

THE POWER OF QUESTIONS

“JUDGE A MAN BY HIS QUESTIONS, NOT BY HIS ANSWERS”

- *Voltaire*

As I was reading the book [Why The Mighty Fall by Jim Collins](#), he explained that he was asked to give a speech in 2008 at West Point to a group of “great students.”

Thinking he was going to speak to cadets, he was told that he’d speak in front of 12 US army generals, 12 CEOs, and 12 social sector leaders.

The topic? America.

Nervous and unsure of how he should even approach this situation, he remembered what his mentor told him in the past.

“Don’t try to come up with the right answer, come up with good questions.”

See, questions create meaning, shifts one’s focus, create powerful states of mind, and generate new beliefs and understanding.

Asking Questions to Build Business Relationships...

When I first started in the training business, one of my biggest mistakes was that I constantly tried to find the answer for my clients (instead of asking compelling questions). A few years ago while performing an assessment on a client, I remembered one of Dale Carnegie's rules. ***Be a good listener and encourage others to speak about themselves.*** The more they spoke about themselves the more I learned about their behaviors, motivational sources, the approach towards their day, and their beliefs. I believe one of the most powerful tools in my assessment process is the power of questions. Most importantly, questions that pertain to behavior. The answers I receive, define how I work with my clients. If you just listen, you come to understand their perception of their body and the world.

Asking Questions to Improve Performance in Sports

Imagine a coach sitting in front of a team at the end of the game after a depressing loss. What would be the best way to reach out to them? Do you think that grilling them and telling them everything they did wrong would get them motivated? Or do you think that asking questions, not just any questions, but meaningful questions would inspire reflection, help them self-assess their performance and ultimately build their capacity to adapt and problem solve in the face of changing external circumstances?

This is exactly what coach John Schiffner of the Chatham Anglers did while I was a strength coach in the Cape Cod league. He would always ask the guys, "Why are you here? Did you do your best? Did they really deserved to win, if so, why? How did you represent your name tonight?"

I would always look around and see everyone thinking about the answers to his powerful questions.

Asking Questions for Personal Growth...

More often than not, we don't need to be told what to do. We need a new way of thinking about the problem at hand. If we are asked the right questions, we can replace pain with pleasure in an instant.

With the younger athletic and non-athletic population, I believe critical thinking is on a major decline due to technology and the way we communicate. Kids and young teens are always told what to do rather than being given the chance to problem solve.

“You’re either leaving a problem, in a problem or entering a problem.”

Les Brown

The following questions are great visualization techniques.

Understand where they’re coming from. Get in their world.

- What’s holding you back? What’s happening?
- Why do you allow this emotion, thought, or feeling to describe who you are?

Segway into next set of questions, ” So Let me ask you something...”

Bring them back to their goal, change the emotional pattern they’re in.

- Does this current state allow you to achieve this goal?
- What do you really want? *(What do they desire)*
When they answer this, feed off this answer by asking one or more of the questions below:

The following questions I ask myself and my athletes in times of uncertainty. Create assumptions by showing the athlete that change needs to occur.

- If you don’t change this issue, what could this mean for you?
- What could you be missing out on?
- If you do change this issue, what could this mean for you?

- What would change?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yr7Wkz7W7Vs>

I've learned to ask the following questions to myself and athletes when there needs to be a mood shift. This one is usually done with their eyes closed. The goal is to make them visualize success and greatness.

- Do you remember a certain time when you felt... (this is a time when they felt powerful, unstoppable, important, a leadership role)
- What kind of posture did you have, how were you standing?
- How were you breathing?
- What did you see, focus on?
- What was the outcome?

I would then tell them to save this state of mind and set of emotions and bring them into competition.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrJlkcZ5log>

The moral of the story, ask good questions to create world-class results.

Until Next Time,

Joe Giangrasso!