parenting is a journey filled with countless questions. As parents, we constantly seek to understand how our children are feeling, what they are thinking, and how they are navigating life. When their behavior or thoughts seem to deviate from the norm, or a crisis arises, the need to ask questions becomes even more pressing. The timing and the quality of these questions can have a profound impact on our children's development, our relationship with them, and their perspective on the world. It's important to ask questions that promote open communication, critical thinking, and emotional growth.

1. DURING CALM, CONNECTED MOMENTS

When my children were young, the events of 9/11 struck our lives, leaving us feeling numb and finding it difficult to move forward with the normal routines of life. As parents, the importance of discussing what occurred and knowing how our children felt was crucial. I found this opportunity to converse and discuss their feelings during quiet family times. Find that time, whether it is during your morning routine, a peaceful evening at home, carpooling, or being outdoors on a summer evening with fireflies lighting up around you. These moments create a safe space for them to openly discuss their feelings.

2. AFTER SHARED EXPERIENCES

Shared experiences can often serve as a starting point for deeper discussions. With your child, consider listening to the lyrics of a song that may inspire discussions, playing a game together, or dining out at a favorite restaurant, to have dialog where you can ask your child about their thoughts and feelings on a variety of matters. These conversations became opportunities for them to reflect and learn.

3. IN EMOTIONAL SITUATIONS

My family was blinded by the pain of loss when my sister lost her battle with breast cancer. My children were very close to my sister, and her loss left them considerably upset. Helping them cope and understand was extremely difficult. Being surrounded by the love of our family, keeping memories alive, and being open about our emotions helped guide us through our pain. I learned to ask questions that helped them process their emotions. Instead of immediately offering advice, I'd ask, "How are you feeling about this?" or "What do you think would help right now?" This approach encouraged them to find their own solutions and develop emotional resilience.

4. DURING LIFE TRANSITIONS

Transitions, such as starting college, securing a new job, or ending romantic relationships, have posed difficulties for my children at varying stages of their lives. Often stress levels are high. Allow them to articulate their thoughts and navigate their emotions before offering advice to help foster their growth into confident adults.

HOW TO ASK BETTER QUESTIONS

Posing the right question at the right time can be tricky. Raising children to live thoughtfully and intentionally enhances introspection and an awareness of consequences and encourages open conversations as a family unit. Here are some questioning tips that I find to be effective:

1. ENCOURAGE REFLECTION

During his college years, my oldest son sorrowfully asked, “Why do I always have to learn from my mistakes?” Whether it is a matter of poor grades or troublesome behaviors, it is important for your child to understand the consequences brought upon by their actions. Rather than lecturing, it is best to have them reflect on their experiences. Ask open-ended questions to lead toward richer conversations, such as, “What did you learn from that situation?” or “How would you do things differently next time?” These “what” and “how” questions help develop critical thinking skills to serve them well in adulthood and as they manage their careers.

2. BE PATIENT AND LISTEN

Give your child time to discuss and think before answering questions. Resist the urge to interrupt. Show them that you value their thoughts and opinions. This patience fosters an environment of mutual respect and open communication. Recently, as one of my sons experienced a heartbreaking end to a relationship with his girlfriend, I took the time to listen to his feelings and thoughts, treading very carefully to ask the right questions without imposing my advice, helping him become more self-aware and emotionally intelligent.

3. THE POWER OF SILENCE

Again, you know your child best. Some respond well to open-ended questions, but sometimes, silence speaks louder than questions. Simply being present, and sitting together in silence, may allow your child to think more deeply and provide thoughtful responses. I am a firm believer in the value of reflection to provide the confidence to trust your instincts. In this regard, silence can be a powerful tool.

THE POWER OF ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS

As a parent, asking the right question at the right time can significantly impact your child’s journey toward success. Thoughtful questions that make your child feel heard and valued are gifts that keep giving, long after they are asked. In my own experience, engaging with my children in meaningful dialog not only enriched our relationship but also equipped them with the tools to navigate life’s challenges, both in their youth and adulthood. **W**



HOW AND WHEN TO ASK BETTER QUESTIONS AS A PARENT

FROM MY CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVE



WHEN I SAT DOWN to write this article, I started to ask myself how I would have liked my parents to communicate with me or ask me questions. I reflected on that for quite some time, and it became clear that I was asking the wrong question of myself. What I had wanted in my past was irrelevant; it mattered what my children wanted in the present. So, I went right to the source and asked them, "What could I be doing differently in how I ask you questions?" They both looked at each other, communicating with their eyes, "Is this a trap? Why is Mom asking us this?" Ironically, my lead question was not the right question to ask. When I explained my reason for asking this question, they became much more open.

