

Sample Open Questions for Coaching Conversations

Questions that build relationship

Clarifying intent, checking for understanding

- What is your interest?
- What do you hope to accomplish?
- What is your challenge?
- What have done since last meeting?
- Who have you consulted?
- How did you decide what to do?
- What example can you share?
- When you say..... what exactly do you mean?
- Who else is involved?

Stating the issue and clarifying its context

- What is going on for you?
- How do you feel about that?
- How could you be more specific?
- What are your suspicions?
- What are your objections?
- What else can you tell me about that?
- What are your assumptions?
- What signs were present?
- How do you account for that?
- What does that mean to you?
- How was that significant?
- What struck you about that?
- What does that suggest to you?
- What does that suggest to you about....?
- What does that help explain for you?

Identifying criteria for the decision/way forward

- What would be an acceptable answer for that?
- Where do you want to be?
- What are you trying to do?

What level of risk is acceptable?
What results do you hope to achieve?
What would success look like?
What would you prefer?
What is the best/worst that could happen?
What's missing?
How might it have been better/different?
In what way is this important to you?
Who else thinks it's important?

Probing and challenging assumptions

In what way is that a problem?
How do others see the issue?
Would you elaborate on that point?
Are there other interpretations for this event?
How do you want things to be different?
What are you committed to?
In what way will that help?
What did you learn from that experience?
What did you learn in similar situations before this?
What is holding you back?
What is at the back of your mind?

Exploring feelings, attitudes, beliefs

How do you feel about...?
How comfortable are you talking about this?
What is making you anxious/nervous/excited/encouraged?
How do you feel this situation came about?
How are you changing?
What are you telling yourself?
What do you feel when you speak about...?

Questions that create possibility

Identifying possibilities, stimulating new ideas

How do you think that X needs to change?
Who else might you talk to?

How will you go about it?
What are your thoughts on?
What's stopping you from....?
What would happen if...?
What is the worst-case scenario?
How would you handle that next time?
What other options do you have?
What assumptions are you making?
How could X be of help?
What other perspectives are there?

Exploring and assessing the options

What could you do differently?
How might you apply that?
What would you like to do with that?
What could you do to hold on to that?
What are the options?
What makes you think this option is not possible?
Who could be affected by the decision?
What is the impact on stakeholders?
What did you learn from this previous experience?
How does this compare with what you've done before?
What course of action makes sense?
What might you do to help apply that?
How could you make it better?
What would be the consequences of taking no action?
What information do you need to make a decision?
What are the risks of each alternative?
How can these risks be addressed?
What are the costs and benefits of this option?

Questions for action

What strategies are needed to make this happen?
What actions will have the most immediate impact?
What support do you have for this change?
Who are your allies?
Who needs to be involved to make this happen?

Who is accountable for the results?
How will you ensure people understand your purpose/plan?
How does this connect to other issues or priorities for the organization?
Who can give you an objective perspective on this
What requests do you need to make?
What commitments do you need to make for this to work?
How will you communicate this?
How is it going for you?
What's working/not working?
What are the remaining constraints?
What changes would you make?
What has been the impact so far?
What has changed? How can you tell?
What would you do if you had to face this again?
What did you learn?