



Power Questions: Build Relationships, Win New Business, and Influence Others

By Andrew Sobel & Jerold Panas

“People will forget what you said to them. They will even forget what you did to them. They will never forget how you made them feel.”

If you are like me, sometimes you struggle to come up with questions that people will respond to with more than a simple “yes” or “no” answer. I want to ask questions that people love to answer, and that can be insightful to discovering new insights from others lives, both for me and for them. These questions are an excellent guide of where to start.

1.What would you like to know about us?

Suggestions for How to Use This Question “What would you like to know about us?” When someone asks us a question, we rarely ask them to clarify exactly what it is they want to know. Have you ever watched someone give a five-minute answer to the wrong question—to a question they thought they heard but which wasn't actually asked? It's painful. Always clarify what the other person is looking for. If someone says, “Tell me about yourself,” you could start with your birth—and talk for hours. Or, you could ask them what part of your background would most interest them, and start there. When to use the question When you are asked a general question that could potentially require a long answer. When time is short and you want to be sure that your very brief answer will be right on target. Alternative versions of the question “What part of my background interests you?” “What aspect of that situation would you like me to focus on?” “Before I answer that—have you had any experience with our organization in the past?” “What if I started by describing a couple of examples of recent work we've done for clients like you?” Follow-up questions “Does that answer your question?” “Is there anything else you'd like me to talk about?”

2.What do you think?

Suggestions for How to Use This Question “What do you think?” “Many a man would rather you heard his story than granted his request,” wrote Philip Stanhope, the Fourth Earl of Chesterfield. Make those around you feel heard by asking the superb question: What do you think? You will open up a floodgate and

become a sponge soaking up information. Then listen. Listen aggressively. Listen attentively. Listen to the silence. Listen with your eyes. Listen! You may not like what you hear when you ask the question. That's the risk you take. Just remember the seeds of progress are rooted in the unhappy person. It's the pebble in the shoe that causes you to take notice.

3.How will this further your mission and goals?

Suggestions for How to Use This Question “How will this further your mission and goals?” Our mission and goals are absolutely at the heart of who we are and who we want to be. This is true at both an institutional and personal level. Yet, we often stray from them. We get engrossed in our day-to-day lives, and we lose sight of the forest for the trees. It happens because it is very human to be drawn into things that fulfill our hunger for achievement, wealth, power, and fame. But these don't often nurture our hearts and souls. When to use the question When you see someone doing things that are inconsistent with their core mission. When someone is making a decision to invest significant time and resources in a new direction. When you suspect the other person has not thought through what their mission and goals really are. Alternative versions of the question “Can you remind me of your mission and goals?” “Is this consistent with your values and beliefs?” Follow-up questions “Why or why not?” “Are there other ideas or initiatives you're considering that would also support your mission—which also merit consideration?”

4.Question assumptions. Use questions to launch those around you and a journey of learning.

Suggestions for Using the Socratic Approach When you adopt the Socrates mindset, you approach almost every conversation differently. Here is a contrast that will help you understand this mindset: Instead of: You: Telling Ask thought-provoking questions Being the expert Invite others to contribute expertise Controlling knowledge Help draw out others' experiences Assuming meaning Ask about the meaning of words Mandating solutions Solicit solutions from others Showing how smart you are Show others how smart they are Analyzing Synthesize and look at the big picture “Remember that there is nothing stable in human affairs; therefore avoid undue elation in prosperity, or undue depression in adversity. ”—Socrates, 469–399 B.C

5.How did you get started?

Suggestions for How to Use This Question “How did you get started?” Of all the questions you might ask, what's best about this one is the joy, passion, and inspiration it brings to both you and the teller. How did you get started provides a

many-splendored array of stories. Each one is precious, full of joy (and, at times, heartbreak along the way). And often some precious laughter. In asking this question, you will find men and women who live life with a playful curiosity. They are willing to risk it all, to roll the dice. They are not afraid to go out on a limb, because they know that's where the fruit is. When you ask, "How did you get started?" you also help recognize the ordinary as extraordinary. Every friend, colleague, or even stranger has a story that is dear to them. How they chose their profession. How they met their spouse. That serendipitous trip to Los Angeles, where they ended up settling down. When these stories are shared, a connection is created. When to use the question Anytime, to invite someone to share how they got started in their career—or in any other part of their lives. Alternative versions of the question Of a couple: "How did you two meet and end up together?" Of an artist or musician: "Who taught you? How did you learn your craft?" Of anyone: "Where did you grow up? And how did you end up in. . .?" Follow-up questions "How did you decide to do that at the time?" "What was the toughest lesson you had to learn?" "If that had fallen through. . .what do you think would have happened?"