My daughter said, "I don't like it when you cross-examine me." My son said, "Don't ask questions for which you already know the answer." I thought, well, that is a problem! We are trained to ask questions this way. My son also said, "Don't ask me a question offering me a choice when I don't really have one." He explained that when I'm asking a question, I already have a preferred answer in mind, and it makes him feel like he has no control. After a long, but great, conversation, it became apparent that it was not so much the question or how I was asking it, but why I was asking it.

We don't realize they can read us better than we read ourselves. They hear every tone, see everybody's movement, and see every twitch of the eye. When the questions lack emotion, children know it's a fact-finding mission, and they undermine their sense of self. Letting them understand why we are asking a question allows them to see the importance of the question and why that particular dialogue is necessary. We aren't just asking because we're supposed to as their parents. If we are not genuine and authentic in our intent behind a question, we will never get genuine answers or openness.

Mindfulness practices teach that everything should come from curiosity, openness, and non-judgment. You cannot be genuine without them. This is a practice that many people apply to their everyday lives and jobs, but we rarely take this approach with children. Most of us don't see our children as individuals, people developing complicated thoughts and feelings. Children want to feel that we care about what is going on in their lives and that we are truly interested and eager to know. They want us to be vulnerable in a way that we can hear and accept the things we may not want to hear and accept. They want to know that whatever they say will be accepted and that they will be supported. They don't want our questions to have an agenda or an already-formed opinion. They want to feel authentic curiosity, non-judgment, and openness.

When we are genuine in our body language, our tone of voice, and our facial expressions, we will send the message that we are truly curious. We aren't judging, we are open to whatever they're about to throw at us, and we are truly listening. Before you ask a question be clear in your intention of asking the question. Ask yourself why you are asking it, what you are trying to accomplish, and ask yourself



MAYBE THE LESSON IS NOT ABOUT ASKING BETTER QUESTIONS OF OUR CHILDREN, BUT HOW TO ASK BETTER QUESTIONS OF OURSELVES.

am I ready to listen? If we understand our intentions, the questions we ask our children will be purposeful, open, and clear. If we have a clear intention and know why we are asking a particular question, our genuine curiosity, non-judgment, and openness will become apparent.

The hard part comes when trying to stay within that intention throughout the conversation. How many times have we been in conversation and we're already forming our response? This is a clear sign that something they said has triggered you to get defensive or protective. When you feel yourself getting defensive, protective, or triggered by something they say, you must stay in that moment. It's in our nature to go back to the past and rehash, find fault, defend, and, ultimately, stop listening. Some tools to master staying in the present and staying within your inten-

tion center involve tuning into your physical body (because our physical body is always in the present). Noticing your breath, feeling your feet on the floor or the sensations in your hands are all ways to stay in the present moment. You are in a conversation about them, not you. It's very easy to lose sight of that and inadvertently show disinterest, discourage, or lose our why.

There is a lot of advice out there on better ways to ask questions as a parent. We can ask open-ended questions or thought-provoking questions. We can get on their level. We can ask follow-up questions. Authenticity is only possible if we understand why we are asking and make sure they understand it as well. What I learned from my children is that maybe the lesson is not about asking better questions of our children, but how to ask better questions of ourselves. **W**

How and When to Ask Better Questions as a Patient

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Healthcare

can often feel overwhelming, with a barrage of information and complex terminology coming from your doctors and medical staff. It is critical to come prepared when meeting with a medical or behavioral health professional to enhance your overall experience and understanding. Knowing how and when to ask the right questions as a patient can greatly improve your healthcare experience and lead to better outcomes. By being proactive in seeking clarity, you can ensure that you are fully informed about your condition, treatment options, and overall health. Let's explore how to ask better questions and when to bring them up during your healthcare journey.



WHY ASKING QUESTIONS IS IMPORTANT

Asking questions can make a huge difference in understanding your health, unlocks learning, and improves clinical or therapeutic rapport. Questions are a powerful tool that can be extremely beneficial and necessary, particularly so in circumstances when question-asking challenges social norms. Whether you're dealing with a new diagnosis, discussing treatment options, or managing a chronic condition, clear communication between you and your healthcare provider is essential.

