

Book Summary: *The Coaching Habit* by Michael Bungay Stanier

Big Ideas & Best Quotes

Toby Sinclair

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The Coaching Habit book is NOT about turning you into a coach. It's about making you a leader, a manager, a human being who's more coach-like. This means building this simple but difficult new habit: Stay curious a little longer, rush to action and give advice a little more slowly.



3 Big Ideas

- **Big Idea 1** - Ask these 7 [coaching habit questions](#) that cover the majority of situations a manager might find themselves in.
- **Big Idea 2** - For a manager to become an effective coach they need to build new habits. To begin with, it will be unnatural and difficult to ask rather than tell.
- **Big Idea 3** - Coaching should be a daily, informal act, not an occasional, formal "It's Coaching Time!" event.



Two Coaching Habit Quotes

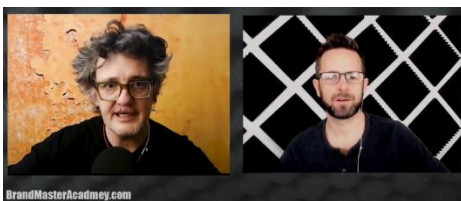
The Coaching Habit book summary quotes:

- One of the most compelling things you can do after asking a question is to genuinely listen to the answer. Stay curious, my friend.
- Tell less and ask more. Your advice is not as good as you think it is.

"Coaching tends to be a conversation that aims to help unlock another person's potential."
3 skills needed for great coaching conversations are **ACTIVE listening**, Asking **powerful QUESTIONS**,
and developing **SELF-AWARENESS**." [Toby Sinclair](#)

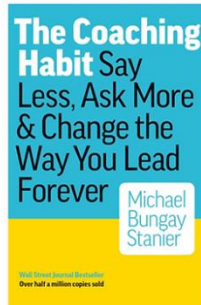


THE COACHING HABIT | [Core Message](#), 5:51 min.



7 Strategic Questions |
[Focus, Strategic & Learning Questions](#) 6:05 Min

**Tell less and ask more.
Your advice is not as good
As you think it is.**



Synopsis:

“Coaching is an essential skill for leaders. But for most busy, overworked managers, coaching employees is done badly, or not at all. They’re just too busy, and it’s too hard to change.

But what if managers could coach their people in 10 minutes or less?

In Michael Bungay Stanier’s *The Coaching Habit*, coaching becomes a regular, informal part of your day so managers and their teams can work less hard and have more impact.

Drawing on years of experience, Bungay Stanier reveals how to unlock your peoples’ potential using seven essential coaching questions.

- Get straight to the point in any conversation with The Kickstart Question
- Stay on track during any interaction with The Awe Question
- Save hours of time for yourself with The Lazy Question, and hours of time for others with The Strategic Question
- Get to the heart of any interpersonal or external challenge with The Focus Question and The Foundation Question” -Audible

Key notes:



- Why coaching others helps you: It lets you work less hard and have more impact
- Allows you to break 3 vicious circles:
 1. Creating over-dependence
 2. Getting overwhelmed
 3. Becoming disconnected

Why build a coaching habit?

Why build a coaching habit?

Coaching can help you provide more effective support to your employees and co-workers. You'll also learn skills that can help you become the ultimate coach for yourself.

The change of behaviour at the heart of what this book is about is this: a little more asking people questions and a little less telling people what to do.

Busy managers need to find ways to empower and motivate their teams without becoming a bottleneck. Taking a coaching approach helps build resourcefulness within your team members.

Coaching helps you break free from three vicious cycles:

- Overdependence on the manager
- Getting overwhelmed with requests
- Becoming disconnected from your team

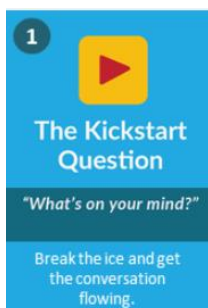
Four reasons why coaching doesn't stick after training:

1. Coaching training is often overly theoretical, too complicated, a little boring and divorced from the reality of busywork.
2. It's hard to translate new insights into action and do things differently.
3. The seemingly simple behaviour change of giving a little less advice and asking a few more questions is surprisingly difficult. Managers have spent years delivering advice and getting promoted for it.
4. Managers do not get good coaching from their own manager. It's a vicious cycle of ineffective coaching.



The Seven Coaching Habit Questions

The Seven Essential Coaching Habit Questions



1: The Kickstart Question - "What's on Your Mind?"

One of the reasons managers don't coach more often than they do is that they don't know how to start.

This question is a really simple way to start any coaching conversation. It helps you quickly get to the real conversation.

You're not telling them or guiding them. You're showing them the trust and granting them the autonomy to make the choice for themselves.

If people need a nudge, there are typically three areas that can be explored in the workplace:

- Projects —any challenges around the actual content.
- People —any issues with team members/colleagues/other departments/bosses/customers/clients.

- Patterns—if there's a way that you're getting in your own way, and not showing up in the best possible way.



2: The AWE Question - And what else?

The first answer someone gives you is almost never the only answer, and it's rarely the best answer.

"And what else?" is the quickest and easiest way to uncover and create new possibilities.