6. Why do you do what you do?

Suggestions for How to Use This Question "Why do you do what you do?" We do things for many different reasons. But when you put "should" in front of those reasons, you can be certain all the pleasure and excitement will be soon drained away. You will not find passion associated with the word should. No one gets excited about should. In contrast, when you unveil the true why of someone's work and actions, you will find passion, energy, and excitement. When to use the question When you want to understand what motivates and drives the other person. To help reenergize other people about their vocation. Alternative versions of the question "What are the most exciting parts of your job/of what you do? Why?" "What are you most passionate about in your professional life? Your personal life? Why?" Follow-up questions "Why are you especially passionate about that?" "What gets in the way of your satisfaction?" "What would make it even more rewarding?"

7. What in your life has given you the greatest fulfillment?

"What in your life has given you the greatest fulfillment?" A sense of fulfillment is different from a feeling of accomplishment or happiness. Fulfillment comes from achieving your hopes and dreams. It reflects a state of completeness or wholeness. It's when you have a sense of deep satisfaction. When you ask someone about what fulfills them, it opens the door to exploring something that is invariably very special to that person. It creates a powerful connection, like sharing a relaxed meal or spending an intimate evening together. When to use

the question To build a more personal connection with someone at work or in a professional setting. To get to know any of your friends and family better. Alternative versions of the question “What in your life gives you your greatest sense of satisfaction?” “What is the most fulfilling. . .(relationship, experience, job, etc.) that you've ever had?” “What experience affected you the most in your life?” Follow-up questions: “Say more about that. What was especially fulfilling about it?” “Is there anything else that has also been deeply fulfilling for you?”

8. Is this the best you can do?

“Is this the best you can do?” You should reserve this question for occasions when it is especially desirable for someone to do their very best and push themselves to their strained and stretched limits. Often, we settle for mediocrity when we do need our best. Mediocrity is the enemy of greatness. Like Gresham's law: “Bad money drives out good.” Companies give lousy customer service, yet they wonder why they are losing market share. College students slide by with half-hearted efforts, but want to be offered the plum jobs when they graduate. Apathy is rampant. This question can spur the other person to greater heights and make them focus on what their best really is. When to use the question When you've asked someone at work to complete a task or project for you. When trying to get a child to raise their effort to the next level. Best of all, when you're working on a project, whatever it is—a writing assignment, responding to an RFP, preparing a vision statement for a company, or even working in your garden. Ask yourself, “Is this really the best I can do?” Alternative versions of the question “Is there still room for further improvement?” “In what ways could this be even better?” Follow-up questions “What's stopping you?” “Do you think this would be worth your ‘best’?” “What's the best part of this? What can be improved?”

9. Is it a yes or a no?

“Is it a yes or a no?” When you are trying to pin someone down on an issue, or determine their commitment, there are many ways you can ask the question. There are soft, inquiring approaches like “What would you think of. . .?” Sometimes, you must leave no room to wiggle. A closed-ended question is potent when you want a direct, unvarnished response. Is it a yes or a no? When asked purposely, in an appropriate way, the closed-ended question is a powerful and demanding ally to the asker. When to use the question To find out whether or not someone is fully committed. To draw out any doubts or hesitations. Alternative versions of the question “Can you commit fully to this?” “Are you on board or not?” “Can you make a final decision now?” Follow-up questions “What excites you most about this?” “What are your biggest doubts or reservations?”

10. Engage in discussion about their critical challenges. Ask informed questions about the future. Questions that capture the imagination. Questions about the other person's aspirations, priorities, and reactions to the world around them.

Let me give a few examples that will stimulate your thinking: “Where will your future growth come from?” “How do you think your current strategy is going to change, given. . . (e.g., the success of new competitors, the rise of low-cost imports, deregulation, etc.)” “If you had additional resources, which initiatives would you invest them in?” “Sometimes a ‘breakthrough’ requires a ‘break-with.’ Are there any things you need to deemphasize or stop doing?” “Why have you been successful so far? How will that change in the future?” “Which organizational or operational capabilities do you need to strengthen in order to achieve your goals?” “As you think about the future of your business, what are you most excited about? What are you most concerned about?”

