

330 Thinking Questions That Lead to Possibilities & Breakthroughs

Mentoring, Coaching & Self-Reflection



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About ODYSSEY MENTORING & LEADERSHIP

Odyssey Mentoring & Leadership is the premier resource that entrepreneurs, small business owners, and CEO's come to for effective mentorship & leadership programs, training, news and skills:

- How to build strong mentoring and leadership programs
- The mentoring skills you need to succeed
- The latest thinking on mentorship, leadership & communication
- Training programs that produce lasting results

To learn more, visit our website at www.OdysseyMentoring.com. If you like what you see, you can subscribe to our Odyssey Mentoring & Leadership E-Newsletter and get our latest news and views in your inbox every month!

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Thinking Questions & Why They Matter

We are geared to want quick answers. In a life-threatening emergency, that makes a lot of sense. But, if what we want are lasting changes, personal and professional growth...it's the questions that we take the time to ponder that help us reveal our power and creativity. It's the questions that lead us below the surface to insights and lasting change.

The most effective mentors ask thinking questions that are challenging and often uncomfortable to consider. This process allows you to grow through self-reflection. There is rarely an obvious "right" or "fast" answer. We have to be willing to engage with the question and try out new perspectives. It takes patience and persistence.

Once you've had that "aha" moment, you want to map out your next action steps. Write them down. If you have a mentor, share them with her and allow her to support you. If you are a mentor, support your mentee by listening, being a keen observer, and holding her accountable for meeting her milestones.

I use this list of questions by choosing one a day to contemplate and share with my clients and followers on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Pinterest. One of the lessons I have learned is that no matter what I am doing, no matter which question I choose to think about, it leads to an insight that empowers me and supports me in what I'm working on. I also use it for starter questions when I am mentoring or coaching.

You can use these questions on your own. Write down your action plan and post it where you can see it. Refer to it throughout the day or week to help you maintain your focus.

It takes repetition to master any new skill. Mastering the art of asking thinking questions that lead to insights, breakthroughs and accomplishment is within your reach whether you use these questions for self-coaching or you are mentoring or coaching another.

Goals

Am I willing to face the inconvenience of stretching myself to achieve my boldest goals?
What will I do toward my goal that I have been putting off all month?
What did I make more important than taking another step toward my goal?
How does working toward my goals impact my partner or family?
On a scale of one to ten how committed am I to reaching my goal?
How can I state my goal more clearly?
How can I break down my goal into bite-size pieces?
Are my personal standards high enough to reach my goals?
How often do I review my plan for reaching my goal(s)?
Is this a goal or a pipe dream?
Which of my core values does my goal express?
Does my goal pull me forward or am I struggling to reach it?
What will I have to give up in order to make room for my goals?
If I achieve this goal, will it bring lasting fulfillment or fleeting pleasure?
How will achieving my goal transform my life?
What would be the biggest impact of achieving my goals?
What is the excuse I have always used for not achieving my goals?
What are the measurable results I am aiming for?
How will I celebrate reaching my goal?
Have I identified specific measurable results for my goal?
Will working toward this goal force me to stretch?
Is this goal big enough for me?
Have I set a due date for completion of my goal?
Do I have milestones for my goal so I can track my progress?
Have I declared my intention to achieve this goal so that I can be held accountable for doing it?

Reality Check

How do I test for reality?
Will this matter in five years?
What is working?
What is working well for me right now?
What is not working well for me right now?
What is the difference between what goes well and what goes right?
What are the questions inside the questions?
What superstitions do I think are true?
What am I teaching others to expect from me?
How are my core values guiding me today?
Do I distinguish my thinking from my thoughts? What's the difference?
What are my leadership habits?
How far into the future am I looking?
On a scale of one to ten, how sure am I that I have all the information I need?
What is my tolerance for uncertainty?
Do I choose collaboration over competition?