INFORMED CONSENT

Asking the right questions helps you understand the pros and cons of treatments, enabling you to make better decisions about your care. Remember, the healthcare system is still a business. What may be more lucrative to them, may not, however, be most beneficial to you or your family.

AVOIDING MISUNDERSTANDING

Medical terms can be confusing. Clarifying what you don't understand can prevent errors or miscommunication about your condition or treatment plan. Do not be

afraid to request further explanation in terms that are more understandable to you and your family.

BUILDING TRUST

Asking thoughtful questions helps establish a stronger relationship with your healthcare provider. You will feel more comfortable and confident in their recommendations. This is particularly imperative when receiving mental health care.

Why would a Patient sometimes not ask questions? Typically, this is because they are confused, overwhelmed, or because they are afraid of appearing ignorant or difficult. The strange surroundings, unfamiliar faces, long waits, and feelings of anxiety, intimidation, pain, and vulnerability can contribute to a phenomenon labeled "white coat silence," which is defined as a reluctance to vocalize questions or concerns to a physician. At times, the provider-patient dynamic appears synonymous to a parent-child relationship. The medical field is already addressing this imbalance and welcomes opportunities to correct this dynamic, including providers sitting at eye level with patients and entertaining all questions for clarification.

HOW TO ASK BETTER QUESTIONS

1. BE SPECIFIC

General questions like, “What should I do?” are too vague. Instead, frame your question to get precise information, such as, “What are the benefits and risks of this medication for my condition?” Specificity leads to clear, actionable answers.

2. USE OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

Open-ended questions encourage your provider to give more detailed responses. Rather than asking, “Is this medication good for me?” ask, “Can you explain

4. ASK FOR CLARIFICATION

If your doctor uses terminology you don’t understand, don’t hesitate to ask for clarification. A good way to do this is by saying, “Could you explain that in simpler terms?” or “What does that term mean in relation to my condition?”

5. ASK ABOUT ALTERNATIVES

In medicine, there are often multiple treatment options. Ask your provider, “What are the alternatives to this treatment, and what are their benefits and



how this medication will affect my condition over time?” This allows your doctor to give you more context and information.

3. PRIORITIZE YOUR QUESTIONS

It’s easy to get overwhelmed and forget important questions during a medical visit. Before your appointment, make a list of your most pressing questions, starting with those that concern your immediate health. This way, even if time is limited, you address your top concerns. It is important to be your own best advocate and ensure your medical needs are met.

drawbacks?” Understanding your choices can empower you to make a decision that aligns with your values and lifestyle.

6. USE “WHAT IF” QUESTIONS

To understand the full scope of your condition, asking “what if” questions can help. For example, “What if I don’t proceed with this treatment? What could happen?” or “What if I change my diet or lifestyle—will it impact my condition?”



WHEN TO ASK QUESTIONS

1. AT DIAGNOSIS

When you are first diagnosed with a condition, it's natural to feel overwhelmed. This is a critical time to ask questions like:

- What exactly is my diagnosis?
- What are the typical symptoms and progression of this condition?
- How will this affect my daily life? Understanding your diagnosis will give you a baseline for managing your condition and seeking the right care.

2. WHEN DISCUSSING TREATMENT

Options Whether you are deciding on surgery, medications, or lifestyle changes, it's crucial to gather as much information as possible. Questions to ask include:

- What are the benefits and risks of this treatment?
- How long will the treatment take to work?
- What side effects should I be aware of?
- How will we monitor progress?
- What is the timeline for recovery or healing?
- What are the final results?

3. DURING FOLLOW-UP

Visits After starting a treatment, you'll likely have follow-up visits. These are opportunities to ask about your progress and address any concerns:

- How is the treatment working?
- Are there any changes I should make to my treatment plan?
- What should I expect next?

4. WHEN YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND SOMETHING

Any time you feel unsure or confused, don't wait until the next visit to ask for clarification. It's okay to ask for more information during the appointment or even follow up afterward. It's better to get the right information upfront than to guess or rely on potentially incorrect assumptions.

