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"Tough Love"

CLIENT QUESTIONS THAT GET GREAT RESULTS

With Julia Sarver

Have you ever wondered why your clients sign up to work with you-but then never actually follow through on what you suggest?

Here's the truth about great coaches: they KNOW when it's time to break out the "tough love" questions so their clients can get the results they've wanted for years.

You don't need to know more about nutrition to get great results from your clients

You need to learn how to ask better questions!

Here's why tough love questions make the difference:

- ▷ Because no matter what you know, if you can't help your client figure out how to change her habits, she won't get the great results you know that diet and lifestyle change can deliver.
- ▷ I've been coaching for almost 10 years, and I know that the tough questions I ask are the make it or break it factor for my clients. These questions have helped my clients lose weight, change careers, and end unsupportive relationships.
- ▷ If you want to become a better health coach, check out these powerful 'tough love' coaching questions that will help your client make a move, and will help YOU become a better coach.

All my best,

Julia

Question 1:

On a scale of 1-10, how important is this to you?

When to use it: This question is most impactful before working with a client to gain an understanding of how committed they are to working with you. You want to be sure people say at least a 7, and ideally, they're saying 8, 9, or 10. You can also use this question halfway through a coaching program to find out if they are still committed, or if the focus of your work together needs to change. In this case, you could say, "On a scale of 1-10, how important is this to you now?" or "Is this still a 9 in level of importance?"

Question 2:

What will happen if you don't change?

When to use it: I use this question at the beginning of my work with clients, generally in the first session or the 'getting to know you' session before we are officially working together. This question helps you understand what's at stake for the client working with you. The answers might range from "nothing" to "I will get really sick" or "I'll regret it for the rest of my life".

Question 3:

How will you know?

When to use it: I ask my clients this question when they are talking about success in broad strokes or aren't creating goals that are measurable. For example, if a client says, "I just want to feel better", I'll ask: How will you know when you're feeling better? If they're not sure, you can follow up with, "What will be different? Will the feelings in your body change? Will you think different thoughts? Something else?"

Question 4:

If you did know the answer, what would it be?

When to use it: This question is a great pattern interrupt when your client is having a hard time answering a question, or says they don't know. This question is often enough to shake them out of their rut and provide a fresh perspective. A good follow-up to this question if they still say they don't know is: If you had to guess, what would you say?

Question 5:

How do you stop yourself?

When to use it: This question is another pattern interrupt when your client tells you they just haven't been able to change in the past. Their answer will give you clues into the "why" of their resistance – do they not actually know what to do? Do they need more skills? Or is there a belief in the way? This question allows them to start to dismantle the beliefs and habits they have in place that allow them to stay stuck.

Question 6:

What would you do if you knew you could not fail?

When to use it: This question helps us get to our client's deepest desires. One of the interesting things about coaching work is that we often are able to crack open our client's deep-held beliefs and blocks, and this question helps us (and them) understand what it is they truly want. A powerful alternative is: "What would you do if you knew it was okay to fail?"

Question 7:

What would _____ do for you?

When to use it: This question is the beginning of a series of questions you can ask that get to the root reason a person wants to work with you. For example, you might ask "What will losing weight do for you?" Answer: it will help me fit in my clothes. "What will fitting in your clothes do for you?" Answer: it will help me feel better about myself. "What will feeling better about yourself do for you?" Answer: It will allow me to stop feeling so bad about myself.

Question 8:

According to whom?

When to use it: This is another great pattern interrupt, and is especially effective if you suspect your client is holding on to beliefs that may not be theirs. Many of us accept beliefs as though they are true about reality. If your client says, "I'll never feel good about myself until I lose weight", you can ask, "According to whom?"

Question 9:

What's that like for you?

When to use it: This is a great exploratory question and one I use often. What's so impactful is that there is no judgment and no assumption on your part when you ask this question – the client can really go anywhere from here. This question is especially useful when you're exploring painful topics.

Question 10:

Tell me more, or Say more about that.

When to use it: Although this is technically not a question, this is one of the most useful phrases I use in my coaching practice as I'm getting to know a client and working to learn their map of the world. "Tell me more" or "Say more" about that is a good way to dig deeper without asking a specific question or pointing the conversation in a direction - rather, this technique lets the client lead you.

Question 11:

What's the decision you'd like to make about that?

When to use it: This question is perfect as you are wrapping up the conversation and when you'd like to find out what the client will do about the topic you've discussed. It also provides a great starting point for your next session. "Last session, you decided that you wanted to XYZ. How did that go?"

Question 12:

Six months/one year/five years from now, what's the decision you'll wish you had made?

When to use it: This question is useful not just for clients but also for ourselves! This question is helpful when we are faced with making a difficult decision. Even though the decision in the moment can feel impossible, I've found that when I ask my clients and even friends and family what their future self will wish they had done, the answer becomes immediately clear.

Question 13:

I'm curious...I'm wondering...

When to use it: These phrases are a great option when you need to transition topics or you have a hard question ask. They work as 'softeners' and can allow you to ask harder questions without them feeling as intrusive or abrupt.

Question 14:

Can I just check with you about something?

When to use it: This is another phrase I'll use as a softener, especially when I feel like a client is avoiding an answer or if there is more underlying their initial response. I often rely on my intuition when I use this question and I'll ask it I feel a client is avoiding an answer or giving conflicting answers.

Bonus Tips:

- If you ever get stuck and aren't getting an answer, you can simply say, "Let me ask this another way" and then move onto another question.
- Most of our clients are NOT used to being asked questions like this. Some are happy to play along, and others have a harder time and might get confused or even defensive. Remember to stay light and open, and release your own attachment to the outcome. You can always come back to them and say, "I might be wrong, but I'm getting the sense that you're not comfortable. Is that right?" or even just "Can I check in with you? What's happening for you right now?"
- Asking high level coaching questions takes practice! You might choose one or two questions to practice with before you dive in fully with these.



Are you looking for a health coach community for when you have questions, need support, or just want to vent? Come join me and 2200+ health coaches in my free, online community - [join us here](#).

Hi, I'm Julia.

When I first started health coaching, I had no idea what I was doing. I remember trying everything I could think of to grow my list and find more clients, and still not being able to make it work. That's when I added a short group program to my practice, and everything changed. Since then, I've worked with hundreds of clients, and now I show health coaches how they can sell out their programs, too.



[Connect with me + other health coaches in our online community.](#)

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