

Mentoring - Great Questions

by Rick Woolworth

Author's Note: These questions should be asked where appropriate for the context. (Example: a question about a mentee's marriage or dating life would be rarely asked in a workplace setting.)

Future vision

- ****Your 80th birthday --** Write down 5 bullet points you'd want people to say about you. This is a critical question as it will help you to define what is long-term success. Let's begin with the end in mind and work backwards from there to determine what's important to build into your life today. Your answers will naturally evolve during your lifetime. Be sure to re-visit the question.
- What are you most proud of? Your two greatest achievements?
- What are you reading and/or learning which is helping you envision a great future for yourself?
- Is there something that you have dreamed of doing for a long time? Why haven't you done it?
- Is success over the long term for a person something you can measure?

Immediate / Near Term Issues

- ****Your ideal near-term priorities –** Rank how you want to prioritize your time and efforts from #1 - 5. Now rank what your spouse or best friend(s) say are your actual priorities from #1 - 5. How are they different? Are your actual priorities aligned with your 80th birthday bullet points?
- *What keeps you up at night?

Self-Awareness

- ****What are your top aptitudes and talents? How are you gifted? Your superpower?**
- *Energizers -- Name them in any part of your life -- job, hobbies, sports, children, giving back, etc. What areas of your life are most draining? Burdensome?
- *Environments -- you most thrive in: small vs large, innovative, competitive, collaborative, process-oriented, common-good focus, etc.
- Assessment tools – what have you learned about yourself from any of these tools: Enneagram, Myers-Briggs, StrengthsFinder, Strong Interest Inventory, Career, Love Languages, Spiritual Gifts
- ****Time Bomb:** If you were to have a fall - publicly or privately - what would be the reason (your weakness / blind spot / Achilles Heel)? Have you shared this with someone else?
- What are you most proud of? Your 3 greatest achievements?
- If you could wake up tomorrow having gained any one quality or ability, what would it be?
- What did you love doing in high school?
- Where is your hometown? How did it impact you?
- What do the voices say that whisper to you?

Relationships

- *Tell me about the key relationships in your family eco-system.
- Describe your relationship with your father and mother? If your parents had a physical piece of paper with a script for your life, what would be written on it?
- *How would you rate your marriage right now on a 1 – 10 scale?
- How do you think about dating and your path towards a long-term relationship?
- Who has been the most influential person in your life and why?
- How would you rate your friendships on a 1 – 10 scale? What do you value most in a friendship?

Career

- *What is the biggest issue you face in your work life?
- *Do you sense you are well suited for your current work? Can you see yourself being stimulated and fulfilled on your current career path the next 5 years?
- *Do you sense you are in the right career given your innate strengths, aptitudes, and talents? Are you in the right role and area of responsibility?
- If you could “white board” an organization and your role that would be exciting assuming no financial, geographic or other constraints, what might that look like?
- How would you describe your leadership style?

Values / Spiritual Life

- What do you do to “reboot” so that busyness and the tech overload in your life does not result in burnout and shrink your soul?
- What would your children say is important to you?
- *Were you raised in a family with a particular worldview? A spiritual or religious tradition?
- How is your worldview / spiritual life reflected in the different components of your life?

Other Questions

- What are you most afraid of?
- What would you have done differently in your life if you had the chance?
- Is there someone you have not forgiven? Confucius said, “Before you embark on a journey of revenge, dig two graves.” What do you think of this statement?
- Harry Truman said, “Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers.” What are you reading and have read in the past year that have impacted you?
- Do you have a personal Board of Directors?
- Given the choice of anyone in the world, who would you want as a dinner guest?
- Regarding the issue of racial reconciliation, what do you think of the question, “If you are not doing something to be part of the solution, could you be part of the problem?”
- Finances - what approach or framework do you use to manage your finances? How is it working? Is spending on lifestyle expenses allowing you to save and be a generous giver?
(Example: 75% spending / 15% saving / 10% giving model)

* Key questions