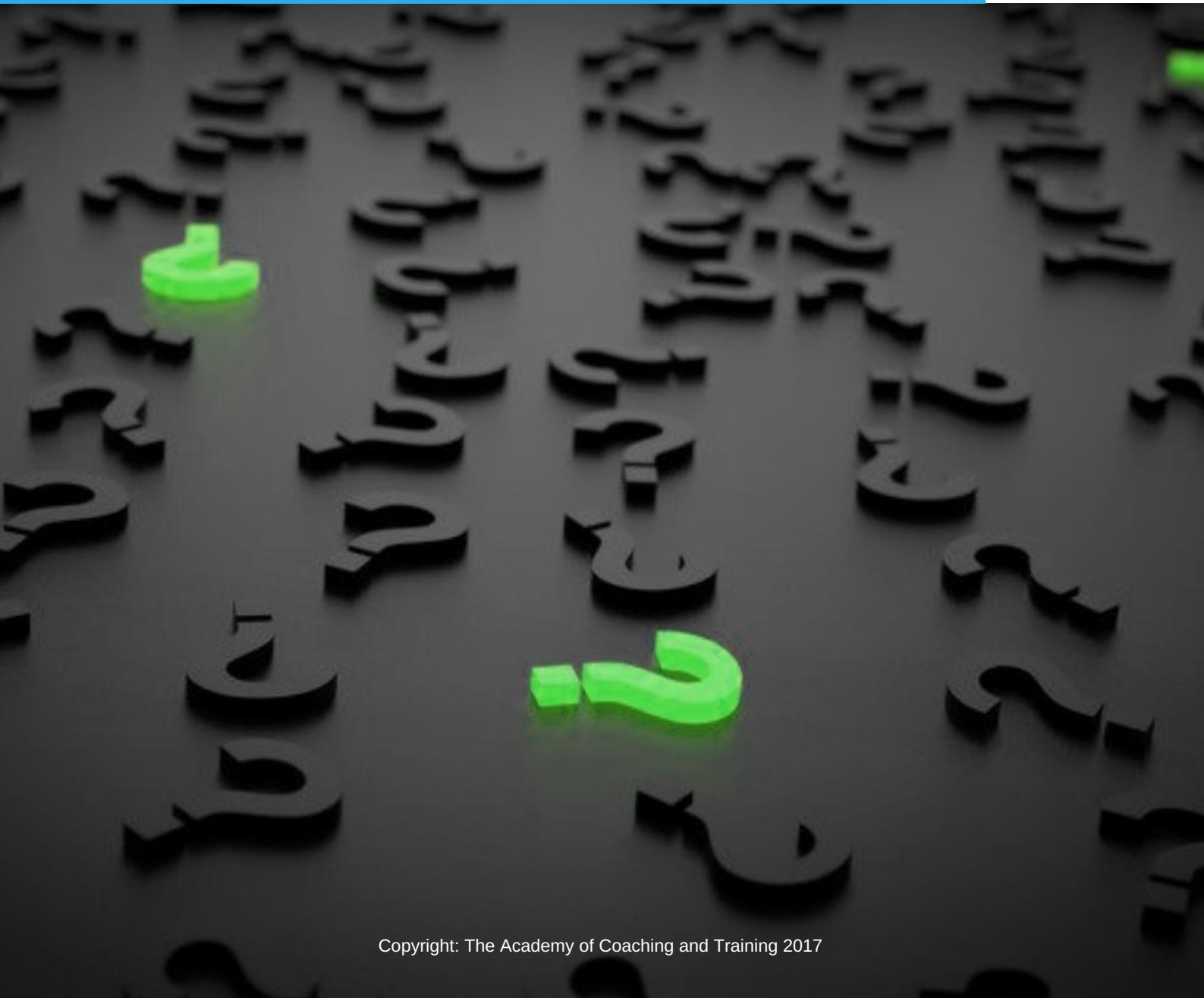


# 100 KEY QUESTIONS FOR COACHES



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100 KEY QUESTIONS FOR COACHES

THE ACADEMY OF  
COACHING AND TRAINING

**ACT**

Professional  
Coaching  
& Training

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Steve Payne is an international coach, entrepreneur, actor, published author and speaker. He is also one of very few certified Master Trainers of NLP in the world.

