

ICF-NJ Powerful Questioning Case Study (Jackie) collated questions

Thank you to all of you for responding with your questions. What a fantastic list to learn from! I have participated as well – I wouldn't want to miss out on the fun of crafting questions!

The quality of your questions is a huge part of what makes a powerful coaching session for a client, and it starts with noticing what you are present to (Coaching Presence). The depth and quality of our questions, especially open-ended discovery structured questions, is a hallmark of what differentiates coaching from other professions.

The purpose of this exercise was to stretch your creative muscle, and to craft questions you might otherwise not think of. It is not meant to be a training in powerful questioning, but an awareness building and expansion exercise.

We'll be debriefing learning from this exercise on Session 5 (June 12). Consider the following:

Which questions did you like, and why?

Which questions might you never have thought of?

Which questions might you never feel comfortable to ask?

For additional awareness and learning, review the Powerful Questioning PCC Markers and consider which marker a question might be evidence for.

I gave each of you individual comments on your questions. This document collates all questions received, anonymously, by person. I have left my comments below in blue, so others can learn. **Oh, at the very end, you'll find my list of 57 questions I crafted from this case study. I'm sure I could come up with another 57 questions if I wanted to as well 😊**

Case Study - Jackie

What questions are you curious to ask Jackie, based on this information:

Hi I'm Jackie. I've owned my beautiful art gallery for 10 years. My husband John is a manager for a telecommunications company. Yesterday, he came home feeling shaken and upset, with the news that he no longer has a job and that 80 other people were also told they no longer have a job. John felt blindsided and had no idea this was coming. I'm also in shock about this unexpected occurrence.

We have 2 children in high school and the oldest will soon be entering college/university. We have a lot of expenses with all the sporting and musical activities our kids have, as well as putting money away for college tuition.

My art gallery has been barely profitable for many years. While I absolutely love art, I now wonder if I should put my creative talent to use somehow else. Given John just turned 55 years old, he still has some years before he retires. I don't know how long it will take him to find a new company and position. However, he's also talking about finding something that is more fulfilling to him for the next 10-15 years before he retires. That scares me as I don't know what he's thinking about or how long it might take for him to find employment.

I want to make sure I'm providing for our family as well as supporting John as he goes through this transition as he's supported me with my art gallery for a decade, when it hasn't made a lot of income for us.

I do have a belief that everything will work out in the end, however the reality of our situation has hit me hard. I feel in a bit of a tailspin trying to figure out the best options for my family. That's why I've hired you as my coach; to help me work out how I navigate through this.

Person A

These are customized using the information provided about Jackie:

What do you need to feel settled as you navigate through this transition?

What do you think you need to ask your husband right now?

What excited you to create your art gallery?

What creative talent did you use in creating your art gallery?

What would it feel like if your beautiful art gallery generated income for your family whereby eliminating any and all financial pressures?

What new frame of mind would you need to have to achieve this? *This is a good question, yet not fully using client language. Instead of 'frame of mind' perhaps 'belief,' "What belief would you need to have to achieve this?"*

This is a great question, yet a more general question, not fully customized by information about the client:

What resources can you imagine that you need or new tactics would you need to employ?

Example of customized might be, "Using your creative talent, what resources can you imagine you'd need to employ?" or "Using your creative talent, what tactics would you need to employ to take you out of a tailspin?"

Person B

These are customized using the information provided about Jackie:

What does “working out in the end” look like to you?

What would make this less scary?

How do you need to partner with your husband around this?

While great questions, these are more general, not fully customized by what client said:

What would give you peace of mind? Customized example might be, “What belief might you need in order to move from feeling scared to having peace of mind?”

What possibilities are opening up now?

What would be fulfilling?

What would bring you joy?

What would a great future look like to you? A more customized example: “If you were beyond feeling in a tailspin, what might a great future look like to you?”

What talents and passions can you draw upon to help you “create” that future? A more customized example, “What creative talents can you draw on to help you create the future you desire?”