What stops me from taking action?
 Am I bogged down in the details?
 Do I celebrate the differences?
 How do I use the differences in others to separate myself from them?
 What is the most difficult challenge I am facing today?
 How would people who know me really well describe me?
 How flexible am I? Really?
 What is the one thing I fear most? Could it happen again?
 What emotions are driving me today?
 What habit am I trying to break?
 What am I willing to do to succeed?
 What won't I do to succeed?
 Is what I say and do in harmony?
 What do I say or do, that opens doors?
 How important are the promises I make to myself?
 What principles are most important to me?
 Am I really open to new ideas?
 Do I choose the people around me?
 How do I embrace my failures?
 Do I see another's success as my failure?
 What do I do when things don't go the way I planned?
 How long am I willing to stay angry?
 Am I waiting for something bad to happen?
 Am I waiting for something good to happen?
 What could happen if I stopped waiting?
 Is the problem I am solving an obstacle or an opportunity?
 How hard am I willing to work for what I want most?
 Where is my life out of balance?
 What challenges am I struggling with at the moment?
 Is the adrenaline rush worth the risk I am taking?
 Do I treat my family as if they are my best clients?
 Do I share my successes or my complaints most often?
 What am I willing to endure for my goal to become a reality?
 If I don't make a change, what will it cost me in the long run?
 Where am I sabotaging myself?
 On a scale of one to ten how much do I love the work I do?
 On a scale of one to ten how motivated am I?
 What do I love about my clients/customers?
 What does luck have to do with my success?
 Am I using this challenge to grow or am I beating myself up?
 What deadlines are causing me to worry?
 How long have I been thinking about this situation?
 Have I ever experienced something like this before?
 What's stopping me from taking action?
 What's the worst that can happen, and can I handle it?
 Am I procrastinating or is there a valid reason to delay?
 What's the emotional cost vs. the financial cost?
 How do I describe the difference between a need and a value?
 Am I angry or am I hurt?
 What am I responsible for here?

Is this an assumption or have I checked to be sure of the facts?
Do I light the fire within as well as the fire under?
Do I actively seek new challenges or just manage those I have?
How do I assert and express my freedom?
Am I a talent scout?
Under what conditions would I allow exceptions to my standards or ideals?
Who are my champions?
Have I defined the problem accurately?
How would I define the problem if I stood on the other side of the fence?
What is my intention in making this decision?
Whom could my decision or action harm?
Can I discuss the problem with the affected parties before I make my decision? Will I?
Am I confident that my position will be as valid over time as it seems now?
Could I disclose, without qualm, my decision or action to my boss, CEO, the board of directors, my family, or society?
What is my tolerance for uncertainty?
What is my tolerance for failure?
What am I willing to forgive myself for?
What question do I ask the most?
Who fills my time?
What are the main concerns of my team?
What are the main concerns of my customers/clients?
What are my main concerns?
Whose concerns are most important for me to address right now?
Is there a win/win approach to addressing competing concerns?
Is there concrete evidence to validate my concerns?
Who shares my concerns?
What is within my power to control?
On a scale of one to ten how honest have I been about this with others?
What keeps me up at night?
How good a friend am I being to myself?
What rules do I have that get in my way?
Am I bothered by this situation, or am I stimulated by it?
What can I do better than any one else in my organization?
Is there anything else I need to consider before starting?
What in my life/work am I resisting?

Choices

What would I do differently if I could and how would I do it differently?
What is one thing I can do differently for just one week to see if it would make a difference in the results I can produce?
Will I work on or in my business today?
What will I stop doing this year?
What is the difference between a choice and a decision?
Have I chosen to take action or am I just hoping I will?
Will my next choice move me forward or keep me stuck?
What's the most resourceful choice?

Do I ask for what I really want, or just for what I think others will give me?
Will I risk being vulnerable, or act to protect my pride and patch of power?
Do I speak my mind or bite my lip, so I don't ruffle feathers or subject myself to criticism?
To whom and to what do I give my loyalty: as a person and as a member of the organization?
What could I be happy about if I chose to be?
Am I ready to choose?
Will what I do today give me energy or drain my energy?
Am I going to react right away or will I let the situation continue to develop for a while?
What keeps me from choosing what is in front of me?
Will I choose to have a positive attitude today?
What makes me think I have no choice?

Next Steps Forward

What are the three most important things I can accomplish today? Will I?
Knowing that 66% of all sales close after four calls, whom will I call today?
What problem will I solve today?
What is my most recent insight and will I take action on it?
Who will I help today?
Who or what will I serve today?
What insight did I have today that I am willing to take action on?
Will what I do today get me closer to where I want to be?
What can I do to move things forward?
What is the most important question I can ask today?
What act of kindness will I perform today?
Who do I need to speak to today?
What is the best use of my time at this moment?
What will I accomplish today?
What am I willing to do to improve this situation?
What am I willing to stop doing to improve this situation?
Do I need to work harder or delegate more?
Do I have a detailed strategy to get there from here?
What one thing will I do differently, for a week, to see if it will make a difference in the results I produce?
What could I do right now to put a smile on my face?
If I could only do one thing this week, what would I do?
What is the first thing I will do next month, next year?
Which step could I take that would make the biggest difference right now?
What strategies will help me be more effective today?
If I weren't scared, what would I do?
What must I accomplish in the next 12 months?
What will I focus on today?
What could stop me from taking my first step?

