Introduction to the Power of Questions

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I was one of those annoying kids that never took books home, I got A's on everything, and I would show up at five minutes before class and look through the book and know what the question were going to be.

And that was my superpower. I peaked out at about 14 years old. They did some standardized testing. I lived in Napa, and I had got the highest score they ever had in the school system.

And they said my IQ was in 160s. It's hard to measure at that point, but probably 162 to 165. But a lot of that was because I was just a sponge for information.

Some of it was I, you know, saw patterns and things and I was actually, that's my greatest skill other than questioning. But I just absorbed massive amounts of information, kind of like chat GPT.

I didn't have context for it, but I have massive amount of content. Hi and welcome to The Balancing Point. so you can restore balance, boost vitality, and enjoy a healthier life every single day.

Hello, and welcome to The Balancing Point. I will be your host today, Katherine Black. And I'm an associate of Dr. John Needers, as well as co-author of The Sweet Spot and The Sweetspot 2 Books.

Today, we will talking about questions. This is actually one of the biggest lessons I think I've learned while working with Dr John Neeters, is the importance of questions, in particular, the quality of these questions we ask.

So why is this an important thing for you? Well, for me, changing the quality of the questions I asked was life-changing. I mean, literally transformative on any level people want to look at transformation.

And so to me it's the core of everything that I do. Now, I have always been one who was just a sponge for information. I was one of those annoying kids that never took books home, got A's on everything, would show up at class five minutes before class and look through the book and know what the questions were going to be.

That was my superpower. I peaked out at about 14 years old. They did some standardized testing. I lived in Napa, and I had got the highest score they ever had in the school system.

And they said my IQ was in 160s. It's hard to measure at that point, but probably 162 to 165. But a lot of that was because I was just a sponge for information.

Early Learning, Pattern Recognition, and Curiosity

Some of it was I, you know, saw patterns and things and I actually, that's my greatest skill other than questioning. But I just absorbed massive amounts of information, kind of like chat GPT.

I didn't have context for it, but I have massive amount of content. You ask a question about almost anything. and I would come up with an answer. And if I didn't know the answer, I had enough ability to create connections that I could come with the right answer and it was very frustrating for my teachers.

My mom says that in second and third grade, I would come home after school and read the encyclopedias. And I can remember that and really getting into depth as much as I could, like intricate things.

I understood the women's menstrual cycle when I was in, in 2nd grade. Then in third grade, we got some new neighbors. There were five kids, four young boys and a young girl, and they were all sports freaks.

So from third-grade on, about the middle of third grad, I didn't read encyclopedias anymore. I just played a lot of sports every day, all day after school, on weekends, etc.

And I went through life and I did okay. I had a couple of pretty good jobs and you know I was somewhat charming at that point and i could get along with people and so I just kind of made my way.

And then I stumbled into traditional Chinese medicine and, I've talked about that on a few other podcasts, but basically I met this brilliant, brilliant practitioner of traditional chinese medicine, a brilliant herbalist.

and started studying with them. But again, my orientation was, he said do A, so I did A. He said, do B, I do did B. but I didn't study on my own. I just went to class.

So I really was not a very good student at all, but you know, meandered along. And then one day I'm driving down Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley and I drive by this martial arts studio and it says Master Peter Ralston.

a winner of the 1978 Worlds Martial Arts Championship. So that kind of got my attention. But so I stopped and I watched through the window and they were doing martial arts that I'd never seen before.

Nothing like them. Yeah, so that lured me inside. And once I got inside, it was very packed in there. And I looked around and there was one of my assistant teachers from my other class, my another Tai Chi class.

Right? So I figured, well, there must be something going on here and I really liked her. So, I decided to study for a while. And then I kind of fell into, and this is kind the story of life.

I fall into a lot of amazing opportunities. You know, keep your door open. But I've been able to study with some of the most brilliant people in many different fields just because I was there and they were there.

And so I worked with them. Peter was one of those. His love was for ontology, the study of being, pure beingness. After I'd been there for a little while, he was doing a four-day intensive.

They called it an enlightenment intensive and In that domain, so there are many types of questions. Most are requests for information. Where's the bathroom?

Where can I get a cup of coffee? Things like that. And then there's some which are designed to create communication. How are you doing? And really meaning it, right?

But then, there is deep, deep questioning to discover. things that we don't normally even think about discovering. So I spent this workshop asking the question, who am I?

Who am, I for four days and half the time I was a listening partner and have the.

Discovering Ontology and Self-Inquiry

I, was, a communicating partner. One partner would say, experience who you are and communicate that to me. And then they would just be a vessel, just a, vessel to get your communication with zero judgment at all.

And it was wild. I didn't know anything like this actually even existed. Um, I had a minor enlightenment experience, but I Didn't even know that because I don't Even know what our purpose was.

Why were you doing this? Right. And that was, yeah, you say minor was on the nation, the nature of who am I, which is called a mouse enlightenment generally.

It's just kind of a, a peak, But that, that Was enough to kind Of blow me away. it's like, Oh, i'm not a martial artist. I'm not a Democrat. I am not Republican.

