

## The Advice Monster (Michael Bungay Stanier)

Author of 'The Coaching Habit' and 'The Advice Trap', Michael Bungay Stanier talks about coaching being one of the most powerful tools for leaders. He has listed 7 questions that, according to the Huffington Post (2017) 'will change how you lead forever'. These are strategic and thought-provoking questions to help drive beneficial changes in behaviour, help build team cohesiveness and get things done effectively.

See the 3 advice monsters in Michael's [TED talk here](#)  
Or this [Forbes article here](#)

### 7 key coaching questions from Michael Bungay Stanier's 'The Advice Trap'

#### 1. The Kick Start Question: 'What's on your mind?'

This question jumps right to the heart of the matter without assuming you already know the answer. It gives your coachee a chance to voice the thing that is most pressing for them. You may already have a good idea of what they are struggling with, but by asking this question, you'll know what the real focus of your conversation should be.

#### 2. The AWE question: 'And What Else?'

Stanier calls this the best coaching question in the world because it can supercharge any conversation. It's a follow up that forces the other person to think deeper about the issue at hand. Often the first response that comes to mind isn't the only answer or even the best answer. The most powerful question in coaching is "And what else?" As a leader, your first inclination is to fix problems, but this question also works as a great self-management tool. It forces you to slow down and really think about what the person is saying before rushing to give advice.

#### 3. Focus Question: What's the real challenge here for you?

As mentioned with the A.W.E. question, the first response someone gives may not be the most relevant. Similarly, the first issue that comes up in a coaching session might not be the real problem at hand. This question helps nail down the actual problem, and those two little words at the end "for you" help steer towards a more personal conversation (rather than a whinge about the organisation, or about something they expect you to 'fix'). This leads to a more developmental coaching session rather a performance based one, which can save time on having to do less coaching down the road.

#### 4. Foundation Question: What do you want? Or What do you want from me?

Sometimes this is actually a difficult question to answer but asking this is a great way to get deeper into the conversation more quickly. It can be particularly powerful if the conversation seems to have been derailed by frustration or other negative emotions. As with many of these questions, it also works as a self-management tool. If you're feeling a little lost, asking yourself what it is that you want out of this conversation can help you get back on track.

#### 5. Lazy Question: How can I help?

Being lazy is rarely a recommended course of action in the organisational world, but here, it's sound advice. Doing work that isn't yours to handle wastes your time and doesn't help the other person grow. Instead of assuming you know what the other person needs from you, just ask. By asking either of these questions, you can get a clear request for what you can do without taking ownership away from them.



6. **Strategic Question:** If you're saying yes to this, what are you saying no to?

Strategy is often about saying no to things that you really want to say yes to. It's about making decisions by looking at what has to be sacrificed for the choice you ultimately make. Strategy is often about saying no to things that you really want to say yes to. Tough choices are something you and your associates have to learn how to deal with. It's important when making these choices to know exactly what the decision involves. It's easy to assume that you already know the answers, but when you think about it in terms of "what do I have to give up by making this choice?" it can put things in sharper perspective.

7. **Learning Question:** What was most useful here for you?

This question makes people stop and reflect, and this is extremely important for the learning process. Neural connections aren't made when people are being told what to do, or even when they're doing something; they're made during the reflection process. This question also provides you with feedback on which coaching approaches work and which could use some tweaking.