

**Coaching Tip of the Month for Supervisors**

**Putting Powerful Questions into Action**



**Scenario:** During emotionally charged moments, keep questions **neutral**.

**Powerful Questions:**

Instead of: “Are you upset about that?” … Ask: “How do you feel?”

**Why it works:** Asking “are you angry?” carries with it some explicit assumptions; you are assuming you know how other people are feeling (maybe also judging them). These “loaded” questions are far less powerful then neutral questions. Effective coaches give their employees space to fully drive the conversation and avoid including their own perceptions and biases whenever possible. This leads to greater discovery and growth for employees.



**Scenario:** Ask **strength-based** questions early during your standard check-ins

**Powerful Questions:**

Whatis a recent success that you have experienced?

Given our work so far, what have you felt best about?

**Why it works:** Often, check-ins focus on barriers and immediate needs, which can make sense. However, building on areas of strength is a very productive way to drive performance, enhance motivation, build trust and encourage persistence. Allowing areas of momentum more “air time” has many positive effects. First, both parties can learn about hidden opportunities that may not be leveraged to the fullest to solve problems. Most importantly, staff feel that you know about what they do well, and feel valued.

**Scenario:** When working on goal setting, encourage staff to be **specific**.

**Powerful Questions:**

“Which initiatives, specifically, would you like to be more involved in?”

“With which participant do you want to build a more trusting relationship?”

**Why it works:** When you are tempted to be directive, ask these types of questions instead. These questions help employees get practical, plan specific next steps, envision themselves actually doing the hard work, consider road blocks, and consider what information you might have that they need.