Person C

These are customized using the information provided about Jackie:

If you could paint your ideal scenario of what happens in the next couple of years with everyone in your family, what would it be?

How can you use your belief that ‘everything will work out in the end’ to help you steer what happens next?

What options are you excited to consider?

While great questions, these are not fully customized by what client said.

Where is your heart at? Client doesn’t mention heart.

I hear you talk about your beautiful gallery and your love of art and then questioning whether to put your creative talents somewhere else. What will answer that question for you? The intent is good yet seems like a lot of information rolled into one, therefore a bit complex to respond to. Simplify. Perhaps some individual questions might be, “What question might you be seeking to answer for yourself about your beautiful art gallery?” “How would you engage your creative talents to answer the question you have about navigating this situation?”

What do you believe would make you fierce versus scared right now? While a good intuitive question, it’s assumptive by the coach. Allow the client to determine their belief ‘state’ for example, “If you weren’t feeling scared right now, what would you be feeling instead?” Perhaps

'fierce' is a great thing to offer as a sensing, which is a different coaching skill than this questions exercise is asking. But do love the question intent!

What support would you like to give John that may bring him peace? A shift in focus to what the client feels is more empowering, as we aren't coaching John, only Jackie. Alternative example: What support would you like to give John that may bring you peace?

What would bring YOU peace? A good intuitive question. Yet the client doesn't mention wanting peace. A more customized example might be, "Rather than shock and scared, what feeling would you like to be experiencing?"

What information might be useful for you to have as you think about your future plans? A more customized example might be, "What information might be useful for you to have as you navigate through this transition?"

How would you like me, as your coach, to best help you navigate all this into concrete goals?

While good, this feels assumptive that the client wants 'concrete goals' right now, versus what client said she wanted was, 'to help me work out how I navigate through this.' Maybe question could be more simply, "How would you like me, as your coach, to best help you navigate all this?"

Person D

These are customized using the information provided about Jackie:

How can this strengthen your relationship with your husband?

How would you be able to make your art gallery more profitable?

How can your creative side be a resource to you and your family in this moment?

How does emotional support to your husband look like to you?

What is the future you want to create for you and your family?

What opportunities lie ahead for you and your husband right now?

What do you need to feel grounded and centered right now? While a good intuitive question, client doesn't mention grounded or centered. A more customized version might be, "What do you need to feel you're out of the tailspin right now?"

These are good questions. yet a more general question, or not fully customized by information about the client:

Besides me as your coach, who else would be able to support you in this process?

What is essential?

How can this strengthen your relationship with your kids? A fully customized question would use children or family, instead of kids. Small difference, yet keeps the focus fully using the client references and language.

Who do you want to be at this moment in your life? Who are you/need to be...type questions are often challenging for clients to answer, unless they are trained coaches or from personal development as it tends to be our coaching 'jargon.' It may be a client knows how to answer this, yet often they are confused. If the client said, what do you mean, what would you say? That's the thing to ask instead. Alternative example: How do you want to show up for yourself and your family at this moment in your life?

Person E

These are customized using the information provided about Jackie:

What is it like for you to be in a "tailspin" with your family?

What would need to happen for you to feel that you've fully and successfully emerged from this tailspin?

How do you want to show up for your family during this time?

What do you imagine would be the ideal way for this situation to unfold for you?

Some observations:

You said that this has "scared you." How does being afraid/scared show up for you as you go through your day? Fully customized is to only use the client language of scared, and not add in afraid. Scared and afraid might be different for the client. Trust 'scared' is enough rather than complicating or adding more.

Who do you want to be during this time of transition? Who are you/need to be...type questions are often challenging for clients to answer, unless they are trained coaches or from personal development as it tends to be our coaching 'jargon.' It may be a client knows how to answer this, yet often they are confused. If the client said, what do you mean, what would you say? That's the thing to ask instead. Alternative example: How do you want to show up for yourself and your family during this time of transition?

How do you want to be as a wife during this time? This is a somewhat easier question to answer than your first one above. Yet still, consider shifting the language so it's less jargon such as, "How do you want to show your support as a wife during this time?"