Perspective

Will today be a learning experience for me?
What one thing will I allow to make the most difference for me today?
What commitment frames my actions today?
What is important enough to require my full focus? Will I choose it?
Am I willing to use the small victories that happen every day to outweigh the few things that go wrong?
What surprised me today?
What is fair?
How do I know fairness when I see it?
If life isn't fair, can we be fair with each other?
What will I do to shift my perspective?
Do deadlines empower me?
Who is the CEO of my career?
What are "they" listening for?
What am I listening for?
Am I ready to be the best at what I do?
What inspires me?
What will I forgive myself for today?
Will I be sleepwalking today or eyes wide-open – full tilt boogie?
What aren't "they" saying?
What did I learn about myself today?
What did I discover about my thinking today?
How generous am I willing to be?
What am I reading that will help me to grow?
What does the extra mile look like?
Does luck happen, or do I make my luck?
What obstacle is blocking me?
Am I focused on the problem or the solution?
Am I focused on what's wrong or what's right?
Can I distinguish my story from the truth?
Who controls the benchmarks?
Do I want what I want for its own sake or am I trying to avoid something else?
Does my story empower me or disempower me?
What's great about my life today?
What's the benefit of my current problem?
What's the downside of my dream?
Who wouldn't like it if I succeeded?
Am I acting on faith or fear?
Am I standing in my power or pleasing someone else?
What am I pretending not to know?
Instead of either/or, how can I use both?
Am I approaching this from my head or from my heart?
What does this accomplishment mean to me and why does it matter?
In what way is my current situation perfect?
What do I find myself saying over and over?
How do my personal priorities fit with my career/business priorities?
Who must I please?

What is right about this that I am not seeing?
What are the top five things I love about my work?
What do I consider to be my greatest personal achievement?
What do I consider to be my greatest professional achievement?
Am I a game changer? Why or why not?
Could things be better than they are right now?
What is holding me back?
What unreasonable request can I make of myself, or another today?
Do I do what's always been done, or challenge old assumptions and try new approaches?
Is this a teachable moment?
What is most important to me right now?
What am I afraid of?
What am I passionate about?

Possibility

What new possibilities am I listening for right now?
What new possibilities will I take advantage of today?
What am I listening for?
A year from now, what will I wish I had done today?
What am I doing that I want to do more of?
What possibility am I present to today?
What will I say "YES" to today?
If this weakness became my strength, what would that look like?
What will I make possible before the end of the year?
If I knew I couldn't fail in the next six months, what would I do?
What would I do with a blank check?
Is the future I imagine for myself worth living into?
What is missing that I can provide?
What is the world I can imagine?
What is the most surprising thing I have learned from a younger colleague?
What is the most surprising thing I have learned from an older colleague?
What do I want to be known for?
How could coaching or mentoring improve my work?
What would delight me today?
Will my vote count today?
How could coaching or mentoring improve my life?
What will I do today to improve the world?
What is the outcome of working with me?
What is the difference between need and want?
If I could change one thing in my life, what would I change?
Who needs to hear from me today?
What does my ideal future look like?
If I were guaranteed success, would I do anything differently?
Who else, besides me will benefit from what I am doing?
How can I turn things around and have better results next time?
What will make the biggest difference?

What does my intuition tell me about the challenge I'm facing?
Have I solved problems like this before?
How can I improve this, so it adds value forever?
How can I solve this problem so it never comes back?
How could I have this conversation so it empowers everyone concerned?
What might make the difference that could change everything?
If I approached this with courage, how could my life change?
What is the impact I'll make by creating this?
How can I create more value with less effort?
How can I enjoy the process of solving this problem?
If my life were oriented around my core values, how would that look?
What will my impact be 100 years from now?
Who do I need to become in order to succeed?
Is this the best outcome I can imagine or is there something greater?
What's next for me?
What do I want more of in my life?
What is the legacy I want to leave behind?
If money were of no concern, what would I do differently?
What is within my power to change?
If time weren't a constraint, what would I do differently?
What would I do if I weren't accountable to anyone?
If I approach this with courage, how would my life change?

