

Real and Fake Questions

*AKA learning questions versus judging questions**

Stating your truth directly and without obfuscation minimizes guesswork and “reading in” on the part of listeners.

Real (Learning) questions:

- Are curious and open.
- Seek to bring new information or points of view to the table.
- Require suspending judgment.
- May start with “What” or “How.”
- Are often preceded by the asker’s view point AND clearly separate the question from the view point.

Fake(Judging) questions:

- Are often leading or rhetorical.
- Usually contain the asker’s own point of view.
- Can be ineffectually used to pave the way.
- May be judgmental.
- May start with a negative contraction, e.g. shouldn’t, wouldn’t, couldn’t.
- May start with “why.”

** Terms ‘learning questions’ and ‘judging questions’ are from the book ‘Change Your Questions: Change Your Life’ by Marilee Adams.*



Peeler Associates

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Identifying Fake Questions

Are these real ('Learning') or fake ('Judging') questions?

1. Would you like to wait until John can be here?
2. Do you really think that it is wise to spend money right now?
3. What concerns do have about the project plan?
4. What do you think about holding off on that for a while?
5. Do you think it would be a good idea to let her go?
6. I'm concerned that it will take too long to complete. What are your thoughts on the proposed plan?
7. That's not what I meant. Why are you getting so huffy?
8. Is there anything that you think I might do to better communicate our intentions?

Activity: Generating Better Questions

How might you improve these questions to be more genuine and information seeking?

1. Don't you think that might take way too long to accomplish?
2. Did you really think that you would be able to get her to agree?
3. Couldn't we just try to do it this way?
4. How do you think that Jane is doing with her new responsibilities?
5. Do you worry that it will be too late?