11. What are your dreams?

Suggestions for How to Use This Question “What are your dreams?” This is a deceptively simple yet powerful question that most of us are afraid to ask, perhaps because we think it would be too intrusive. Maybe we are afraid of what the answer will be. Yet, everyone loves to dream, and we all have dreams. It can be a magical moment for others when you invite them to share their dreams with you. When to use the question When you want to connect with and get closer to a loved one or friend. When you want to help someone reconnect to their passion and their aspirations. Alternative versions of the question “What things would you like to do in your life that you haven't gotten around to yet?” “If you had no constraints—children, money, your spouse's job, whatever—what would you like to do?” Follow-up questions “What would be most rewarding about that for you?” “What could make that possible?” “What's getting in the way of doing that?”

12. When the choice is deeply personal, ask: “What do you feel is the right decision for you?” Be quiet. Don't fill in the silence. Allow the other person to find the correct solution.

Suggestions for How to Use This Question “What do you feel is the right decision for you?” Baltasar Gracián, a Spanish Jesuit who lived in the seventeenth century, was a trusted advisor to kings, queens, and wealthy nobles. In his still-popular book, *The Art of Worldly Wisdom*, he wrote: “When you advise a prince, you should appear to be reminding him of something he had forgotten, rather than the light he was unable to see.” Sometimes, your job is to help others go deeply into their hearts and recognize their own decision rather than push them in a particular direction. When to use the question When the choices are

extremely close. (When someone cannot make up their mind about two alternatives, more logical analysis may not help.) When the decision is a very personal one that may also affect loved ones. (You cannot quantify the impact of moving to a new city on a child. Only the heart can understand that). Alternative versions of the question “What does your heart tell you?” “How will this impact your family (spouse, children, loved ones)?” “With each of these choices, what regrets do you think you might have—either way— in two years?” Follow-up questions “What would you say is the deciding factor for you?” “What's your next step from here?”

13.What have you learned?

Suggestions for How to Use This Question “What did you learn?” This may surprise you: We often do not learn from our experiences. This has been demonstrated repeatedly in research studies conducted by social scientists. We attribute our successes to our own capabilities and performance, whereas we pin failures on other people or external circumstances beyond our control. Woody Allen said that if you can't find someone to blame, you're not trying hard enough. The U.S. military is one of the few organizations that systematically tries to learn from experience. The “after-action review” is a staple of all military operations, including training exercises. Commanders are brutally honest. Remember to ask not just “What did you learn?” but also “What did you learn about. . .?” Perhaps there is a lesson about motivating people, trust, or organizational politics. When to use the question Any time someone is sharing an experience or event with you. After any meeting, interview, or visit. When you are mentoring or coaching someone. Alternative versions of the question “What's the most memorable thing you took away from that experience?” “What did you learn about. . .?” (people, trust, human nature, motivation, planning, etc.). Follow-up questions “Do you think that's always true, or is this situation particular?” “Can you say more about that?”

14.Can you tell me more?

“Can you tell me more? A woman has dinner, within one month, with two great rival British statesmen of the nineteenth century, Gladstone and Disraeli. Both have been Prime Minister of the country. When asked to compare the two men, she says, “After my dinner with Mr. Gladstone, I thought he was the cleverest man in all of England.” When her friends ask about her second evening out, she replies, “After my dinner with Mr. Disraeli, I felt as though I were the cleverest woman in all of England!” When you make the conversation all about you, others may think you are clever. But you will not build their trust. You will not learn about them. You will squander an opportunity to build the foundations for a rich, long-term relationship. When to use the question Often and everywhere. As a general

prompt to encourage someone to go deeper and say more. Alternative versions of the question “Can you say more about that?” “What do you mean by. . .?” (ask them to define their terms more carefully) Follow-up questions “When. . .?” “What. . .?” “How. . .?” “Why. . .?”

15.To get someone to reflect on their job (or their life), ask: “What parts of your job do you wish you could spend more time on, and what things do you wish you could do less of?”