How do you want to be as a mother during this time? Alternative example: How do you want to show your support as a mother during this time?

Person F

These are customized using the information provided about Jackie:

What can you imagine are the best options for your family?

What would it take for you to continue working in the gallery?

What would it take to provide for your family, support your husband through this transition and continue working in your gallery?

While good questions, these are more general, not customized by what client offered.

If you could totally and completely trust your intuition, what would you tell yourself? **More customized might be, "If you could totally and completely trust your creative talent, what would you tell yourself?"**

If you had a crystal ball and could see the future, what do you see? **More customized might be, "If you had a magic creative paint brush and could see the future, what do you see?"**

What do you believe stands in the way of getting what you need?

What do you believe are causing your fears with this situation? **Even more customized would be using scared, not fears, "What do you believe are causing you to feel scared with this situation?"**

What would it take for you to be happy in this situation? **Client doesn't speak of happiness.**

What new frame of mind would you need to free yourself of the fears you are facing? **This is partially customized and great as it is! Even more customized might be, "What new beliefs would you need to free yourself of the scary feelings you are facing?"**

What would you do now if you decided NOT to trust your intuition? **Client doesn't mention intuition. A more customized example might be: What would you do now if you decided not to trust your creative talents?**

Person G

These are customized using the information provided about Jackie:

How can you show support for John during this time of initial shock?

How can you and John stay connected to each other during this transition?

Years from now when you look back on this time of transition, what words do you want to use to describe yourself?

What qualities do you want to model for your children during this transition?

How can you go about deciding about your art business?

While good questions, these are more general, or not customized by what client offered.

Which aspect of this situation do you want to address first?

How much time will you and John allow yourselves for your next career choices?

What lifestyle expectations are you willing to adjust?

How do you want me to be with you during this session?

What are options that you enjoy for managing the stress of this transition? Client doesn't mention stress, although that's a good intuitive leap...for another exercise 😊. More customized example might be, "What are options that you enjoy for managing the shock of this transition?"

What about the art gallery brings you joy? Partially customized and good as is. Yet client doesn't mention joy, but does mention her 'absolutely love of art.' Alternative example, "What about the art gallery do you absolutely love?"

What other creative outlets offer similar enjoyment? Alternative example, "What other creative outlets offer similar absolute love?"

Person H

These are customized using the information provided about Jackie:

What helped you in starting your art gallery?

What does feeling the opposite of scared look like?

You have a lot going on. What would help you feel grounded right now and not in a tailspin? You offer an empathetic comment prior to asking the question, which is great. Yet for this exercise, the question stands powerfully on its own, "What would help you feel grounded right now and not in a tailspin?" Perhaps grounded is not the state the client wants, so perhaps another alternative could be, "What feeling would you like to have instead of the feeling of being in a tailspin?"

How do you want to support John? What does that look like? This is stacking back-to-back questions. Separate out, one at a time as it can be a habit to stack questions like this. Question 1 is great, "How do you want to support John?" Question 2 is great, "What does support for John look like from you?"

What strengths do you have that help you run your art gallery? This is partially customized. More fully would be taking out strengths and adding in creative talent, "What creative talent do you have that help you run your art gallery?"

How have you managed other times of uncertainty? While a good intuitive leap, that's a different exercise... 😊 Client doesn't mention uncertainty, but does mention feeling scared, in shock, and in a tailspin. More customized might be, "How have you managed other times of shock?"

While good questions, these are more general, or not customized by what client offered.

What do you think is most important to look at first?

What do you need with all this ambiguity swirling around you?

What are the possibilities generated by this situation?

How can I best support you in navigating this situation?

Person I

These are customized using the information provided about Jackie:

How could you learn more about what John is considering or thinking about?

You say you want to support John as he goes through this transition, what might that support look like?

How might things change when John finds something more fulfilling?

What concerns could your children have about this situation?

While good questions, these are more general, or not customized by what client offered.

How do you need me to be with you right now?

