

Sample Questions for Different Situations

The following list of types of situations and companion questions are to provide examples of clean questions that will help demonstrate your curiosity and interest in helping someone else through a discovery process. Note that they are “what” and “how” questions are meant to challenge without being challenging. Sometimes, the best we can offer to a colleague is a willingness to ask in a way the brings them to a point of examining their current thinking and what they want in the future. If you can make someone thinks a little harder and deeper, you have likely provided some valuable help.

- Historical “What have you tried so far?”
- Future state “What do you want to see happen moving forward?”
- Planning “What is your game plan?”
- Affective “How do you feel about where the project is right now?”
- Reflective “What do you think is getting in your way?”
- Probing “What is the real challenge for you here?”
- Novel “What is an approach you haven’t tried yet?”
- Clarifying “What part isn’t clear?”
- System “Who else will this impact?”
- Exploratory “What options have you considered?”
- Analytic “What’s contributing to this situation?”
- Mindset “How is your current mindset helping or hurting?”
- Mirror “What could you be doing differently?”
- Appreciative “What IS working?”
- Challenge “How might you challenge yourself?”
- Implementation “What support do you need?”
- Autonomy “What can you be doing on your own at this point?”
- Feedback “How will you keep me in the loop?”
- Learning “If you had to do it again, what would you do differently?”

These are just a few examples that can be used in discussions about projects, team performance, individual performance, and on-on-one development/supervision goals. Use your own language to paraphrase and focus on the benefits of asking clean questions.