In 2017 Steve was nominated as Best Personal Development Author by the Best You magazine for his critically-acclaimed book on values, *My 31 Practices*, co-written with Alan Williams.

**STEVE:** *It never ceases to amaze me the transformational power the 'right' question asked at the 'right' time' can have.*

*Most of the major turning points in my life have been the result of someone asking me the 'right' question, such as: 'What do you really want?', followed by 'how will that help or benefit you, what will that enable you to do?'.*

*I witnessed a global multi-billion dollar company that was losing 33% of its sales team and 25% of its leadership every year, stop the direction it was heading in and change its way of working, all because of the simplest of coaching questions; 'how do your people feel?'*

*My greatest wish for you as a coach is that you learn to be fully present with your clients and ask great questions to help you understand them and help them understand themselves.*

*From this foundation, together you can create great strategies that make a real and lasting difference.*



# How best to use this document



## Why produce this document?

### Resources for Coaches

One of the most common traits found in successful people is they all seem to seek out support, be that through mentors, coaches or by simply accessing the very best information available.

We believe that making resources available to coaches will help them succeed in their business and add more value to their clients. Ultimately this will in turn play its part in making the world a better place.

This document has 100 questions. That's a lot. These are individual questions asked with specific intentions. You can pick and choose which ones might help you. You might choose to use none of them.

This document is not designed to be read from cover to cover sequentially. Use it as a resource to best serve you in your own way.



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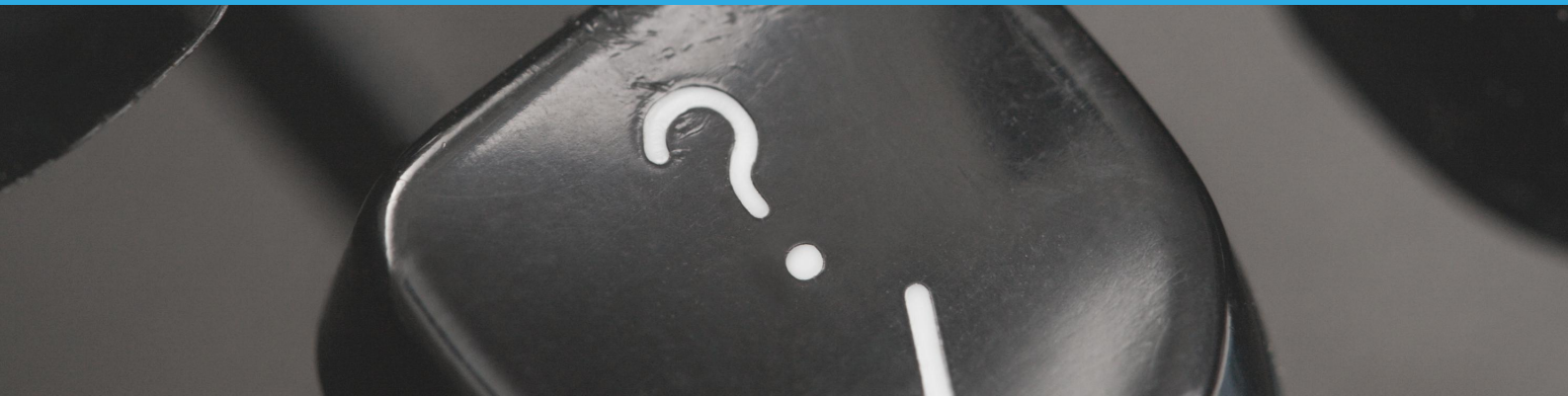
- A community of like-minded coaches
- Coach mentors on tap to answer your questions
- Real-time Q & A Sessions
- FREE, high-value downloads, pdfs & videos







Questioning and listening skills are the two main currencies of the professional coach. Inspired targeted questions can be the difference that makes the difference when facilitating great results for your clients.