5. BEFORE MAKING MAJOR HEALTH DECISIONS

If you're facing a decision about surgery, long-term medication, or major lifestyle changes, take the time to ask about all of your options and their long-term consequences. Don't hesitate to ask for a second opinion if needed. Ask the provider about the costs and what may be expected. Ask to speak with any patients who have undergone the same treatment you are seeking.



HOW TO PREPARE FOR A MEDICAL APPOINTMENT

1. BRING A LIST OF QUESTIONS

As mentioned, prioritizing your questions beforehand ensures you don't forget anything important during the appointment.

2. TAKE NOTES

Writing down the doctor's responses can help you remember details and review the information later.

3. BRING A COMPANION

Having a family member or friend with you can help you stay focused and provide a second set of ears to hear the information.

4. BE HONEST

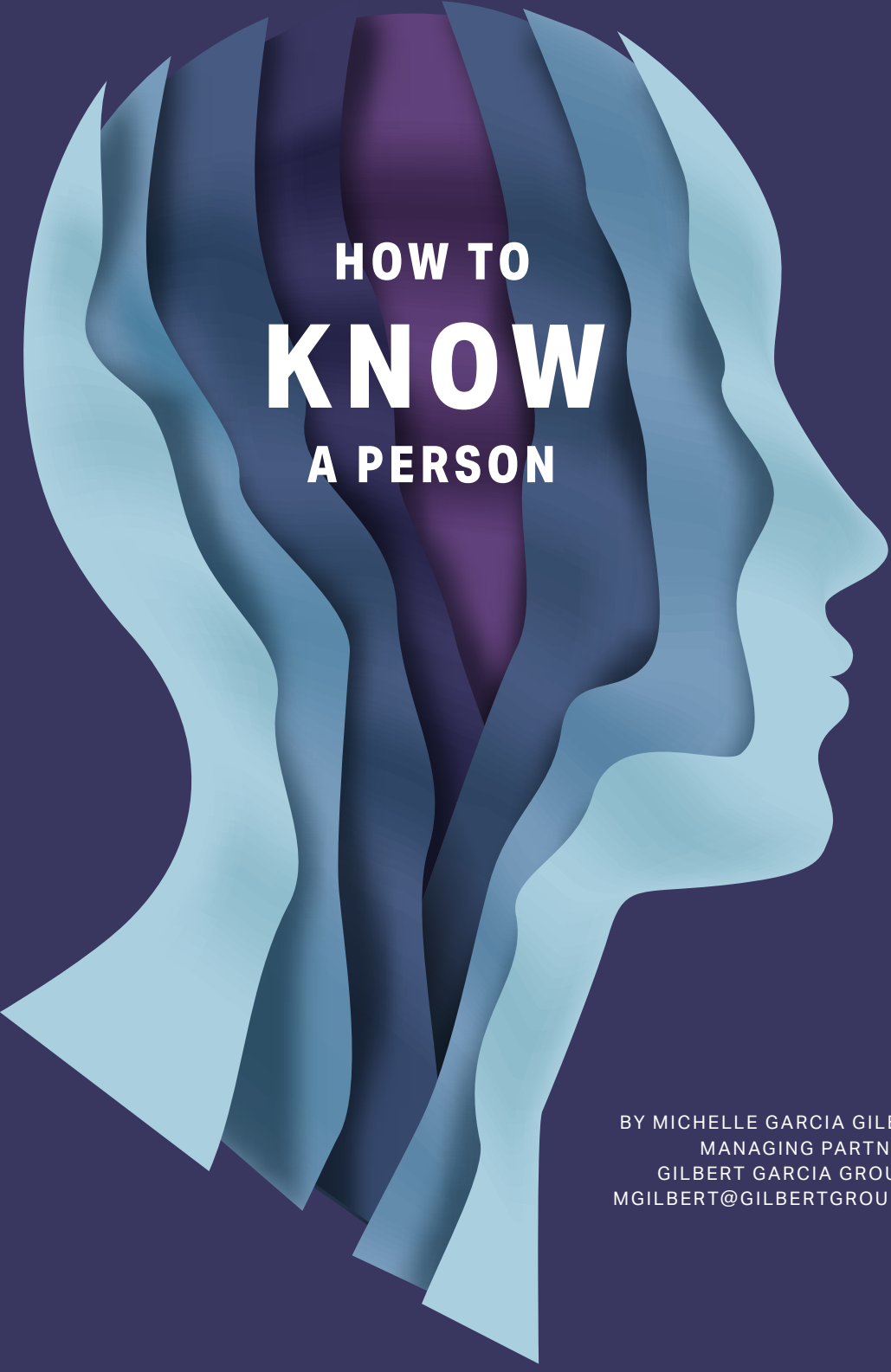
Always be honest with your healthcare provider about

symptoms, lifestyle, and medication adherence. Clear information leads to better treatment.