“What parts of your job do you wish you could spend more time on, and what things do you wish you could do less of?” Many factors influence how we spend our time: Historic accident, other peoples’ demands, and our tendency to follow the path of least resistance. By stepping back, we can often finally see the forest and not just the trees. This question is a wonderful way to get people talking about their job—whether it’s running a company or running a household. You’ll lead them down a path of reflection that may result in joyous and transformative changes. When to use the question To invite another person to talk about their position and their role in an organization. In particular, around the time of someone’s anniversary in a job—one year, three years, and so on. To explore a friend, colleague, or family member’s life and help them understand how they might refocus their time. Alternative versions of the question “Which are the most enjoyable parts of your job, and which parts do you find least enjoyable?” “If you had an extra couple of hours in each week, how would you spend them?” “What do you wish you could devote more time to?” Follow-up questions “What’s getting in the way of making that change?” “I know it’s difficult to drop or spend less time on some of those things you mentioned. . .but what might possibly enable you to do that?”

16.If you had to write your obituary today, what would you like it to say about you and your life?

“If you had to write your obituary today, what would you like it to say about you and your life?” Obituaries are normally for those who stay behind. They help the family and friends of those who have departed celebrate their lives. An obituary can become something important to the living in another way. Envisioning it ahead of time can help shape your life. It can bring what’s most important to you—and what you truly enjoy—into sharp focus. Writing your obituary now will highlight the choices you are making and can make. When to use this question When coaching or mentoring someone. When a young person is making important career and life choices. Alternative versions of the question “Looking ahead in your life, what do you think will give you the greatest sense of achievement? The most personal fulfillment?” “What are some things you haven’t done but which you would like to do before you die?” Follow-up questions “Why

did you put those particular things in your obituary?” “What could get in the way of accomplishing that?”

17. How do you see me as a leader?

“How do you see me as a leader?” (. . . or, as a colleague, friend, parent?) We take for granted that the people who work for us or with us understand and respect what we stand for—that they appreciate our values and approach to work. The same goes in our personal lives, with regard to our family members and friends. But do they know who we really are? How do we know? You can create a truly intimate and inspired conversation by asking this question. You may learn something unexpected. When to use the question Any time you want to know how others perceive your leadership. To discover if those closest to you—family, friends, colleagues—understand who you are and what you stand for. To shake people up who are on the fence about your intentions. Alternative versions of the question “What do you think I stand for?” “If you were to summarize the principles or values I exemplify, what would some of them be?” Follow-up questions “What have I done that has really reinforced that?” “What else could I do to better communicate and be a role model for these things?” “Why do you think that?”

18. What has been the happiest day of your life?

“What has been the happiest day of your life?” This question can illuminate a darkened room and brighten someone's black mood. The other person may not even be able to answer it—or provide a single answer. That's okay! You will set their mind in motion, flipping through the most pungent memories in their life. Whether the answer is a revelation or just thoughtful silence, this question always has a positive if not thrilling impact. When to use the question Any time you want to deepen your understanding of the other person and build a stronger relationship with them. To understand the important events that have shaped someone's character. Alternative versions of the question “What was the greatest day of your life?” “What event in your life has brought you the greatest joy?” Follow-up questions “Why was that so special for you?” “Are there any other days or events that stand out for you?”

19. Can you tell me about your plans?

“Can you tell me about your plans?” To be a great listener, follow these three principles: Humility. The Indian spiritual leader Mahatma Gandhi said, “To discover the truth, one must become as humble as the dust.” You must believe you can learn from every person you encounter. Curiosity. As we grow older, our curiosity dies. The average five-year-old asks 200 questions a day. How many do

you ask? Approach every situation with an intense sense of curiosity, and you will listen more. Self-awareness. Your biases and prejudices will prevent you from listening to others. Women often make the decision about which new car to buy—yet, in a typical car dealership, the salespeople pay far more attention to the husband. Know yourself! When to use the question Before you tell someone what you think their plans should be. When you need to understand the other person's intentions and priorities. Alternate versions of the question “How do you plan to approach this?” “What is your strategy?” “What are your ideas for where you want to go in the future? Follow-up questions “What process did you use to arrive at that? “What things have you decided not to do?”

19.If the circumstances were turned around, how would you like to be treated?