## The Importance of Asking Great Questions:

### Why do we ask Questions?

I once asked a client, *'if you do not change anything now, if you continue doing what you are doing, your life will be like this in 5, 10 years time. Is that ok with you?'*

That was all that was needed for this client to stop procrastinating and commit to change. It wasn't necessarily easy, but they went from working for a wage to running their own business. Their life has massively changed, and all for the better! It all revolved around a question. We primarily ask questions to:

- understand
- learn
- clarify
- challenge
- provoke
- build rapport and closer connection
- demonstrate that we are listening
- give ourselves time to think (oh yes, that will happen)

### Open and closed questions

There are two main types of question. Open and closed.

#### Open Questions

These questions elicit information and typically start with:

- Where...?
- What...?
- When...?
- How...?
- Why...?
- Tell me...?

#### Closed Questions

These questions clarify and confirm and typically start with:

- Do you...?
- Can you...?
- Will you...?
- Have you...?
- Did you...?



”

You judge the quality of  
a question not by its  
complexity, rather by  
the complexity of the  
thought process it  
produces

“



The 100 questions below are structured to follow the classic **G.R.O.W.** model, which is a model for helping a client progress towards successful outcomes.

The letters **G.R.O.** and **W.** stand for:



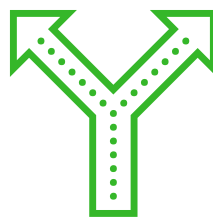
*Goal*

What do  
you want?



*Reality*

Where are  
you now?



*Options*

What can  
you do?



*Way  
Forward*

What will  
you do first?

*Please note, some questions in the following sections may seem similar, however, the subtleties of small changes can make all the difference*



## SECTION 1



WHAT DO YOU WANT?







## SECTION 1: Goal

### 1. What do you want, specifically?

Focuses the client's mind on a well-defined, desired outcome and can highlight when an outcome is not well-defined.

### 2. So, what's going on?

More relaxed opener. Allows the client to explore their current situation to understand it better for themselves. They can see the 'problem' in context.

### 3. What do you want to change?

Opens the client up to the desirability of change and provides focus.

### 4. What do you want to achieve from this coaching session?

Helps the client stay focused on making immediate progress.

### 5. What goal do you want to achieve today?

Focuses on a specific goal.

### 6. What would you like to happen?

Helps the client connect with a vision for the future.

### 7. What would need to happen for you to walk away feeling that this time was well spent?

Creates a marker to measure progress.

### 8. What outcome would be ideal?

Helps the client aim for the best outcome, regardless of obstacles.



## SECTION 1: Goal

### 9. Why is this goal important to you?

A vital values-centered coaching question. This explores the client's intention and encourages thought as to what the client will be able to do once they have achieved the goal - the goal beyond the goal.

### 10. If I could grant you one wish for this session, what would it be?

Automatically creates the goal(s) to aim for and encourages the visualisation of positive outcomes.

### 11. What would you like to happen that is not happening now?

Highlights that the client is not where they wish to be in relation to their goal. It also helps the client visualise a positive outcome.

### 12. Can we do that in the time we have available?

This question manages expectations and keeps the process firmly rooted in what is possible to achieve in the time allotted.

### 13. What do you want to achieve now, that will help with the long term goal?

This puts process goals in the context of greater outcome goals – after all, every goal has a goal.

### 14. What does success look like?

This question forces the client to visualise a positive outcome and connect with the benefits of that outcome.

### 15. How much influence do you have over successfully achieving your goal?

This question does two things: 1. it focuses the client on their personal responsibility for change and 2. it helps the client understand potential limitations (as long as these are not simply limiting beliefs).



## SECTION 1: Goal

### 16. How would you be able to measure your progress?

Helps the client create markers to measure progress.

### 17. When do you want to achieve your goal by?

All goals need to be time-bound – otherwise they will probably never happen!

### 18. Is that realistic?

Helps establish parameters and boundaries and prevents the client wasting resources.

### 19. What will you be seeing, hearing and feeling when you achieve your goal?

Focuses the client's mind on what it will be like to achieve their goal and helps the client find more motivation (ask as 3-separate questions).

### 20. What challenges are you currently experiencing?

Helps the client identify potential barriers.

### 21. How can you make that goal more specific?

Forces the client to clearly define their goal – it is hard to move effectively towards a vague goal.