5. DO YOUR OWN RESEARCH

Look at peer-reviewed studies and articles and review the current and best treatment/intervention for your condition.

Asking the right questions at the right time can significantly improve your healthcare experience. By being proactive, informed, and prepared, you can gain a better understanding of your health and be an active participant in your care. Don't be afraid to ask your doctor to explain things or take time to discuss your concerns—good healthcare is a partnership between you and your provider. **W**



HOW TO **KNOW** A PERSON

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How to Know a Person was written by David Brooks, a Canadian-born American journalist and cultural and political commentator. He is a bestselling author, op-ed columnist at the *New York Times*, and recurring commentator on *PBS NewsHour*. Born on August 11, 1961, in Toronto, Canada, he graduated from the University of Chicago with a Bachelor of History degree in 1983 after which he became a police reporter for the *City News Bureau*, a wire service jointly owned by the *Chicago Sun* and *Sun Times*.

In addition to the instant book, he is the author of several other books, *Bobos in Paradise: The New Upper Class and How They Got There* and *The Social Animal: The Hidden Sources of Love, Character, and Achievement*, a *New York Times* best seller.

In his own words, “I write about political, social and cultural trends, the clash of ideas and the always tricky subject of moral formation.” See, <https://www.nytimes.com/by/david-brooks>.

WHY I LISTENED TO/READ THIS BOOK

I was led to this book by my therapist friend, who has assisted me in some of the worst moments in my life, and who has helped me to be a better person. As I age and navigate relationships, I occasionally check in with him, and he strongly recommended this book during one of our conversations.

I listened to the book as an audiobook and have been going back to read it. Brooks did not grow up being comfortable relating to others. It wasn't until he was married and had children that he realized he needed to change, because “Life has a way of tenderizing you.” He now believes that people skills are necessary to having a satisfying life, but Western society does not equip people with these skills.

He states, “I’ve come to believe that the quality of our

lives and the health of our society depends, to a large degree, on how well we treat each other in the minute interactions of daily life.”

Brooks distinguishes between people who are diminishers and illuminators in society, and he notes that illuminators bring out the best in others.

He uses data that shows that the longer people are married, the less they accurately know each other, because they tend to rely on early memories of one another and fail to consider that they grow and change throughout the years.

WHY WE DON'T LISTEN

“... most of us have all sorts of inborn proclivities that prevent us from perceiving others accurately”. He lists a number of common issues that inhibit people from truly seeing others: anxiety, egotism, naïve realism, the lesser-mind problem, objectivism, essentialism, and static mindset.

In contrast to these issues, a person looking for beauty is likely to find wonders, while a person looking for threats will find danger. He suggests viewing each person as possessing an eternal, beautiful, God-made soul which changes how we view people.

Regarding how to get to know a person, he says, “Sometimes you can learn more about a person by watching how they talk to a waiter than by asking them a pro-

“I’ve come to believe that the quality of our lives and the health of our society depends, to a large degree, on how well we treat each other in the minute interactions of daily life.”



found question about their philosophy of life.” He continues that by asking questions and actively listening to a response, “you are adopting a posture of humility,” and the worst questions are the ones that don’t involve a surrender of power but evaluate or judge others. Open-ended questions are humble questions.

WHAT QUESTIONS CAN WE ASK?

According to Brooks, examples of questions that can lead to interesting conversations, which questions seem to me to be probing, are:

- What crossroads are you at?
- What would you do if you weren’t afraid?
- If you died tonight, what would you regret not doing?
- If the next five years are a chapter in your life, what is that chapter about?
- Can you be yourself where you are and still fit in?

Brooks adds “Each person is a mystery. And when you are surrounded by mysteries, as the saying goes, it’s best to live life in the form of a question.” He suggests that it is best for people and for society for people to learn to know each other better. The suicide rate in the United States rose by 33% between 1999 and 2019. In one survey, 54% of Americans feel that no one knows them well. Lonely people who feel unseen can become suspicious and mean.

