



**Reveal Your True Self with These
Mind Probing Questions and Answers**

Ask "What If"



Put some magic in your thinking by asking "what if?" questions. What if animals became more intelligent than people? What if we had mouths in the palms of our hands? What if men also had babies? What if we had edible clothing? What if we elected our officials by lottery? What if people exuded a foul smell from every pore whenever they did something bad?

Such thinking will stretch your thinking and lead to new ideas and solutions.

What unusual "what if" questions can you ask to expand your thinking?

Ask Why?



Leonardo da Vinci: "I roamed the countryside searching for answers to things I did not understand. Why shells exist on the tops of mountains along with imprints of plants usually found in the sea. Why thunder lasts longer than that which causes it. How circles of water form around the spot which has been struck by a stone. And how a bird suspends itself in the air. Questions like these engaged my mind throughout my life."

What are you curious about? Where can you expand your thinking by asking "Why"?

Avoid Arrogance



On the morning of the Battle of Waterloo, Napoleon Bonaparte smugly assured his generals: "I tell you Wellington is a bad general, the English are bad soldiers; we will settle this matter by lunchtime."

Don't be blinded by arrogance. A little humility can help you steer clear of disaster.

What's your blind spot? Where does ego adversely affect your performance?

Be Dissatisfied



An inventor was asked why he spent sixteen hours every day tinkering with his work. His answer: "Because I'm dissatisfied with everything I do."

Dissatisfaction can be beneficial to the creative process. Otherwise, you lose the prod you need to spot potential problems and opportunities.

What are you dissatisfied about? How can you turn irritation into inspiration?

Believe In Yourself



"What concerns me" the philosopher Epictetus once remarked, "is not the way things are, but rather the way people think things are."

If you think you're smart, you'll act that way. If you think you're creative, you'll be creative. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy. As you think, so you are.

In what ways are you smart and creative?

Be Persistent



Two Frogs fell into a bucket of cream.

The first frog, seeing that there was no way to get any footing in the white fluid, accepted his fate and drowned.

The second frog didn't like this approach. He thrashed about and did whatever he could to stay afloat. Soon his churning turned the cream into butter, and he was able to jump out.

How Persistent Are You?

Break Out Of Your Rut



The more often you do something in the same way, the more difficult it is to think about doing it in any other way. Break out of this "Prison of familiarity" by disrupting your habitual thought patterns.

Write a love poem in the middle of the night, Eat ice cream for breakfast. Wear red sox. Take the slow way home. Sleep on the other side of the bed. Such jolts to your usual routines will lead to new ideas.

How can you break out of your rut to expand your thinking?

Challenge The Rules



According to ancient prophecy, whoever could untie the "Gordian Knot" was destined to become King of Asia. All who tried failed to solve this complicated puzzle. Then Alexander the Great had a turn. After fruitless attempts to find a starting point, he was stymied. Finally, he said, "I'll just have to make up my own knot untying rules." He pulled out his sword and sliced the knot in half. Asia was fated to him.

Most advances have occurred when someone challenged the rules and tried a different approach.

What rules can you challenge?

Change Its Name



If an architect looks at an opening between two rooms and thinks "Door," that's what she'll design. But if she thinks "passageway," she may design something much different like a hallway, air curtain, tunnel or even a courtyard.

Different words bring in different assumptions and lead your thinking in different directions.

What else can you call your idea?

Check Your Timing



Shakespeare: "Ripeness is all." Never forget that the greatest idea at the wrong time is a loser.

Is the timing right for your new idea? What if you waited six months or a year? Would it have been better last year or the year before? What opportunities will you miss if you don't do it now?

How is your timing? Are the present circumstances optimal for your new idea?

Combine Ideas



"The time has come," the walrus said, "to talk of many things: of shoes - and ships - and sealing wax - of cabbages - and kings."

Combining unusual ideas is at the heart of creative thinking. The ancients mixed soft copper and even softer tin to create bronze. Gutenberg combined the wine press and the coin punch to create moveable type and the printing press.

What different ideas can you combine?

Conform



When St. Augustine was a young priest in Milan, he took a problem to his bishop. He was going to Rome where the Sabbath was celebrated on Sunday, while in Milan it was celebrated on Saturday. Augustine was confused as to which was the right day. The bishop solved his problem by saying: "When in Rome, do as the Romans."

Conformity is a necessary part of our social existence. Without it, the fabric of society would come apart. It's the same with new ideas: If you're too far out in left field, you might be out of the ball park.

To what standard should you be conforming?