“If the circumstances were turned around, how would you like to be treated?” Everyone loves the adage, “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” It's warm and fuzzy. It makes perfect sense. But it's easier to agree intellectually with the sentiment than to live it. Living it is very tough. Sacrificial forgiveness is espoused by many of the world's major religions. In the New Testament Gospel of Matthew, Peter asks Jesus “How many times shall I forgive my brother or my sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” and Jesus replies, “I tell you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.” Of course, forgiving someone and giving them a second chance can be two different things— you may be able to do the former but not the latter. In any event you will push the other person to look at every possible solution by asking this question. When to use the question When someone asks you for counsel about a difficult situation involving another person, or about a perplexing dilemma. Alternative versions of the question When someone has done something wrong, or that is hurtful toward you, you can reverse the roles in yet another way. Ask, “If you were me, what would you do?” This may make the other person accept your decision more willingly. Follow-up questions “Why do you feel that would be right?”

20.What do you wish they would do more of?

What do you wish they would do more of?” They have to change! That's a common criticism. And criticism is contagious. If you can get the other person to be specific about the behaviors they wish to see, however, you'll achieve a powerful redirection of the conversation. You'll move from complaints and cynicism to productive dialogue about how to move forward. You will help sharpen the other person's understanding of the problem. Don't fix the blame, fix the problem. When to use the question Whenever someone at work complains. When an individual is singled out and criticized. Alternative versions of the question “If you could get your people to do just one thing differently—one action

that would have a big impact on performance—what would it be?” “In what ways do you wish they would change?” Follow up questions “Why do you think they aren't doing those things?” “Are they not doing the right things because they lack knowledge and skills, because the organization gets in their way, or because they don't have the natural ability?”

21. Why do you want to do that?

“Why do you want to do that?” “Why?” can be a terrible question if used at the wrong time and for the wrong issue. It can communicate underlying disapproval. It can sound critical, carping, and nagging. It can make the other person feel bad about themselves. “Why?” can also be a powerful question. It can make others think more deeply about what they are doing, and help them get to the heart of the issue. “Why?” can make us stop, reflect, and examine our actions instead of just mechanically going about our lives. Use careful judgment in asking “Why?” but ask it often. When to use the question When you genuinely want to understand someone's motivations. When the other person wants something but you're not sure they really need it. When you are trying to understand what are the root causes of a problem. Alternative versions of the question “What result are you expecting from that?” “How did you decide to take that approach?” “Why do you think you should start there?” Follow-up questions “Why is that?” “Why do you think that's happening?” “How do you know that?”

22. What is the greatest achievement in your life?

“What is the greatest achievement in your life?” This question has many levels to it. It contains the potential to create deep, multi-layered conversations. It raises additional questions: Is it possible to define a single greatest achievement? Do we mean professional achievement or in any sphere, such as personal and family life? How do we define achievement, after all? It is a powerful question that provokes deep thought and dialogue. Even if the other person has difficulty citing a single experience, you will learn a great deal about them. (And by the way, be prepared to answer this question yourself, as it may get quickly turned around on you!) When to use the question When you want to deepen your relationship with someone and learn more about what is important to them. Alternative versions of the question “What is your most personally gratifying achievement?” “What is the one achievement you are proudest of?” “In thinking about all of your achievements, which one do you think other people will most remember, and why?” Follow-up questions “Say more about that. Why did you choose that particular one?”

23. Before you begin each meeting, ask, “What decisions do we need to make today?” After every meeting, ask: “What have we decided today?”

“What have we decided today?” In many organizations, procrastination rules. (“I would do something about my procrastination—but I can't get around to it!”) People are afraid to make decisions. They are concerned about upsetting powerful, established interests. It's easier to play it safe than make a decision for which you may ultimately be accountable. Creating a list of benign action steps, which don't really take you anywhere important, is easy and low risk. When you make decisions together, it binds the group with a public affirmation. The result is firm commitment to follow through on agreed action steps. When to use the question After any meeting. After discussing an important issue with a family member or friend. (“So, have we decided anything?” or, “What have you decided to do?”) Alternative versions of the question When someone comes to you with a problem or issue: “Is there a decision that I need to make or that I can help you make?” At the start of a meeting: “What is the purpose of this meeting?” or, “What decisions do we want to make today?” Follow-up questions “What is needed in order for a decision to be made on this?” “Do we all agree about that?”

