

MCS 306 - Seven Questions for Successful Coaching Summary

*From **The Coaching Habit: Say Less, Ask More & Change the Way You Lead Forever**
by Michael Bungay Stanier*

Question 1: "What's on your mind?"

Also known as the “Kickstarter” question. This question is a safe way to open a conversation because it invites people to share what is most important to them. Coaching can focus on either identifying and correcting a specific problem or helping someone with their own personal development.

Question 2: "And what else?"

Asking “what else” is the easiest way to extend the conversation, create more insight, and encourage self-awareness. The first answer someone gives you is rarely the whole picture. Also known as a “lazy” question, “and what else” allows you to refrain from offering solutions while giving the other person time to define the issues and possible solutions more clearly.

Question 3: "What's the real challenge here for you?"

This question focuses the conversation, allowing you to spend time solving the real problem rather than those initially uncovered during the first question. It also implies that while there may be more than one problem, the conversation is focused on the one that matters most. The question encourages the person to slow down, think deeply, and identify the real problem. It is better to start questions with “What” rather than “Why.” “Why” might make someone feel defensive. “What” provides more detail to a problem you are trying to fix without drawing attention to a lengthy backstory. “Why did you do that?” could be stated as “What made you choose that course of action?”

Question 4: "What do you want?"

This can often be a tough question to answer. It’s hard to verbalize what you actually want in a way that is clearly understood. “What do you want?” is a direct question that focuses on the outcome of a situation. Once you see where you want to go, getting there is easier.

Question 5: "How can I help?"

Also known as the lazy question. This encourages someone to make a clear request and stops you from jumping in to solve the problem. Giving advice is easy, but it creates a dependent relationship between the coach and the person being coached. Most people don’t need you to solve their problems – they need your continued support as they confront and solve their own challenges.

Question 6: "If you're saying *yes* to this, what are you saying *no* to?"

This is a strategic question that asks someone to be fully committed to what they are agreeing to do. In Scouting, leaders often serve in multiple roles. Over-committing or trying to do too much usually means that the quality of work suffers. Being fully aware of realistic time demands, personal limitations, and current workloads can help prevent misunderstandings.

Question 7: "What was most useful for you?"

This is a learning question designed to encourage self-reflection and insight. Just telling people what to do is not enough. Fixing the problem is only the beginning. Allowing time for reflection reinforces learning and helps people internalize new information. Coaching is about helping others unlock their own potential.