Dig Deeper



"Nothing is more dangerous than an idea when it is the only one you have" - Emile Chartier

Don't stop with the first idea you come up with. Dig deeper to come up with others.

How do you keep a fish from smelling? Cook it as soon as you can. Keep a cat around. Burn aromatherapy candles. Cut its nose off... **The best way to get a good idea is to get lots of ideas.**

**What good ideas are below the surface?
What's the second right answer?**

Don't Fall In Love With Ideas



If you fall in love with an idea, you won't see the merits of alternative approaches -- and will probably miss an opportunity or two.

One of life's great pleasures is letting go of a previously cherished idea. Then you're free to look for new ones.

**What part of your idea are you in love with?
Kiss it goodbye.**

Exaggerate



Imagine a joke so funny that you can't stop laughing for a month. Paper stronger than steel. An apple the size of a house. A jet engine quieter than a moth beating its wings. A home-cooked dinner for 25,000 people.

Try exaggerating your idea. Think big: what if it were a thousand times bigger, louder, stronger, faster or more powerful? What if the number of people who could use it were increased a thousandfold? Now think small: what if it were only one-thousandth as powerful, fast, costly, or as complicated as before?

How can you exaggerate your idea?

Flex Your Risk Muscle



Bull's-eye every time? If so, you're standing too close to the target. As comedian Woody Allen puts it, "If you're not failing every now and again, it's a sign that you're not doing anything very innovative."

Everyone has a "risk muscle." You keep it in shape by trying new things. If you don't, it atrophies and you're no longer able to take chances.

How can you exercise your risk muscle?

Get Out of Your Box



Each culture has its own way of looking at the world. Often the best ideas come from cutting across disciplinary boundaries and looking into other fields. As Robert Wieder put it: "Anyone can look for fashion in a boutique or history in a museum. The creative explorer looks for history in a hardware store and fashion in an airport."

Example: World War I military designers borrowed from the Cubist art of Picasso to create more efficient camouflage patterns for tanks.

**In what outside areas can you look for ideas?
How can you get out of your box?**

Get Rid of Excuses



When the Spanish explorer Cortez landed at Veracruz, the first thing he did was burn his ships. Then he told his men: "You can either fight or you can die." Burning his ships removed a third alternative: giving up and returning to Spain.

Sometimes it takes more creativity to get rid of excuses than it does to come up with the idea. What three factors will make it difficult to reach your objective?

How can you get rid of these excuses?

Give Yourself a Pat on the Back



What have you done well lately? Where have you made progress? What good things have you accomplished? What obstacles have you overcome?

Congratulations!!

Give yourself a pat on the back. Now go out and earn another one!

Hear Opportunity Knocking



A leading business school did a study that showed that its graduates did very well at first, but in ten years they were overtaken by a more streetwise, pragmatic group.

The reason, according to the professor who ran the study: "We taught them how to solve problems, not recognize opportunities."

Where Do you hear opportunity knocking. How do you answer it?

Imagine How Others Would Do It



What people do you respect for creative achievement? A leader in your field? A so-called "Guru"? A teacher or mentor you've had?

Now, imagine that one of those people is responsible for developing your concept. What would they do? How would they approach it?

How would someone else change your idea?

Imagine You're The Idea



Imagine that you're a parking meter. How does it feel when coins are inserted in you? What is it like when you're "expired." How could you be easier to use?

Imagine that you're a box of cereal on a grocery store shelf. How can you be more attractive? What can you do to force the grocer to give you more shelf space?

How would you feel if you were the idea you're developing?

Learn From Mistakes



On his way to creating the light bulb, Edison discovered 1,800 ways Not to build one. One of Madame Curie's failures was radium. Columbus was looking for India.

Errors are one of life's primary learning vehicles. That's because success reinforces the way you do things. When you fail, however, you learn what's not working, and you get the opportunity to try new approaches.

What mistakes have you made lately? What insights have you learned from them?

Listen to That Hunch



Your subconscious mind constantly records and stores unrelated data from the outside world. Later it combines this data into good ideas and answers -- hunches -- if you simply ask, trust and listen.

These hunches can, for example, lead you to take a spontaneous vacation or steer you away from making a bad investment.

What hunches have you had lately? How can you apply them to making your life better?

Listen To Your Dreams



Greek philosopher Heraclitus: "To those who are awake, there is one ordered universe, whereas in sleep each man turns away from this world to one of his own."

Your dreams can help resolve conflicts, refresh thinking, inspire solutions and suggest new approaches.