What is the biggest concern?

What other possibilities are there?

What can you imagine would be a great outcome from this situation?

What is your biggest fear about this situation? More customized would be using scare instead of fear. For example, "What scares you about this situation?"

(if communicating with the children is a concern) What is most important for you to communicate to the children? No qualifier needed, as this is a powerfully structured question, "What is most important for you to communicate to the children?"

Person J

There are no customized questions using the information provided about Jackie. Perhaps you misunderstood the exercise?

I see you've taken the Deconstructing Questions information and used for your possible questions. Yet they are not fully formed questions for this exercise so I've done a bit of that for you. While good questions, these are all more general questions, or not customized by what client offered. Take a look at the collated document for examples by others of fully formed questions.

~~What (who) is the most important thing (person/value/outcome) in all of this (right now)?~~
~~What (who) is the most important thing (person/value/outcome) in all of this (right now)?~~
~~What (who) is the most important thing (person/value/outcome) in all of this (right now)?~~
What are you sure (~~unsure~~) of?
What are you ~~sure~~ (unsure) of?
Who do you want (need) to be in this situation?
Where (when) are you (your thoughts, your emotions) stuck?
What is an ideal (imagined, hoped for) future (present)?

Person K

These are customized using the information provided about Jackie:

What do you think you would have to do differently for your gallery to be more profitable?
What amount of profit would it take for your gallery to create, for you to be able to support your family?
What would you not do to show you are supportive of John?
What options have you imagined are available to you?

While good questions, these are more general, or not customized by what client offered.

What strategy would you perceive would help John determine what would be more fulfilling?
This is a good question, yet the focus is on imaging what John needs. Better is to deep focus on the client being coached so they can answer more truly for themselves. Alternative example might be, "How would you like to support John to find what would be more fulfilling to him?"

What resources would it take for John to find a new fulfilling position? Same as above. Keep questions focused on the coaching client.

What is interfering with you putting a plan together? Client doesn't mention a plan. Perhaps instead, "What is interfering with you finding options to navigate through this transition?"

What will it demand from you to be successful? This isn't informed by what client offered.

Person L

These are customized using the information provided about Jackie:

What about the reality of the situation is hitting you hard?

What do you believe right now is standing in your way to feeling less in shock about the situation?

Some observations:

Since you believe everything is going to work out in the end, what are you upset right now? This is a good question, customized by client language offered. Even more customized would be to use client emotion of scared or shocked, rather than changing it to upset, which might be your interpretation that is or isn't accurate. Alternative example, "Since you believe everything is going to work out in the end, what are you scared about right now?"

While good questions, these are more general, not customized by what client offered.

Of all the concerns you mentioned, what is the most pressing at this moment?

If you could change anything about yourself to ease your way through this, what would it be?

What would you like to get out of today's session?

What would you love to learn from this situation?

Person M

There are no fully customized questions using the information provided about Jackie.

Some observations:

Do you believe you can navigate through this? This is customized nicely using client specific language. This is structured as a closed-ended yes/no question, limiting discovery potential. A more powerfully structured open-ended question allows for further client discovery rather than an assumption client will say more than yes or no. Alternative example, "What is your belief about how you can navigate through this?"

While good questions, these are more general, not customized by what client offered.

Sounds like a stressful situation. Is this a good time to talk?

I heard you say you feel in a bit of a tailspin. How would you like to feel?

What sort of resources do you feel you have?

What sort of resources do you think may be missing?

Person N

This was customized using the information provided about Jackie:

How do you want me to be with you in this navigation?

While good questions, these are more general, not customized by what client offered.

How do you want to be and feel?

How do you want to feel when we agree to stop the exploration?

Who do you want to keep in your thoughts?

How can I partner with you to keep those thoughts and people present?

How do you see yourself in your legacy?

What parts of you contribute to that legacy?

Which parts need more exploration to achieve full potential?

Where might there be challenges to explore further?

