



# *Passion for Life Coaching, LLC*

*Making Deliberate Choices for a Fulfilling Life*

Newsletter by Suzette Langley, Life Coach and MSW

## **Just Ask**

October 2009

Michael J. Marquardt, a professor of human resources and international affairs at George Washington University and author of *Leading with Questions: How Leaders Find the Right Solutions by Knowing What to Ask* says, "You don't have to have the answer to ask a great question. A great question will ultimately get an answer."

A friend, who is a school teacher, told me this story. One day, as the children played at recess, a usually very calm, good-natured little boy hit a little girl, who was his best friend. The playground monitors rushed over as the little girl stood crying. One monitor immediately reprimanded the boy in an angry voice, "You can't hit other people. That's wrong! What were you thinking?! And, boys don't hit girls!"

Now, both children stood sobbing. The other playground monitor sat down with the children and asked only one question of the little boy, "Why did you hit her?" Through tears, he explained, "There was a bee on her and I didn't want my friend to get stung." The monitor glanced down and, indeed, laying on the ground by the little girl, was a bee.

What a difference great questions make! Effective and empowering questions serve several purposes.

1. **They create clarity.** What did you learn about the little boy through one question?
2. **They construct better relationships.** How did your opinion of the little boy shift when you understood his reason?
3. **They inspire people to reflect and see things in fresh, unpredictable ways and encourage breakthrough thinking.** What would you ask the little boy to help him find other solutions to protecting his friend from bees?
4. **They challenge assumptions.** What assumptions did the first playground monitor make? How did those change with one question?

Open-ended questions do not seek specific answers. They allow curiosity and exploration. Good open-ended questions can start with what, how, when, where, who, why, tell me, or I wonder.

By asking your significant others, children, coworkers, and friends the right questions, you can minimize miscommunications stemming from making assumptions. You also help them develop their ability to solve problems, their creativity, and their resourcefulness.

What great questions will you ask of others today?

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