“Loneliness leads to meanness. As the saying goes, pain that is not transformed gets transmitted...The essence of evil is the tendency to obliterate the humanity of another....Our problem is fundamentally moral. As a society, we have failed to teach the skills and cultivate the inclination to treat each other with kindness, generosity, and respect...In a sense, American culture became demoralized.”

HOW CAN WE CAN BETTER KNOW A PERSON

The message I received from Brooks and his book is to have an awareness about the lack in our conversations

“Sometimes you can learn more about a person by watching how they talk to a waiter than by asking them a profound question about their philosophy of life.”

and relationships, and then seek to learn and improve in order to have more meaningful lives. One helpful trait that Brooks identifies is that he thinks that people who read tend to be more empathetic, and empathy is important in relationships. As mentioned at the beginning, through suffering and life experiences, people tend to become wiser and get better as they age, which is a factor in my personal favor.

In addition to asking more open-ended questions, and listening well to responses, you also should see people in the context of their cultures.

“To see a person well, you have to see them as culture inheritors and as culture creators.” He suggests that people see the world in a way that made sense according to their ancestor’s circumstances. He adds, “When I’m looking at you, and trying to know you, I’m going to want to ask how your ancestors show up in your life.”

Brooks shares many events from his own life that are impactful, and which provide another roadmap for knowing people. For example, he had a close friend who was depressed and who eventually took his own life. He felt very inadequate in his efforts to help his friend and ultimately felt like the best he could do was to listen to his friend and not try to solve any perceived problems.

Brooks references extensive research and academic sources that he uses in addition to his own experiences and his own curiosity about knowing people. Brooks provides tools, like techniques and questions, which I have been trying to implement in my own life. The book is deep and takes time to digest in order to implement change. I have found the process set in action by reading this book to be well worth the effort. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is looking to better know others and to better know themselves. **W**



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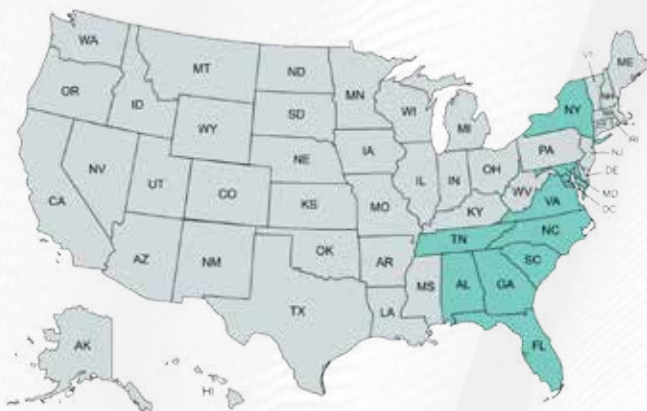
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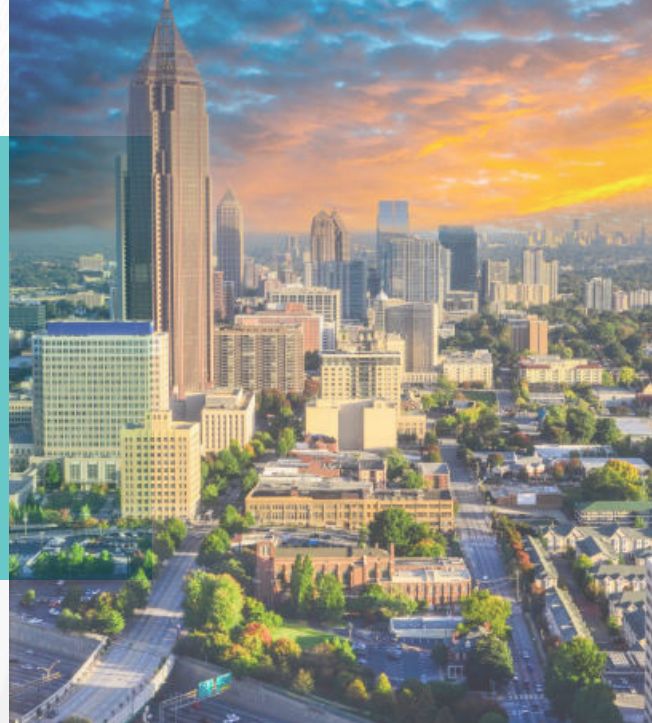
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WHAT'S YOUR *Passion*

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AS WE ALL EXPERIENCED, Spring of 2020 was quite a change in how we all lived our lives, both professionally and personally. During this time, I began working remotely from home with little contact with the outside world. I could feel myself starting to lose some excitement in my everyday life. Then one day, when society began slowly opening up again, I purchased a wonderful little floral hanging basket for my front porch. The rest was history. I fell in love with plants and botanicals, and over the past few years have grown both my outdoor garden and indoor plant collections.