Who do you want to be in this exploration? *Who are you/need to be...type questions are often challenging for clients to answer, unless they are trained coaches or from personal development as it tends to be our coaching 'jargon.'* It may be a client knows how to answer this, yet often they are confused. If the client said, what do you mean, what would you say? That's the thing to ask instead. Alternative example: How do you want to show up for yourself in this exploration?

Person O

Some observations:

What needs to be addressed in the short term to ensure the stability of your family? *This is great and somewhat customized, it's a good intuitive question about stability. Perhaps using client language, "What needs to be addressed in the short term to ensure you and your family process the shock and scariness of this situation?"*

What structures have you and your husband created for emergencies? *This is somewhat customized, as it mentions her husband. Yet emergencies is not as customized as using language of the client, perhaps using blindsided, or navigating times of challenge. Alternative example, "How have you and your husband supported each other previously when navigating something you've been blindsided by?"*

While good questions, these are more general, not customized by what client offered.

What is your greatest concern?

What opportunities does this situation present?

How can you best take care of yourself during this stressful time period?

Person P

This is customized using the information provided about Jackie:

What is the scariest part of this?

While good questions, these are more general, not customized by what client offered.

What would you like to accomplish through our coaching relationship?

What do you know for sure?

What values that are really important to you?

And of those, which are your top 3? How do you know when you are honoring them / not?

What support do you feel you need in this chapter of your life?

Anything else?

Carly's Questions

What's the most beautiful piece of art you've encountered?

What makes a piece of art beautiful?

What makes your art gallery beautiful?

What's the ugliest piece of art you've encountered?

What's the ugliest piece of art you've had in your gallery?

What makes a piece of art beautiful or ugly?

What was your life like before you owned your beautiful art gallery?

If art is the analogy, what is life-as-art saying to you?

How did you and John meet?

When your husband is feeling shaken and upset, how do you feel?

When your husband is feeling shaken and upset, how do you respond?

What emotions do you experience when your husband is feeling shaken and upset?

When, if ever, have you felt blindsided yourself?

What is blindsiding you about this situation?

How do you react when your husband says he feels blindsided?

What happens to you when you feel in shock?

How do you support yourself when you are in shock?

When something unexpected occurs, how have you responded in the past?

What is it about this unexpected occurrence that may have blindsided you too?

What are you most proud of about your children?

What sporting activities do you enjoy, if any?

What musical activities do you enjoy, if any?

If you were your own financial advisor, what would you advise about making your art gallery profitable?

What would be different for you if your art gallery was profitable?

How do you define 'barely profitable'?

Instead of barely profitable, what would you love to be saying about your art gallery instead?

What has sustained you when your art gallery has been barely profitable?

Where did your absolute love of art come from?

What is your creative talent?

What are your creative talents?

How might you use your creative talent to navigate this situation?

What happens for you when you 'wonder'?

What do you do when you feel scared?

How do you behave differently when you're scared?

How does feeling scared impact you?

How do you provide for yourself as you navigate through this?

What does it mean to provide for your family?

What kinds of support would you like to offer John?

How else might you support yourself?

What's the most creative solution you can imagine for yourself and your family?

If I were to speak with you in one year, what would you like to be telling me about your use of creative talents?

Besides your belief that 'everything will work out in the end,' what other beliefs might be at play here?

What's the most supportive belief you could have right now?

Thinking creatively, how would you like to engage with your family right now?

When you feel 'hit hard' how do you react?

What's the impact on you of feeling 'hit hard'?

If you were feeling 'hit softly' instead of 'hit hard' what would be different?

What might be an underlying issue that has put you in a tailspin?

When you are in a tailspin, what do you notice about your beliefs?

How might you creatively engage with the tailspin you're feeling?

If you weren't in a tailspin, what metaphor might you use instead?

What emotions are you in touch with when you're in a tailspin?

How do you know you're in a 'bit of a tailspin'?

What is the tailspin attached to, artfully speaking?

If you were successful in navigating through this, what would be different for you?

What would be most fulfilling for you for the next 10-15 years?

What does retirement mean to you?