Resources & Support

What is the most important lesson I learned from a mentor? How can I apply it today?
Why did I join the groups I belong to – online and in person? Do I get what I want from them?
What can I, or should I, outsource or delegate?
When offered help, will I accept it as a gift, or brush it aside?
Who do I know that can support me in achieving my goal?
Am I willing to ask for help or support?
If I knew someone in my situation, how would I support him or her?
What do I want to be coached on?
What new skill do I want to learn or develop?
What new habit do I want to adopt?
How can I get my needs fully met?
What mistake(s) am I willing to forgive myself for having made?
Does my environment support me?
Who can help me with this?
Does my current habit fully support who I am becoming?
What do I need in order to succeed here?
What plan do I need in order to achieve my new goals?
How can I learn what I need to know about this?
What resources do I wish I had?
What is my most precious resource?
Of the people I know or work with, who has the resources I need?

How can I get my needs fully met?
Whose opinion do I value most and what would they advise me to do?

Appreciation

Who will I acknowledge so thoroughly today they will feel it down to their toes?
Thinking of my most recent accomplishment – what is the lesson I learned in the process?
What new habits have I noticed are beginning to take shape?
What is it that I do that gives me deep satisfaction?
What am I thankful for in my life and work?
What can I do today to care for my SELF?
What is the kindest thing anyone ever did for me? How can I pay it forward?
Do I allow myself to be fully acknowledged when someone compliments me?
How is flattery different from acknowledgement?
What do I want my boss or my client to know about what I've done for them?
What do I need to hear or see to know I am on the right track?
What would I like to be acknowledged for so far in my life?
What will I thank someone for today?
What achievement will I celebrate today?
Do the people closest to me know what I appreciate about them?
What am I grateful for right now?
Who's grateful for me?
How have I grown this year?
What did I accomplish this week?
Do I 'toot my horn' to ensure others know what I'm capable of, or just hope my efforts will be noticed?
How have I changed the world for generations to come?

Our Services

Odyssey Mentoring and Leadership will help you create a culture of learning and support that allows your people to deliver breakthrough results time after time. Through engaging and inspiring training programs Odyssey Mentoring instills the principles of mentorship and leadership that improve communication and change your workplace culture so that your organization is more productive and staff willingly use every opportunity to grow, develop, and cause breakthroughs.

Susan Bender Phelps, CEO and lead trainer has trained hundreds of professionals to be effective in their mentoring partnerships. She knows that just because a person is really good at what they do, has years of experience and the best of intentions, most do not come naturally to the mentoring skills they need to be effective. These skills can be easily learned and mastered.

Mentoring benefits both mentoring partners. Mentees learn faster than experience alone can teach them. Mentors earn more and than rise faster than their colleagues who don't. At the end of the day everyone wins!

If you want to strengthen your existing mentoring or leadership program, or build one that is strong from the start, Odyssey Mentoring & Leadership can provide what you need: program structure, mentor matching, skills training, communication platform, needs assessment, and ongoing or periodic support.

Odyssey Mentoring clients include:

- Chemeketa Community College
- First Congregational United Church of Christ Metro Area Pastors
- Global Partners For Youth
- Lawrence Livermore Laboratory
- Maine Association of Healthcare Administrators
- McDonald Jacobs Accounting and Consulting
- Oregon Association Of School Financial Aid Administrators
- Oregon Horse Country - EquiBiz
- Oregon Society of CPAs
- Portland Community College
- Portland General Electric
- Sandia National Laboratories
- Women At Intel – Rio Rancho

Need a dynamic speaker for your next conference or event?

Susan Bender Phelps has 30+ years of experience working with leaders at all levels of organizations in many industries, including federal, state and local government, colleges, universities, for-profit and not-for-profit. Industries include healthcare, parks and recreation, advertising, accounting, scientists, physicists, architects, consulting engineers, construction, unions and clergy.

Through engaging and inspiring Keynotes and break-out sessions, Susan demonstrates the principles of mentorship and leadership that improve communication and change workplace culture so that organizations are more productive and staff willingly uses every opportunity to grow, develop, and cause breakthroughs. To book Susan, contact Wilene Dunn at wilene@WCDEnterprises.com or call: 713-518-4914.