24. What is your question? (ramblers)

“What's your question?” This is a tough love question. People will resist it—often strenuously. But you must ask it. When someone asks for advice or wants to “bounce something off you,” you can help them immeasurably by asking this question. It forces them to crystallize their thinking. It makes them take the first step toward clarifying what the issue is and what advice they really need from you. By asking this question, you'll also help reduce the amount of posturing that people do with you. You'll move faster toward an authentic conversation. When to use the question Whenever someone says they have a question for you but then doesn't get around to asking it. When you're asked for advice, but the problem statement is so general that you really don't know what you're being asked for advice about. Alternative versions of the question “There must be a question in there somewhere. . . what is it?” “What would you like me to give you advice about?” “You've mentioned several issues. What's the most important one you are struggling with?” Follow-up questions “What have you tried?” “What do you think your options are?” “What's the thing you are you most concerned about?”

25. What made this day more special than any other?

“What made this day more special than any other?” This is an extraordinary question to ask over dinner, when entertaining friends at a cocktail hour, or with the family at the close of the day. The responses are almost always positive. People stretch to think of all the good things that have transpired. What makes this reaction special is that when joy overflows their cup, it tends to spill over onto

everyone else. Should the day's tidings be negative—and this doesn't happen often—just be aware that there are no rainbows without a cloud or a storm. Tomorrow will be a better day. In either case, the question leads to revealing discourse. When to use the question At the end of any day, when you are talking to just about anyone! When someone has come back from a trip, adventure, or outing. Alternative versions of the question “Would you tell me about your day?” “What happened today that made you smile? Did anything make you frown?” Follow-up questions “Why was that particularly special for you?”

26. Is there something else you'd like to accomplish?

“Is there something else you'd like to accomplish?” Almost everyone has an unfulfilled aspiration or dream, no matter where they are in their career or their life. Rarely, however, do others invite them to share it. Anyone can carry on a conversation about plans, reports, and recommendations. Go deeper and create a sublime moment by asking this question. When to use the question When you've already had the chance to meet the other person a few times, and want to start to deepen the relationship. At any stage of someone's career. With a leader who will be stepping down in the next few years. Alternative versions of the question “Is there a dream you've yet to fulfill?” “Do you have something in mind for your next act?” “After this, is there a particular challenge that excites you?” “What are your most important aspirations for your career?” Follow-up questions “What will the timing of that be?” “Do you think that will stretch you in a different way?” “If you do go in that direction, what's the next step you'll take?”

27.5 questions to Help people make a plan:

1. What is your mission?
2. Which are the most important relationships you want to invest in?
3. What are the essential priorities and goals of those closest to you?
4. What are your expectations of the people around you, and what do they expect of you?
5. What is your plan?

28. What's the most important thing we should be discussing today?

“What's the most important thing we should be discussing today?” If what you are talking about does not align with the other person's most urgent priorities, they are going to wish they were elsewhere. You will dramatically increase your relevance and influence if you spend more of your conversations focused on what is most important to the other person. When to use the question Here are some occasions when you may need to refocus the discussion: In update meetings with a client or your boss. When making a sales pitch. With your spouse or significant other. Alternative versions of the question “What would you

like to talk about today?" "What's on your mind?" "We've got 20 minutes left . . . is there anything we haven't covered that we ought to discuss today?" "What aren't we talking about that we should be addressing?" Follow-up questions "Can you say more about that?" "What's behind that?" "Why is this important to you now?"

29.If you knew you had only three years to live, what would you hope to achieve personally and professionally?

"If you knew you had only three years to live, what would you hope to achieve personally and professionally?" Carpe diem has now become a cliché. Latin scholars say it may be translated as "seize the moment." Cliché or not, it is a command that must drive and propel us. It tells us to embrace the whole of life. It is the hymn we sing. It encourages us to besiege the opportunity. To wage war on it. You must engage the day, ravish the moment. Wrest and wring from life all that is good and all it will yield. Your objective should be to die young—as late as possible. That is why this is such a powerful question. If you knew you only had three years to live, how would you spend the time? You will uncover unexplored, unexpected responses no other question elicits. Carpe diem. That says it all. When to use the question With your friends, family, business colleagues, and just about anyone you know. To shake up other peoples' thinking and pull them out of the day-to-day minutia of their lives. Alternative versions of the question "What are the most important things in your life? Are you spending enough time on them?" Follow up questions "What's stopping you from doing this—now?"