### 22. What would be the key steps towards the goal?

Helps the client 'chunk' the steps into manageable pieces to avoid overwhelm.

### 23. I understand, you don't want [X]. So if you don't want [X], what do you want?

This turns an 'away from' motivation into a 'towards' motivation. 'Away from' motivations are great to propel you away from what you don't want (e.g. I want to leave my job) but be aware they don't take you anywhere specific. A 'towards' motivation takes you towards a specific goal (e.g. I want to work at Google).



## SECTION 1: Goal

### 24. What do you want to be doing five years from now?

Puts a goal in context. Introduces the frame of 'time', which can change a goal re: what the client thinks they want, or puts a new perspective on it.

### 25. What exactly is not working?

Forces specificity.

### 26. How is that a problem?

A problem is only a problem if it is a problem! This question provides perspective.

### 27. Who is this goal for?

A goal that is set because your client wants to achieve it, is more likely to succeed than a goal another has imposed on the client.

### 28. If you do not achieve this goal, would the journey towards it have been worth it?

How important is following the dream to the client? Is the journey as important to the client as the destination, will it give sufficient benefits, even if the main goal is not reached?

### 29. What would be the positive effects of achieving this goal?

An exploration of benefits (an ecology check - the study of consequences).

### 30. Would there be any negative effects in achieving this goal?

An exploration of any negative consequences (ecology check).



## SECTION 1: Goal

### 31. As a percentage, how much do you want this goal?

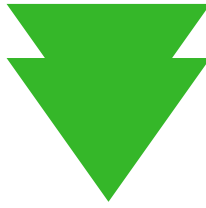
A check to see how important a goal is to a client (anything less than 100% should be investigated).

### 32. What is the context that you want to achieve this goal in?

Specifies 'where' the client wants their goal. For example, a desire to be more assertive might benefit the client at work but might not benefit the client at home.

NEXT SECTION: *Reality*



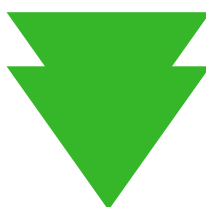


## SECTION 2



# *Reality*

CURRENT REALITY:  
WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?







## SECTION 2: Reality

### **33. What is happening now (what, who's involved, when, and how often)?**

Helps establish a starting position from which to measure progress.

### **34. What steps have you already taken towards your goal?**

Establishes what progress, if any, the client has already made.

### **35. How did those steps go, what did you learn? (follow-up from above)**

It helps the client utilise feedback.

### **36. How would you describe what you did? (follow-up from above)**

Forces reflection.

### **37. Where are you at this moment in relation to your goal?**

Gives the client perspective on the progress made towards their goal.

### **38. On a scale of one to ten where are you?**

Provides a marker of their current position from which to measure future progress.

### **39. What has contributed to your success so far?**

Focuses on the importance of resources and highlights those resources that are working and those which are not.

### **40. What progress have you made so far?**

Establishes current reality.

### **41. What is working well right now?**

Puts the focus on the positive.



## SECTION 2: Reality

### 42. What is required of you?

Focus on personal responsibility for change.

### 43. Why haven't you reached that goal already?

Great question to highlight potential limiting beliefs.

### 44. What do you think is stopping you?

Helps reflection and identifies obstacles; which can lead to identifying resources.

### 45. If you asked [X] (where 'X' is another person), what would they say about you?

Gets the client out of their 'own head', forces fresh perspective.

### 46. On a scale of one to ten, how severe / serious / urgent is the situation?

Forces reflection.

### 47. If someone said / did that to you, what would you think / feel / do?

Forces a perspective shift.

### 48. How do you know that this is accurate?

Forces a client to reflect on evidence for how they know their assessment of where they are is accurate.

### 49. How do you know this is so? (follow-up from above)

Asks the client for their evidence procedure.

### 50. What other factors are relevant?

Forces the client to reflect on what else could be relevant. Gets them to think beyond the obvious.

### 51. Who is directly, or indirectly involved?

Forces greater reflection.



## SECTION 2: Reality

### 52. What does it look from someone else's perspective?

Gets the client out of their 'own head' and filters and changes perspective.

