10 Powerful Coaching Questions to Use with Protégés

1 - “What do you want?”

This question will shift the Protégé from what they don’t want into the positive of what they DO want. They may have always reacted to circumstances or demands placed on them, rather than taking responsibility for creating their own experiences. If they are struggling with articulating what they want, try some alternative ways of asking this question:

“What would you like more of?” or “What do you want in your practice?”

2 - “What’s important to you about this?”

When you ask this question, the Protégé must consider what they value. This question helps prioritize their requirements and aids in decision-making.

3 - “How will you know when you’ve got what you want?”

This question will help the Protégé transform lofty strategic directions into tangible goals with measurable outcomes. Challenge the Protégé to identify specific evidence that will help them recognize when they’ve arrived, instead of living in a world of vague future possibilities.

4 - “What is getting in the way for you?”

This question pinpoints the interference factors that need to change in order to turn a situation around. Often the answer to this question involves a combination of making changes in both the environment and one’s personal approach.

5 - “What resources do you have that can support you?”

When a Protégé is struggling to find an answer or solution, they often look for someone else to tell them what to do. It’s important to remind the Protégé that they have all the resources and the instincts they need to achieve their desired outcome.

6 - “When you accomplish your goal and look back on your success, what will you experience?”

This question acts as a test of whether Protégés have chosen goals that they truly want to pursue. Sometimes a Protégé may come to the realization that the goal doesn’t justify all the foreseeable challenges.
The wording of this question assumes positive results: success, accomplishment and knowledge. Help Protégés explore the future experience in sensory detail by asking the following:

“What will it look like when you accomplish your goal?” and “What will it feel like when you accomplish your goal?”

7 - “What’s the question you don’t want to ask yourself right now?”

This question is valuable when the Protégé isn’t sure how to move forward. It gets beneath the surface and gives Protégé permission to articulate something that hasn’t been said before that may be troubling them.

8 - “What’s the way to make this really easy?”

With this question, you make the positive assumption that solving a situation or achieving the end result can be easy. Sometimes people create complexity and forget to look for an easier way. Asking this question invites the Protégés to come up with strategies that increase focus and fun.

9 - “What’s the first step?”

Coaching (and mentoring) sessions should conclude with an action of some kind. Taking the first step is often the most difficult one because after you take it, you’re committed to move and take another step. You can’t go back. The first step honors the challenge of change and ownership of responsibility. The first step moves Protégé from the present state to the desired state. There’s no correct or best first step, simply something that clearly shifts the Protégé into action toward the goal rather than perpetuating procrastination.

10 - “What else?”

This simple question is amazingly powerful. It allows space to think beyond the immediate issues, giving Protégé permission to raise another issue that wasn’t on the agenda.