

How to ask better questions

Cultivating curiosity to go deeper

“A beautiful question is an ambitious yet actionable question that can begin to shift the way we perceive or think about something – and that might serve as a catalyst to bring about change.”

– Warren Berger, *A More Beautiful Question: The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas*

Warm-up: How curious are you, really?

Circle the statement that best represents your approach in client conversations:

1. I usually focus on answering questions and providing solutions.
2. I ask questions to identify needs and quickly match them to solutions.
3. I ask questions to understand goals, motivations, and what success feels like for the client.
4. I ask questions that sometimes change how clients think about their goals or what’s possible.

Reframe your role: From expert to explorer

Instead of rushing to solve, what if your role was to get deeply curious – not just about what the client wants, but why? The best professionals don’t just react to surface-level needs; they shape deeper conversations that uncover meaning, unlock trust and open better paths forward.

Write your own “beautiful question”

Think of a recent client interaction. Now, reflect on these three levels of inquiry and try to write a “beautiful question” you could have asked instead – one that uncovers the “why” *beneath the ask*.

Tip: A powerful question often starts with “Why,” “What if,” or “How might…” and invites discovery rather than a quick answer.

Level of question	Your beautiful question
WHAT? (Surface level need or situation)	
HOW? (Process, behavior or approach)	
WHY? (Beliefs, motivations, identity)	

Source: A More Beautiful Question: The Power of Inquiry to Spark Breakthrough Ideas, Warren Berger, © 2014

What's your iceberg method?

Go three levels deep

The iceberg method seeks to understand the motivations and beliefs that are underlying a person's stated intent. In an effort to establish long-lasting relationships, one technique we can use is developing a deep understanding of the 'why' beneath a person's need, want or wish. Below, find three common goals shared by many clients. In each column, take time to bring the iceberg method to life. Write questions that will help a client see their goal through a 360-degree lens.

GOOD QUESTION

"How much money do you anticipate needing to achieve this goal?"

BETTER QUESTIONS

"Who will you spend your days with?"
"What will you be doing with your time?"

This exercise is harder than it seems.

Need

"To retire in five years and move to Park City, Utah"

Want

"To pay for my grandkids' education"

Wish

"To set up a charitable foundation"

QUESTION 1

QUESTION 2

QUESTION 3