

Some SMART questions to have in your Action Learning Toolkit

Opening Questions

- what would you like to see happen here?
- what would you like to get from this conversation?
- what are your goals?
- what in your mind is really the crux of the matter?
- how are you feeling at the moment?
- how would you like to feel by the end of our conversation?
- what would you like to talk about first?

Chunking Up - to identify the bigger picture & motivation drivers

- why is what you want important for you? and why is this important? and why is this important?
- what will this do for you? what will this bring you?
- what will this mean for you? how will this affect you?

Chunking Down - to clarify in more detail

- what do you want to achieve? what do you want to see happen?
- what will you do to achieve this?
- what are your reasons for this?
- exactly how do you see this working...?
- what is stopping you? *always followed by:* what do you want instead?
- how much...?
- how do you mean? in what way?
- could you explain that a little more fully?

Questions that Lead to Discussion and Rapport

- is there anything about your position that you'd like to clarify or expand on?
- how do you feel about this?

Challenging Assumptions - to test our judgements & to break free of constraints

- what would happen if you did what you suggested, said, thought?
- what would happen if you didn't?
- how have you arrived at this idea?
- how do you know this?
- what other interpretations or explanations might there be?
- what assumptions are you making about the situation?
- what assumptions are you making about someone else / other people?

Creative Problem Solving & Planning Questions

Think of a significant problem or situation you are facing. Then ask any of the following to create solutions and new possibilities for action:

1. What do you want? What else?
2. What would make the situation better?
3. How do you feel about the situation, person?
4. What are your thoughts about the situation, person?
5. What is most important to you in this situation?
6. How do you want to feel about this situation?
7. What assumptions are you making about someone else in this situation?
8. What could be the cost and payoff to you of solving this problem?
9. What does your response to this situation tell you about yourself?
10. How do you know this?
11. What assumptions are you making about the situation?
12. What could you do differently?
13. Where could get help to improve this situation? Where else?
14. What is positive about the situation?
15. What is the most radical thing you could do?
16. What is the simplest and helpful thing you could do?
17. What don't you know about the situation?
18. What is the relationship between how things are now and how you want them to be?
19. What about this situation would you most like to change?
20. What can you influence that would help someone else to do something differently?
21. How does this situation affect you personally?
22. Can you explain that further?
23. If you get what you want, what will this achieve for you?
24. What do you need to do first?
25. What is stopping you? What do you want instead?
26. What will happen if you are not successful in getting what you want?
27. Why do you believe that what you want is reasonable?
28. Why do you believe that what you want has value?
29. Why are you the best person to be doing what you are thinking of?
30. What about this situation causes you most anxiety or distress?
31. If you are successful how will you feel?

Dealing with Generalisations - to overcome blocks or entrenched positions

Repeat the statement as a question with an emphasis on the generalisation:

- *Everyone* thinks this is what should happen?
- He *never* gets things done on time?
- *Always*?

Getting out of Stalemates

- what if . . .?
- what would happen if . . .?
- what would need to happen for you to be able to agree?
- given that you can't do that what might make things better for you?

Stimulating Thought - to generate some excitement and enthusiasm

- what if you were to . . .?
- how would it be if you decided to . . .?

Gaining Commitment - to confirm decisions or action

- do you agree that . . .
- so you are happy if you. . .?
- what do you want us to do?
- what will you be doing next?
- when can we expect . . .?

Getting Feedback - to check what has been received and to test response

- so how does what you've said look/feel/sound to you?
- are you happy with . . .?

Questions for Evaluating a session

- How helpful/useful has this been?
- How could I have been more effective?
- How can we improve these sessions?
- Are we sticking to the contract rules?