This question is great to surface all of the topics an employee might want to talk about in a 1:1. It's also good to generate solutions to problems. The first idea is rarely the best so keep asking "and what else?" will help generate more elegant solutions.

One of the most compelling things you can do after asking a question is to genuinely listen.



3: The Focus Question - What's the Real Challenge Here for You?

not the first problem.

people to jump around different topics. It's also common that you might feel there is a "Story behind the story". This question helps cut through to the heart of the matter.

Something to be aware of is when the person brings up a topic related to someone else. The key thing to know here is that you can coach only the person in front of you. So, when this happens, use this question to bring the focus back to what's in the control of the person you are coaching.

Part of what makes the Focus Question work so well are those two final words, "for you." A 1997 study involving a fairly convoluted series of math problems focused on the impact of having the word "you" as part of a math problem's description. The researchers found that when the word "you" was present, the questions needed to be repeated fewer times, and the problems were solved in a shorter amount of time and with more accuracy. You can take this insight and add it to all of the questions you ask people. Adding "for you" to a question helps people figure out the answers faster and more accurately.

When asking this question it can be tempting to ask the following up question "Why is this important to you?"

As much as possible try to avoid questions that start with why.

Two reasons:

1. your "Why... ?" comes across as "What the hell were you thinking?" It's only downhill from there.
2. You move into problem-solving mode. You ask why because you want more detail. You want more detail because you want to fix the problem. And suddenly you're back in the vicious circles of overdependence and overwhelm.

Stick to questions starting with "What" and avoid questions starting with "Why."



4: The Foundation Question - "What Do You Want?"

It takes courage to ask for what you want, knowing that the answer may be No. It's also hard to ask in a way that means you are clearly heard and understood. As such, Managers can use this direct question to help people express what they want. Managers should be patient and listen to the responses. It's likely people will struggle to fully express what they want.

"The single biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place." - George Bernard Shaw

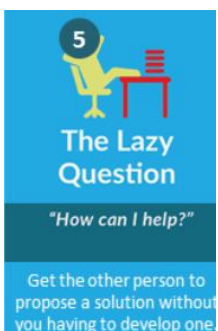
In this question get comfortable with silence. Bite your tongue, and don't fill the silence. It will be uncomfortable, but it creates space for learning and insight.

Silence is often a measure of success.

As people express what they want, understand the difference between, Wants and Needs

Wants are the surface requests, the tactical outcomes we'd like from a situation. A want could be anything from getting a report done by a certain date to understanding whether you need to attend a meeting or not. This kind of information is what typically shows up in response to our question, "What do you want?"

Needs go deeper and identifying them helps you pull back the curtain to understand the more human driver who might be behind the want.



5: The Lazy Question - How Can I Help?

"The minute we begin to think we have all the answers, we forget the questions." - Madeleine L'Engle

Edgar Schein has untangled the paradox of being helpful in his excellent book Helping. At its crux is the insight that when you offer to help someone, you "one-up" yourself: you raise your status and you lower hers, whether you mean to or not.

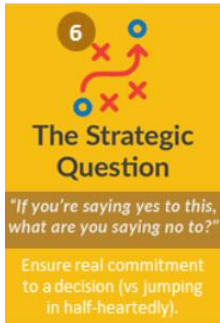
The power of "How can I help?" is twofold.

1. You are encouraging your colleague to make a direct and clear request.
2. It stops you from thinking that you know how best to help and leaping into action.

The more direct version of "How can I help?" is "What do you want from me?"

What's essential to realize is that regardless of the answer you receive, you have a range of responses available to you:

1. "Yes"
2. "No, I can't do that" is another option. Having the courage to say No is one of the ways you stop being so "helpful."
3. "I can't do that... but I could do [insert your counter-offer]" is a nice middle ground. Don't just give them a No; give them some other choices.
4. "Let me think about that."
5. "I'm not sure—I'll need to check a few things out."



6: The Strategic Question - If You're Saying Yes to This, What Are You Saying No To?

"The essence of strategy is choosing what not to do." - Michael Porter

This question can help people understand the impact on projects, people and patterns.

Projects

- What projects do you need to abandon or postpone?
- What meetings will you no longer attend?
- What resources do you need to divert to the Yes?

People

- What expectations do you need to manage?
- From what Drama Triangle dynamics will you extract yourself?
- What relationships will you let wither?

Patterns

- What habits do you need to break?
- What old stories or dated ambitions do you need to update?
- What beliefs about yourself do you need to let go of?

Five Strategy Questions:

1. What is our winning aspiration?
2. What impact do you want to have in and on the world?
3. Where will we play?
4. How will we win?
5. What management systems are required?

Roger Martin



7: The Learning Question - "What Was Most Useful for You?"

You want to help them learn so that they become more competent, more self-sufficient and more successful.

People don't really learn when you tell them something. They don't even really learn when they do something. They start learning, start creating new neural pathways, only when they have a chance to recall and reflect on what just happened.

Your job as a manager and a leader is to help create the space for people to have those learning moments.

"What was most useful here for you?" is a strong and positive way to finish a conversation. Not only do you help people to see and then embed the learning from the conversation, but by finishing on a "this was useful" note, people are going to remember the experience more favorably than they otherwise might.