How can you relate a recent dream to a current problem?

Look Somewhere Else



Finding new ideas is like prospecting for gold. If you look in the same old places, you'll find tapped out veins. But if you venture off the beaten path, you'll improve your chances of discovering new idea lodes.

Remember: you can't see the good ideas behind you by looking twice as hard as what's in front of you.

Where else can you look for ideas?

Pause For A Bit



Poet Doug King on the value of incubating: "Learn to pause... or nothing worthwhile will catch up with you."

Allow the Muse to whisper in your ear.

What problem are you working on that would benefit from a pause?

Rearrange



Rearranging is one of nature's prime methods of creation. The moving plates of the earth's crust form new land masses and surface features. The shuffling of the DNA genetic deck through sex produces new life forms.

Similarly, rearranging your resources can create new ideas. Try putting your ending in the middle, or the center on the top, or the inside on the outside, or the left on the right.

How can you rearrange things?

Reverse



Reversing how you look at a situation can open up new possibilities and dislodge assumptions. Example: when everyone else is gazing at a glorious sunset, why not turn around to see the blues and violets behind you. What do you notice when you look at a coffee cup? Its design or color? Reverse your focus and look at the space inside -- that's what gives it its functional value.

Example: spend a minute describing a current problem. If you're a male, describe it from the female viewpoint. If you're a female, do the reverse.

How can you reverse the way you look at your situation or idea?

See! Hear! Taste! Feel! Smell!



Pay attention to a wide variety of different information. If you're visually oriented, focus on the "sound" or "smell" of a situation. If you're analytically oriented, focus on how something feels. If you're intuitive, concentrate on the logic.

What other senses can you use to develop your mind, expand your thinking?

See The Positive



"The human mind likes strange ideas as little as the body likes a strange protein and resists it with a similar energy," notes scientist W. I. Beveridge.

When you are faced with new challenges or new ideas, focus initially on their positive and interesting features. This will counteract a natural negative bias and help you to adjust or accept them with greater ease.

What's positive about the new ideas or challenges you are currently facing?

Set A Deadline



For many people, the ultimate inspiration is the deadline. That's when you put away your excuses and get down to the business of making your idea happen.

So, what's your objective? Can you state it in a simple sentence. What are the three key things you'll need to do to reach it?

Where is your sense of urgency? What tight deadlines can you give yourself?

Simplify



Editor: "I like your book except for the ending."

Author: "What's wrong with the ending?"

Editor: "It should be closer to the beginning."

What can you edit out of a current project or idea to make it better? What can you streamline or simplify?

Slay A Dragon



Long ago, map makers sketched dragons on maps as a sign to sailors that they would be entering unknown territory at their own risk.

Some sailors took this sign literally and were afraid to venture on. Others saw the dragons as a sign of opportunity, a door to virgin territory. Similarly, each of us has a mental map of the world complete with dragons.

**Where or how does fear bold you back?
What dragons can you slay?**

Solve The Right Problem



"I'm not returning until you fix it," bandleader Count Basie told a club owner whose piano was always out of tune. A month later Basie got a call informing him that everything was fine.

When he returned, the piano was still out of tune. "You said you fixed it!" an irate Basie exclaimed. "I did," came the reply. "I had it painted."

Are you solving the right problem? Is there a more significant one that you're overlooking?

Take A Whack At It



You can't hit a home run unless you step up to the plate. You can't catch fish unless you put your line into the water. You can't make your idea a reality unless you **take ACTION!**

If you want to be a singer, go sing. Sing in the shower. Sing for your friends. Join the choir. Audition for a musical. **Start NOW!**

As adman Carl Ally put it, "Either you let your life slip away by not doing the things you want to do, or you get up and do them."

How can you take a whack at your idea? How can you take action right now?

Think Like A Kid



A high school teacher drew a dot on the blackboard and asked the class what it was. "A chalk dot on the blackboard," was the only response.

"I'm surprised at you," the teacher said, " I did this exercise with a group of kindergartners and they thought of fifty different things it could be: a squashed bug, a owl's eye, a cow's head. They had their imaginations in high gear."

As Picasso put it, "Every child is an artist. The challenge is to remain an artist after you grow up."

What would a six year old see if he/she were looking at your idea or project?

What's Out of Whack



Remember, everything you put out into the world reflects back on you. So...be critical and sense what's out of whack with your product or idea.

The worst thing you can do is put a piece of garbage out there with your name on it... Your reputation is your number one asset.

**What's lacking with your product or idea?
What doesn't feel right about it?**