

Ask better QUESTIONS



Apparently you have about 60,000 thoughts every day and every day you are likely to have 95% of the same thoughts again. Lindsay Tighe explains how to make your thoughts count.

If your thinking directly drives the results you achieve in life, this routine thinking can be problematic and restricting. As a professional coach I have learnt over the years that one of the most powerful ways to generate new thoughts is to ask strong thought-provoking questions – indeed better questions are the way to drive better results.

Whenever I run seminars I remind participants that they are far more amazing than any of them realise; they have so much more potential they could fulfil. In fact, according to Sir John Whitmore in *Coaching for Performance*, in most workplaces up to 60% of staffs' potential doesn't get used. I find this not only shocking, but also very sad. It was Plato who said, "we all have innate wisdom, we just need to be asked the right questions". One of the greatest gifts you can give yourself is to tap into your wisdom and potential is to ask better questions.

In my experience very few people take enough time out to do some structured and thoughtful reflection. Often, even if they do take time out, it is to dwell on the negatives, rather than generate new thoughts.

When you self reflect there is the opportunity to gain insights, ideas, clarity and awareness that you would not have

unless you had taken the time to stop and think. Better questions will be one of the best tools to enable this reflection.

So what makes a question a better question?

The starting point is to have an intention and purpose for your question. When you ask a question with intention, it directs your thoughts to specific areas that will be far more purposeful than random and repetitive thoughts.

Consider the following areas:

- Questions that help you to get clear about what outcome you really want such as, 'what is my ideal outcome?' or 'what is it that I really want to change?'
- Questions that empower you to think about ideas and possibilities such as 'what ideas do I have to move forward with this?' or 'what is a first step that I can take to move me forward?'
- Questions that help you to make a decision such as, 'what will be the best thing for me to do here?' or 'what will I commit to doing differently?'
- Questions that help you to get motivated, take action and be responsible such as, 'what can I do to ensure that I stay motivated and carry out these actions?' or 'what timeframes will I commit to for these actions?'

In general the best advice is to focus on positive areas and solutions rather than problems and issues. In addition try to structure your questions so you keep flowing towards an outcome or at least to a point of real purpose to the thinking.

When you ask yourself questions it is imperative that you bring a willingness to be honest with yourself and a preparedness to challenge some of your limited thinking and assumptions. In doing so the quality of your thoughts will dramatically improve and undoubtedly provide new insights.

One of the greatest challenges with self-reflection is actually finding the time to do it. It doesn't have to be time consuming. Use a time you would otherwise use for something mindless, like having a shower or driving your car. Bring conscious awareness to this time and turn it into productive time to generate new thoughts.

Journaling can also be a very effective and powerful tool to enable self-reflection. It can give the thought more credibility and leverage than if it simply stays in your head. If journaling isn't something you have tried before give it a go and see what happens.

So what are some better questions you could be ask yourself to generate new thoughts and find better answers? **em**

Lindsay Tighe is the founder of Inspirational Coaching and is a successful and highly regarded speaker, business woman, author and coach who is passionate about inspiring others to improve their own lives and the lives of others by asking better questions.

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