

APPENDIX C

Types of Questions To Ask: Exploring a Variety of Perspectives

Adapted from: Sharpe, K. & Nishimura, J. (2017). When mentoring meets coaching: Shifting the stance in education. Toronto: Pearson Canada Inc.

<i>Questions that:</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Questions that:</i>	<i>Examples</i>
Support the person's agenda	<i>What do you want to focus on today? What matters most for you in this?</i>	Support forward movement and change	<i>What's possible now? What needs your immediate attention going forward? How is this going to move you forward?</i>
Expand awareness	<i>Stepping back, what do you notice? What's emerging? What else? What's missing? Where do you want to be?</i>	Generate possibilities	<i>What options have you considered? What have you not considered? Big picture, what else is possible?</i>
Are open-ended	<i>What are your assumptions here? What haven't we considered? How can I support you?</i>	Stretch and build capacity	<i>Where are you in this? What's the next level of thinking that you need to access? What's hard in this for you?</i>
Explore current conditions	<i>What do you know for sure? What questions have you been asking yourself? What feels like a challenge for you in this?</i>	Explore the learning edge (the capacity "not to know")	<i>What support do you want? Where is the stretch in this for you?</i>
Surface and challenge the person's beliefs and assumptions	<i>What belief are you operating from? What assumption are you holding?</i>	Access creativity	<i>If you could do this any way you wanted...? What if... What have you not considered?</i>
invite reflection	<i>Where were you challenged? What feedback would be most valuable for you right now? In looking back on it now, what stands out?</i>	Separate the person from the problem (Epston, 1996)	<i>How would you describe the problem, keeping yourself out of the equation? What do you know for sure about the problem?</i>
Serve the person's vision and larger purpose	<i>Where were you challenged? What feedback would be most valuable for you right now? In looking back on it now, what stands out?</i>	invite the person to generate their own questions	<i>What have we missed? And the question you want to ask yourself right now is...?</i>

Types of Questions to Avoid

Questions That:	Examples
grow out of our judgment, interpretation, or agenda for the person	<i>This sounds challenging—are your students capable of doing this? What if we started with your professional development goals? I think you need to pay attention to them.</i>
are in service of our curiosity rather than the person’s agenda	<i>How has your [supervisor, Chair, etc.] been managing things? What on earth were the students thinking?</i>
are closed (often begin with verbs such as do, did, does, can, will, and are and can be answered with “yes” or “no”)	<i>Are things going any better? Do you think you are prepared? Will you be practicing regularly?</i>
are leading or suggestive (reflect where we think the conversation should go, rather than inviting the person to do their own work)	<i>Sounds like some change is required... Have you thought about inviting them in for a conversation? How can you get students involved immediately?</i>
are intended to advise or fix (can suspend the capacity building and undermine the person’s competence and confidence)	<i>How about getting someone else to lead the meeting? Clearly the lesson is a problem. What about changing the assignment?</i>
are stacked (several at once)	<i>How do you think it’s going to go?...Are you nervous?...What support do you need?</i>
ask “Why?” (should be used sparingly as they typically invite a defensive response)	<i>Why did you do that? You aren’t going to send the email? Why not? Why do you continue to let that get to you?</i>
ask for unnecessary detail (take up precious time and space without moving the person forward)	<i>What happened at the meeting? How did you let them know?</i>
are problem-focused (can be a slippery slope toward venting, justification, and details...regaining traction and forward movement can be extremely challenging)	<i>What is it about this problem that has you all fired up? What is stressing you out? How long has this been going on?</i>

The “best” questions to ask are...

Simple Clean, and Clear	Results Oriented
Poignant and On Target	Creating Space and Perspective
Energizing and Emotive	Relationship Building
Provocative	Challenging