Not only are plants and botanicals beautiful to view, but studies have shown numerous health benefits associated with gardening activities, including an increase in cognitive function, a reduction in stress, and an increase in life satisfaction (Soga, Masashi, et al. "Gardening is beneficial for health: A meta-analysis." *Preventive Medicine Reports*, vol. 5, Mar. 2017, pp. 92–99, <https://doi.org/https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5153451/>). Additionally, the exposure to sunlight while tending to your garden can lower blood pressure, and the exercise involved restores dexterity and strength. (Thompson, Richard. "Gardening for health: A reg-

ular dose of gardening." *Clinical Medicine*, vol. 18, no. 3, June 2018, pp. 201–205, <https://doi.org/https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6334070/>). I know I personally have experienced several of the benefits and joys of gardening.

While rewarding, the legal profession tends to lend itself to increased stress. Everyone needs an outlet to reduce such stress and be able to unwind away from their work. Being surrounded by plants and botanicals really has helped lower my stress levels and has brought more joy into my day. I enjoy watching them grow every day and see what progress they are making. It provides such a sense of fulfillment to

see your botanicals growing and thriving. Walking through a plant nursery on the weekends is so soothing, and I have so much fun picking out fresh cut flowers for centerpieces for my home.

For my outdoor garden, I have a variety of different options each year, from fruits, such as Meyer lemons, tomatoes, watermelons, and berries, to vegetables, such as green beans, broccoli, peppers, and cucumbers, and finally garden herbs, such as rosemary, mint, pineapple sage, and lemon balm. This year, I had an abundance of tomatoes which turned out delicious on sandwiches and burgers. The tabasco peppers also turned out amazing

and just spicy enough for homemade tabasco hot sauce. Additionally, the herbs are always a staple for me to add to almost any meal or even to use in hot teas.

Despite all the benefits, gardening is not always simple, and nature sometimes halts your progress and hopes for a harvest. The most frustrating crop I grow are pumpkins. Every fall I gather numerous pumpkins from the store to decorate my home for the season. Afterwards, I

this year was my Tiger Lily. I planted bulbs a few years ago and this spring saw it bloom for the first time. I also was able to obtain a Plumeria tree cutting on a trip to Maui, Hawai'i in June of 2022, and this summer it finally bloomed for the very first time. It was so beautiful to see, and it transported me back to being in Maui.

Getting to grow your own food right outside of your door has really turned into my passion the last

Not only are plants and botanicals beautiful to view, but studies have shown numerous health benefits associated with gardening activities, including an increase in cognitive function, a reduction in stress, and an increase in life satisfaction

have a designated pumpkin patch where I leave the pumpkins in the garden over winter. Surprisingly, the leftover seeds begin growing the next spring, that is until the squash vine borers take them over. I have such promise in the beginning of spring to have pumpkins for the fall, but once the squash vine borers begin, it is almost impossible to stop them. Unfortunately, I was only able to harvest 2-3 pumpkins last year and none for this season.

On the other hand, one of my most successful indoor plants has been a Snake Plant, or Mother In Law's Tongue, which I have had for approximately 3.5 years, and it has grown to about 4 feet tall. My favorite perennial outdoor variety

four years. Watching your crop grow, tending to your garden on a daily basis, all while obtaining some good Vitamin D, provides me an outlet to relax and unwind after a hard day's work. It has really turned into such a fun and exciting way to spend my time. I love creating meals around what is currently growing in the garden and getting family and friends to taste what I have grown.

I would strongly encourage anyone who is interested to go and purchase some plants and botanicals for your home or office space. Begin with just one and see where it takes you. Not only could it end up exposing you to a new hobby, but you could be happier, healthier, and more productive every day. **W**

