

FINDING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

“Which questions guide our lives? Which questions do we make our own? Which questions deserve our undivided and full personal commitment. Finding the right questions is crucial to finding the right answers.”

-Henri Nouwen

Jacqueline Kelm, author of *Appreciative Living*, believes that we live in a world our questions create. She wrote, “The internal and external questions we ask steer our thinking, attention, and images in one direction or another which in turn directs decisions and creates our experience.”

Most of us realize how important questions are in our daily interactions—it seems we are continually asking a question or responding to one. However, we are often less aware of **the questions that we continually ask ourselves.**

Our internal dialogue exists so automatically that we are barely aware it is happening. What develops are **patterns of thinking** that shape the way we view ourselves, our lives, and the world in which we live and work.

Kelm explained that although it is impossible to monitor every thought that runs through our brains, it is possible to **become more aware of the question and answer “habits”** that guide our lives. She wrote, “What we can do is realize these thought processes are going on, appreciate the value they provide, and make a point to ask questions in a more intentional way at appropriate times.”

Kelm also believes that **what we pay attention to grows:**

It is important to ask about what we want more of, and not less. Our attention will create our experience, and if we focus on lack, we create more lack.

In other words, if we choose to study success, we will not only find it, but more success will be generated. Lou Tice, creator of the *Investment in Excellence* program, describes the same concept in this way: “You move toward that which you think about.”

Similarly, Dan Sullivan, founder of Strategic Coach, Inc., has long promoted **the power and value of “strategic questions.”** For many years he has used one question in particular to foster clarity of vision and motivate positive change:

If we were having this discussion three years from today, and you were looking back over those three years, what has to have happened in your life, both personally and professionally, for you to feel happy with your progress?

What Sullivan has discovered is that this question provides a framework that enables individuals to simplify their complex lives. They gain clarity when they identify their top

priorities and what will make them feel satisfied with their progress. The result is heightened awareness and a new confidence that will lead to important decisions and action steps.

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