### 53. What is the effect on others?

Forces the client to think of ecology (consequences).

### 54. What else is missing in this situation?

Helps the client think more deeply.

### 55. What do you have that you're not using?

Focuses the client on their resources and potential.

### 56. ...and what else?

This is one of my favourite questions, it forces more lateral-thinking and creates more options.

### 57. What is holding you back?

Focuses on identifying obstacles and barriers.

### 58. So, what's going on?

Gets the client to discuss their situation, to get it out of their head and simply by expressing their situation in words, can change how the client views the situation.

### 59. How does this goal impact your spouse / partner?

Ecology check.

### 60. What's the excuse that you have always used for not achieving your goals?

Focuses on limiting beliefs and provokes response (NB. use with great rapport).



## SECTION 2: Reality

### 61. What are you afraid of?

Can provocatively create awareness (use with care and rapport, especially if the client has not said they are afraid).

### 62. What are you passionate about?

Focuses attention on positive resources and connects the client with their deeper self.

### 63. How would you know if that is genuinely a need or a want?

Reality perspective check.

### 64. How are you sabotaging yourself?

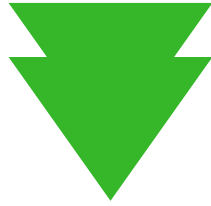
Uses a provocative technique to get a positive reaction out of the client or helps raise their awareness of limiting beliefs.

### 65. What would happen if you did that?

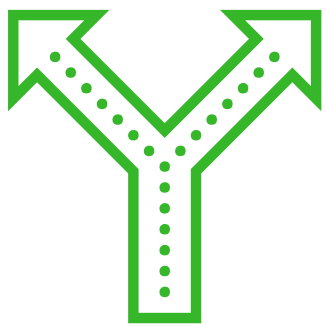
Forces visualisation, association and brings in thoughts about consequence (ecology).

NEXT SECTION: *Options*



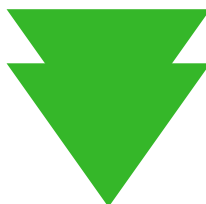


## SECTION 3



# *Options*

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO MAKE  
PROGRESS?





## SECTION 3: Options

### 66. What are your options?

Open the client's mind to exploring possibilities.

### 67. What do you think you need to do next?

Stimulates creativity, perspective and sequencing of steps in a strategy ('chunking').

### 68. What could be your first step?

Creates momentum (ensure this step is specific and achievable). The use of 'could' and not 'will' keeps the focus on creativity and avoids asking for commitment as we want to generate options. Asking for a commitment in the 'options' stage will reduce creative thinking.

### 69. What do you think you need to do to get a better result (or closer to your goal)?

Stimulates creativity and presupposes there are other options.

### 70. What else could you do that you haven't done before?

The classic lateral-thinking question to stimulate more options and prevent the client falling back on previous discoveries.

### 71. What would happen if you did nothing?

Highlights the cost of inactivity – OR – highlights that the problem may not be a problem.

### 72. What has worked for you already? How could you do more of that?

Highlights resources that already work (and provides more motivation).

### 73. What is the most challenging part of that for you? And why?

Forces reflection, evaluation and explores beliefs. Ask these as two separate questions.

### 74. What advice would you give to someone else?

Gets the client out of their personal filters.

### 75. What would you gain / lose by doing / saying that?

Ecology question.





## SECTION 3: Options

### 76. What's the best / worst thing about that option?

Ecology question.

### 77. How have you overcome a similar situation before?

Directs client to more resources and / or motivation and empowering beliefs.

### 78. Who do you know who has encountered a similar situation?

Identifies potential mentors or resources others have used.

### 79. If anything was possible, what would you do?

Removes barriers and / or limiting beliefs.

### 80. If money were no obstacle, what would you do?

Removes barriers to generating possibilities.

### 81. If time were no obstacle, what would you do?

Removes barriers to generating possibilities.

### 82. What would be the consequence of doing that?

Focuses attention on ecology.

### 83. What's the best use of your time now?

Focuses on priorities.

