

# *REVIEW: CAN QUESTIONS LEAD TO CHANGE? AN ANALOGUE EXPERIMENT*

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Questions are so deeply engrained in our daily communication that it's easy to underestimate the impact they have. How can we lead better by asking better questions? This article raises our awareness of the effect questions can have and sheds light on how we can sharpen this powerful tool we use every day.

A fundamental assumption of the Solution Focused approach is that change can be influenced and co-created as an interaction unfolds. In their article, "Can Questions Lead to Change?", originally published in the Journal of Systemic Therapies (2011), Sara Healing and Janet Bavelas verify this assumption by examining how carefully formulated questions can shift one's focus and influence both behavior and perception.

Until now, very little research has been dedicated to determine how exactly questions can influence behavior. A group of Psychologists and Behavioural Scientist have been exploring a phenomenon called the Question-Behaviour Effect. Godin et al. published an article in 2008 on their experiment conducted with 4,672 experienced blood donors. They asked half the group a few questions on "intent", "attitude" and "belief" and discovered that they were more likely to donate blood during the following six months than those who had not been asked any questions at all.

Healing and Bavelas explore more specifically how questions can influence both the performance and perception of a difficult task. In their experiment, each participant was interviewed after executing a predefined task. Half of them answered questions focused on the responsibility they take for their actions (e.g. How did you manage your time effectively?). In contrast, the other half were asked questions focused on external causes and limitations (e.g. How did the time constraints affect your results?). When they returned to execute the same task one week later, the first group performed significantly better than the second. They also attributed different reasons for their scores, clearly influenced by the questions they were asked.

This experiment provides strong evidence that the SF assumption is true. We can indeed influence and even improve the perception and behavior of those we are interacting with, by carefully formulating our questions.