



CULTIVATING THE SEEDS OF CHANGE ©
Renée Canali, Life Coach Vol.2, Issue 11 November 2005
The Power of A Question

Have you ever stopped to think, “What is a powerful question?” Do you notice that sometimes when you are asked a question, you have an immediate need to answer and, on occasion, you pause to think before you answer? There is a reason for these different responses.

Many questions elicit a *reaction*, a need to quickly voice our opinions. Imagine that your boss comes in and asks, “Do you have that proposal for the widgets yet?” Knowing it’s not due until next week, a common response might be something like, “No I don’t have it done yet. I’m working on the X project and wrapping up the Y addendum. I don’t have time to work on that until I get these things off my plate!!” What would happen if your boss asked instead, “When would you have time to start on the widget proposal?” The answer might be more of a *response*.

Questions can be worded in such a way as to avoid most of the emotional charge. Asking questions in a powerful way can encourage *responses*. Responses have less emotion attached to them and allow for more open flow of ideas and concepts. Carefully selected phrasing can bring out more honest answers and more cooperation. Open ended questions more often allow for a response: an open ended question is a question which does not require a specific answer. For example, “How can we work together as a family to get the chores done so that we can have more time to do fun things?”

When the subconscious mind must choose between deeply rooted emotions and logic, emotions will almost always win. T. Harv Eker

Reactions have an emotional aspect to them. Responses come from a more thoughtful, less emotionally charged place. Take, for instance, a child and parent having an exchange about homework. Many parents asked a close-ended question: “Did you do your homework?” (This may be perceived as an attack.) Depending on the child, the answer could be “Why do you always ask me that! I told you I would do it!” (The result is an emotional defense.) Which result are *you* looking for?

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GARDENER'S ACTION PLAN FOR NOVEMBER 2005 ©

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What happens when someone asks a question that doesn't elicit an immediate reaction? If someone asks a well phrased question, they may actually get a *response* instead.

"It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question." Eugene Ionesco

Raise your awareness about how you ask questions. Try to rephrase the questions below in a more open form. Use this technique when you want to open the lines of communication. Ask specific yes/no questions when additional input is not required. You may gain understanding by asking questions that clarify a position or response.

"Don't you know how much I have to get done?"

Or- "Can you tell me when you need this so that I can fit it into my schedule?"

- "Do you need it now, or can it wait?"

"Are you ever going to learn to clean your room?"

Or- "Can you put your clothes in the laundry when you finish changing?"

- "It looks like you forgot to put things away. How much time will you need?"

"Can't you remember to put your things away?"

Or- "What can you think of to remind you to put your things away?"

"Are you always this (dumb, stupid, angry, slow, miserable)?"

Or- "Is there a reason that you feel angry?"

- "Could you use a hand to help you speed up this project?"

Many times, it is not the question itself, but the way in which you ask the question that push people's buttons. Questions can be structured to sound accusatory, critical, calming, or interested. The way in which a question is asked in many cases dictates the type of response you will get back.

"Judge a man by his questions rather than his answers." Voltaire

This month's challenge is to practice asking questions to gain a better understanding, to increase cooperation and to allow others to contribute and feel valued.

"Questions are the creative acts of intelligence." Dr. Frank Kingdon

If you are ready to change your habits and be more productive and satisfied and would like support, you may send an email to Renee@landofpossibility.com or call (301) 279-2363. For things to be different, you have to cultivate change. All rights reserved. This may be reproduced with copyright statement and credits intact.



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