

The CHOICE Connection

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CHOICES
Jean Strosinski, PhD, PCC, CPT



December 2013 - In This Issue:

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Quotable Quotes

"What do we live for if not to make life less difficult for each other?" ~ George Eliot

"When your learning to take the path at your pace, every choice is worth your while." ~ Indigo Girls, Watershed

"In any moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing. The worst thing you can do is nothing." ~ Theodore Roosevelt, U.S. President

Dear Jean,

Our featured writer this month is Stephanie Fuentes, a dear friend for these last fifteen years. We met at a committee meeting to plan a workshop for our professional organization, ISPI - she was new to the ABQ area and then we discovered that we both lived within a few miles of each other - thus the start of a long and delightful friendship. Ahhhh, the art of asking questions - truly, I know of no one better to broach this topic. Stephanie has the most calming and soothing way of asking the question ... and then the next one ... always the appropriate questions in the moment. Her expertise in the world of evaluation, her gentle probing questions on this specialty as we collaborated on projects was the most enriching way of understanding evaluation in a way only she can speak of it. As I wrap up my first year of hosting guest authors, there are many questions I have for you, my readers. So just a few to tickle the mind - What are those delicious accomplishments for 2013? How might you celebrate and acknowledge the challenges and the opportunities you have been blessed with? What will you reach for in 2014?

Stephanie Christine G. Fuentes, Ph.D., is owner of Inventivo Design, a program evaluation consultancy in Denver, Colorado. She is currently working for the Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design as the Director of Institutional Effectiveness. She has been working in the human

performance improvement field for over 15 years as an evaluator, instructional designer, learning program procurer, trainer, and consultant. She has worked with both government and private-sector organizations in a variety of industries to evaluate program effectiveness against business strategy and to design metrics systems. She blends a pragmatic approach and style with technical know-how regarding data collection and analysis that generates robust, sustainable evaluation solutions. Stephanie recently released an e-book with colleague Wayne Stahl, Ph.D., entitled "Harnessing Workforce Dynamics for Competitive Advantage" available at Smashwords here:<https://www.smashwords.com/books/view/353511#!>

Thank you, Stephanie!

In the spirit of sharing our gifts,
Jean

The Art of Asking Questions by Stephanie Christine G. Fuentes

As a shy person by nature, one of the most challenging things I've had to overcome is how to talk with people. I'm an introvert, and much more likely to observe than to engage. As a program evaluator I've been able to blend the desire to observe and perpetual practice of engaging people in data collection. This journey has led me to appreciate the art of asking questions. A well-crafted question can change the nature of a conversation, lead someone to an emotional or personal revelation, or alter the experience the person has of themselves or their environment. A well-timed and well-thought question can reveal details and richness of life that is truly transformational sometimes.



As an evaluator, people often think that quantitative data is my driving focus. Instead, the question someone wants to answer is where I focus my energy and attention. What do you want to know? How do you want to know it? How do you think you'll identify the answer? What happens if it's not what you expect? How will you change based on the answer?

Notice that all of these are open-ended questions that require a response that's more than a yes or no. The best questions are ones that prompt an extended description. Yes or no tells you what, it doesn't tell you why or how.

I love asking questions because I never know what the answer will be or to where it will lead. My naturally intuitive side craves the exploration in conversation as questions unfold and people share their perceptions and experiences. As someone naturally curious about life, I look to help my friends, colleagues, clients, and coworkers navigate their world and experiences through questions. In whatever format the questions are finally explored (a survey, an interview, a focus group, a one-on-one conversation), the experience is always life-changing.

Tools and Resources **FROM THE BOOKSHELF**

[Change Your Questions, Change Your Life: 10 Powerful Tools for Life and Work](#) by Marilee Adams (ISBN 978-1-57675-600-3)

The Conversation Piece by Paul Lowrie and Bret Nicholaus (ISBN 978-0345407115)

Table Topics Cards (ASIN 0975855603)

List Your Self by Ilene Segalove and Paul Bob Velick (ISBN 978-0740777110)

THE INTERNET CONNECTIONS

<http://storycorps.org/great-questions/>

These are questions the NPR program StoryCorps has collected over time to help you start asking questions of your own.

thoughtquestions.com

Provocative life questions to get you thinking.

<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/13/182-questions-to-write-or-talk-about>

If you're still not satisfied you have enough questions to choose from, here are more. See the section on questions for personal or creative writing.

Reflection

Asking questions sparks personal involvement in what you're asking questions about - be ready to be surprised. Spend time practicing writing questions about whatever you're curious about in your work or life. Write out the question and reword it several different ways - you'll notice how easily we load values into our words and make assumptions.

Seek out a partner to listen aloud to you read your questions - notice how the inflection of your voice, the tone, the cadence affects how your listener understands the question (if you're planning to use these questions for a real inquiry, practice saying them aloud in advance!). Reading your questions aloud will also help you identify word changes that will make it easier for someone to answer.

Keep your questions simple, direct, and focused. Ask for only one thing at a time, and make notes to yourself of follow-up questions you might ask.

Choose To

Be open to the unknown as you answer a question ... ask who, what, when, where, why, to what degree ... challenge yourself to ask a better, open-ended question ... remember that a question will prompt an emotional response ... hold yourself and your conversation partner in a safe place ... be compassionate ... be ready to be the one that's transformed by your questioning!



Administrivia

My Constructive Choices Audience...

* Professionals wanting to be at choice in their career and daily work,

* New managers (and aspiring leaders) transitioning to establish a leadership role in their communities,

- * Individuals wanting to sort through the choices, build a more fulfilling life, live their voices, and...
- * Coaches who choose to step out, show up, and say - YES, it IS all about YOU!

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