

10 Great Questions to Ask Your Prospect, Coworker or Spouse

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The Magic Words to Make Their Hearts Melt

Why questions count

We're all looking for the magic bullet, the secret words that will make our spouse melt, our coworker cooperate and our customer giggle with glee as they sign on the dotted line.

After spending twenty years as a sales coach, studying the best of the best, and a decade helping people with their personal relationships, I've discovered that in most situations, the secret

statement is rarely a statement. It's a question.

Nothing is more exciting or affirming than someone who is sincerely interested in us, and the best way to demonstrate interest is by asking questions.

It's ironic. On an emotional level, we all know how wonderful it feels to have someone take a sincere interest in us. We immediately engage, we feel comfortable and we share more information.

But for whatever reason, when we try to get someone interested in us, or try to persuade someone to go along with our plans, we usually take the opposite approach. We wind up talking more about ourselves than we do asking about them.

I've observed thousands of sales people and hundreds of interpersonal interactions, and I can tell you beyond a shadow of a doubt: The people who are the most well-liked, and who are the

Four Reasons Most People Don't Ask Enough Questions

1. LACK OF PLANNING

We plan what we're going to say, but we rarely plan what we want to ask. If questions don't come naturally to you, take two minutes to write down two good questions before important interactions.

2. OVERWHELMING AGENDAS

Some days, it's all we can do to struggle through our own to-do list. However, asking about others usually helps you gain insight and advice for your own life. Next time you're stressed, ask someone else how they're doing.

3. LACK OF EXPERTISE

It's hard to ask questions if you don't know much about the subject matter. If you don't know where to start, sometimes a simple, "Can you tell me more about that?" is all you need to get someone engaged.

4. FEAR

We're sometimes reluctant to ask someone to elaborate on their agenda because we're afraid that ours will be forgotten. In reality, getting their agenda on the table increases our power; it doesn't diminish it. So take a big gulp and ask a question; it won't kill you.

"Just because it's intentional doesn't mean it's insincere."

-- Keith Ferrazzi, author of
Who's Got Your Back



Asking good questions can be hard work, but the results are worth it.

most successful at getting others to go along with their ideas, are the people who ask the best questions.

Intentional Interest

We're all familiar with "How are you?" that don't mean a thing. And anyone who's ever kicked a tire at a car dealership knows that "Don't you think you'd look great driving this?" isn't really a question; it's just a feeble attempt to close.

However, good questions, the kind that truly connect us with others, are sincere, and they're also well-planned. They zero in on the other person's environment, goals and challenges.

Tone, Body Language

Like every other human interaction, when it comes to questions, tone and body language are everything. For example, "Where were you last night?" can be asked with accusation, interest, concern, or even boredom.

If you truly want to connect, identify the person you want to become closer to, get your heart in the right place, think of a few things that might be important to them, and try one of these questions:

1. What do you enjoy most about (insert important activity)?

Asking someone to describe the best part of their job, or parenting or a hobby or even just their day sets a positive tone and opens a window into their emotions.



2. What's the most challenging part of (something they spend a lot of time on)?

This demonstrates that you're genuinely interested in what it's like to live in their world.

3. If you could change anything about (pressing situation), what would it be?

This helps you understand their goals and frustrations. Warning: ask this in a non-manipulative way. You're not fishing; you're interested.

4. How is this (change, event or situation) affecting you?

Our tendency is to ask, "What do you think about this?" But if you ask how something is affecting a

3 Secrets of Asking Great Questions

Tone

People can hear the meaning behind your words, so you want to get your heart in the right space before you ask a question. Ask with an open heart and an open mind, and you'll get a more robust, sincere response.

Intent

How you feel affects the way you ask, so you want to be sure your intent is true curiosity. You're not trying to prove the person wrong, or judge them, or qualify them as a prospect. You're sincerely trying to understand their truths.

Body Language

Make eye contact, turn towards the person, and hold your arms in an open way when you ask questions. Lean forward with eager eyes, a nodding head and a big smile when they answer.

Engaging Your Spouse, Coworker or Prospect

person, you get a much deeper, more meaningful response.

5. When you look at X (challenge) and Y (other challenge), how do you prioritize?

This prompts inner reflection, which in turn gives you clues about the person's thought process and what's really important to them.

6. How do YOU feel about this?



Men may roll their eyes at this one, but it works because it says that you care more about the person than whatever idea you're discussing.

7. What do you think is causing (situation that's on their mind)?

This prompts them to think about root causes which will in turn create a more robust, meaningful dialogue about whatever it is.

8. How can I best support you on (big project, goal or activity)?

This enables them to define what they really want, and it tees you up for the win of providing specific, requested help.

9. What is your deepest fear about (something important to them)?

This allows them to share an area of vulnerability, which contrary to popular belief, most people actually like to do, as long as the listener makes it safe.

10. What are your highest hopes for the future?

Whether the conversation is about their job, their church or their child, when someone shares their hopes with you, they're opening up a piece of their heart. They're telling you what really matters to them.

Your job as the listener is to treasure the information.

4 Situations Where Your Questions Make or Break You

First Dates

Nothing is as seductive as someone who finds you fascinating. Skip the "Let me tell you more about me" monologue and plan some creative questions to help you get to know who they are.



347th Dates

Couple conversation often becomes "report talk" after you've been together for a while.

Instead of updating your spouse with the facts of your life, ask them how they feel about theirs.



Sales Calls

Don't ask, "What do you all do here?" Instead, do your homework,

find out their biggest challenges and ask intelligent, well-planned questions about something relevant to their business.

Social Events

Instead of trying to be interesting, be interested. Make a point to find out three new things about each person you meet. People never forget someone who made them feel special.

"You have to REFLECT on your own thinking
before you can CONNECT with someone.
You have to CONNECT with someone
before you earn the right to LEAD."

-Lisa Earle McLeod



Listening with Love: Hearing their Truth

Nothing demonstrates love more than listening. It doesn't matter whether it's your customer, your spouse, your boss, or your child, people can tell when they have your rapt attention, and they respond in kind. We all have our own truths, and when you take the time to really listen to another person's truth, you connect with them in an authentic way.

A funny thing happens when you become a better listener: people start becoming better talkers. The more fully you pay attention to what they're saying, the more fully they pay attention to what they're saying.

So turn up the volume on your ears and learn to listen with love.

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We elevate thinking

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