### 84. If you could only do one thing this week, what would it be?

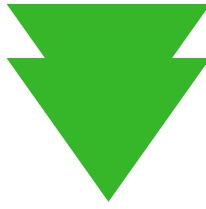
Focuses on priorities.

### 85. If there were no barriers, what would you do?

Takes away barriers, real or imagined.

NEXT SECTION: *Way Forward*



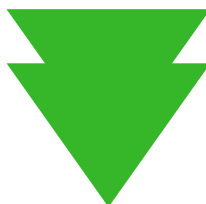


## SECTION 4



# *Way Forward*

WHAT WILL YOU DO FIRST?





## SECTION 4: Way Forward

### 86. From all the options for action you have, is there one that must happen first?

Establishes the hierarchy of importance, if one exists.

### 87. Which option '*would you like*' to do first?

Increases the chance of success of the first step.

### 88. How '*will*' you do that?

Creates the strategy for the task. Also the use of the word 'will', as opposed to the word 'could' is important here, because you are now looking for a commitment from your client in the 'Way Forward' section.

### 89. On a scale of one to ten, what do you think is the likelihood of your plan succeeding?

Tells the coach if there is more work to be done on this goal.

### 90. When will you do this?

Sets a time frame for the task ahead.

### 91. What day and time?

Be very specific.

### 92. Given what happens in your life each week, is it feasible that you could do this (task) then?

Checks for potential threats to the task being completed and takes into consideration the client's environment.

### 93. If something were to happen to interrupt the plan, what could you do then?

Establishes a Plan B and ideally a Plan C.

### 94. What help might you need, if any?

Identifies resources.

### 95. As a percentage, how much are you committed to carrying out this task?

Checks for congruence and gives the coach a clue, through verbal and non-verbal communication, as to the likelihood of success of this task.



## SECTION 4: Way Forward

### 96. What can you do in the next 24-48hrs?

Sets the first step in the near future to maintain motivation.

### 97. How are you going to celebrate reaching your goal?

Presupposes the client will be successful and helps the client connect with the emotion / feeling associated with the successful completion of the goal. This leads to greater motivation.

### 98. Is there anything else that you need to consider before starting?

Checks ecology, resources, congruence and commitment to the goal.

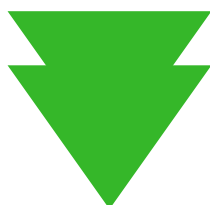
### 99. How will you know the task has been successful?

Sets measuring points to mark progress and success.

### 100. What will you do after you complete this goal?

Focuses attention on the 'goal beyond the goal'. This provides even greater motivation.

NEXT SECTION: Question Styles Overview





## QUESTION STYLES OVERVIEW

STYLE	PURPOSE	EXAMPLES
Open and investigative	To encourage factual & truthful answers	How, what, why, when, where and who
Closed questions	To gain confirmation or clarity	Do, could, shall, can, if, will, are and did
Probing questions	To expand the conversation and understand reasoning	'How would you go about doing this?' 'In what way do you see this solving your problem/or realising your opportunity.'
Evidence questions	To challenge ideas, seek proof	'How do you know this would work?' 'What makes you think so?'
Questions of possibility	To offer new ideas (which may be less popular) or change the course of the conversation	'What would happen if you didn't do it this way?' 'What wouldn't happen if you did'
Contribution questions	To provide an idea of your own (use sparingly)	'It has worked for some, how do you think this could work for you?'
Tie-down questions	To test the true response of your client to your agreements. They encourage a commitment and decision in towards a positive step	'Wouldn't you agree that...?' 'Isn't it true that...?' Or you could end a statement with 'You can see how that will work can't you?'
Alternative questions	To decide or gain agreement for options discussed	'Which of these dates are best for you, x or y?' 'Which of the products offered so far is best for you x or y?'
Direct agreement questions	To confirm an action	'We are agreed this is the next logical step then?' 'Can we agree that you are going ahead then?'



## NEXT STEPS

*Get in on the...*

# ACT

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- A dedicated network of professional coaches
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- Access to FREE articles, pdfs, podcasts, coaching documents and much, much more ...
- No-nonsense community for help, advice, sharing and focus

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