

Clean Language

A language pattern to enable deeper conversations



More information on this session and others from Mike Bowler.

Developing Questions

- *and what kind of X (is that X)?*
- *and is there anything else about X?*
- *and where is X? or (And) whereabouts is X?*
- *and is there a relationship between X and Y?*
- *and when X, what happens to Y?*
- *and what's X like what?*

Sequence and Source

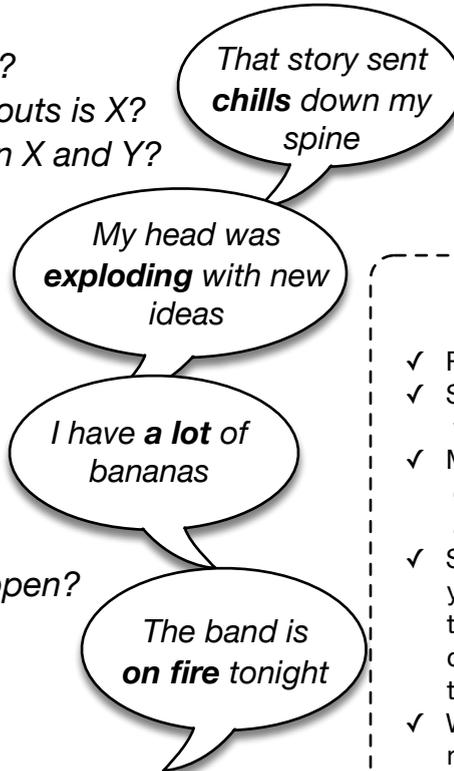
- *and then what happens?*
- *and what happens just before X?*
- *and where could X come from?*

Intention Questions

- *and what would X like to have happen?*
- *and what needs to happen for X?*
- *and can X (happen)?*

Power Switch

- *and when X, what would you like to have happen?*



Tips

- ✓ Repeat back the clients words.
- ✓ Speak slowly and calmly - rushing will break rapport
- ✓ Match the clients intonation and gestures where possible without appearing to mimic them
- ✓ Stick to the first two questions until you're feeling really comfortable with them. You can have a whole coaching conversation with just those two.
- ✓ When you don't know what to ask next, try "And what else do you know about that?" or "Tell me more."

Overview

Clean language questions are specifically designed to avoid introducing new metaphors into the conversation.

Our brains process an incredible amount of information through the use of metaphor (comparing one thing against another). When you listen carefully to the words we use, you will begin to notice how often metaphor is used in conversation.

"I was **struggling** with this problem until **the lightbulb came on**." There are two metaphors in here: we weren't really physically struggling and there was no actual lightbulb.

Sometimes the metaphors are blatant such as "My head was **exploding with new ideas**" and sometimes they're very subtle such as "I have **a lot** of strawberries". What you'll begin to notice however, is that they're everywhere.

Instructions

In each case, replace **X** and **Y** with the clients own metaphor. So if they had said "I'm **struggling** to understand" then we might reply with "What kind of **struggling**?" or "What kind of **struggling** is that **struggling**?"

For questions that have both an **X** and a **Y**, these are different metaphors that we are somehow comparing or contrasting. They might have been used in the same statement as shown in the first example, or they might have been from completely different parts of the conversation. The point is that the client has used both of these metaphors and that we are asking about the relationship between them.

Note that **X** doesn't have to be a metaphor, although it's more powerful when it is. It can also be used with verbs or even nouns.