And that had never occurred to me before, ever. You know, because I was always focused outward. It was a great protector to know all the answers. Then when I turned my attention inward, introspectively, it was literally a mindblower, not figuratively.

So I continued to work with Ralston. did more and more workshops with him. Then I started assisting his workshops and then I starting leading some of them.

Of course, if you're going to lead something or teach it, you have to be better than anybody else at doing it. Right? Otherwise there's no pain. And so there are a series of questions that were set out by some people that we're very advanced.

Who am I? Then what am i? And then what is another? There's a serious of question. And, so, when I experienced what I am, that was like, whoa. I mean, it was so freeing.

It was the most free-ing experience I've ever had. And I developed the awareness, I didn't develop, but I was gifted with the awareness that I had nothing to prove.

I have nothing do except be, and be what I am at that moment, which is unchanging. And so, again, that was my line. And then I was asking a question. I had a great, great partner who was very committed to the truth, whatever that is, not as a thing or as saying, but really, what is.

and I working on the question, What is no distance? And I, at this point, was really committed, I'd stopped dabbling. You know, i was a dabber until I'm 33. Give me a little taste of that, a taste to this, you know I'll come up with some great answers.

Jack of all trades. Exactly. And so at this point, I was deeply committed and the person I working with, her name was Kate, was even more committed than I.

So in the middle, we had a short break during a class, it was called the mind class. and we went out and sat in my van, and instead of BSing or, you know, having a soda, we continued to question and answer and ask the question.

And so I was asking the questions, or actually Kate was actually asking a question, experience no distance and communicate that to me. And I was gifted with the direct experience of no distance, which, you know, it's hard to speak about, but in no-distance, there's no time and there is no thing.

The Taoist arts, they call it Wuji, absolutely nothing. There's Tai Chi, which is absolutely everything, but Wu Ji is the absence. And in the experience of what is no distance, everything is clear.

there is not possibility of anything being out of place, wrong, et cetera. Sounds incredible. Yeah, that totally and completely changed my life. Uh, for about six months, it was a little bit of a struggle.

At that point, I owned a real estate company and I realized that everything I said on some level was alive because you can never accurately communicate your full experience.

And since I was absolutely committed to the truth, It was hard to speak. Right. It's like, Oh boy. Okay. You know, and would have to kind of struggle with it.

eventually, you know, things quieted down a little bit or got a lot louder actually. And so I was able to communicate a bit differently. And I continued to work with Ralston on these questions.

Then I owned a real estate company and I'd had these huge breakthroughs. And, I wanted somehow to bring that into the lives of the people that were working with me.

But I didn't have a language for it. I wasn't going to get real-estate agents to sit with for four days and do an enlightenment intensive, right? That's just not what they were going do.

So then I thought, okay, let me look around.

Experiencing No Distance and Inner Awareness

And I started checking out Anthony Robbins, Tony Robins. He had languaging, not for what Peter was doing, but a bridge from ontological work to how to be in the world, about questioning.

I studied with Tony for quite a while. And the thing that most stuck with me, there are quite a few things, but the most struck with is his saying that the quality of your life is determined by the qualities of the questions.

And that couldn't be more accurate. You know, some people get up in the morning and go, Oh my God, is it going to be another bad day like yesterday? Well, guess what?

Yes, it will. Yeah. Or if you get off and. Wow. What can I contribute today? That's going make this the best day of my life. That's a way different way to approach life or you know can be any number of things But it's really the quality of the questions now I have here.

I'm gonna hold it up. This is my wallet card from 1988 this has been in my Wallet every single day of my life since 1988 because that's when I did my graduation ceremonies with Anthony Robbins and on this card We have the evening questions, like what do you do in the evenings to kind of complete your day, to bring it full circle.

We had the morning questions. And what am I most happy about in my life right now? Now that's gonna really be very different than, oh God, what a horrible day this is gonna be.

So starting with the warning questions ending with evening question and then there's a section called the problem questions And that's what's like for the first one is, right now we're having internet problems, in our office.

And so what is right or great about this problem or this day? Well, what great is we are going to fix this and we going have a better internet system than we've ever had before.

We're doing a lot of broadcasts and had little glitches here and there. and now we're completely redoing it and that's great. That's awesome. It's a little annoying today, but it's, it is great and so the next question is, what's not perfect yet?

Well, What's Not Perfect Yet is we are getting some glitches and sometimes the internet just goes away. So you go through those problem questions and it really takes the problem out of everything.

But what I most want to talk about today is something called the accountability dialogue. Accountability dialogue, huh? Yeah. And so, you know, so much of it's to create observation without judgment.

So I worked with apprentices for many years and martial artists, and most people, it is very difficult to give them feedback without them becoming resistant.

You know, Mary, you know you're you need to step this way when you punch an hour later. Mary. You need the step way this, way, when your punch now or later, marry you, need this step.

This way. When you. Screw you I'm tired of taking this crap from you only here to help you and it's fascinating because I worked with people. I remember this one young woman.

And, uh, I said, okay, when you punch, you have to, it's important that you do this. And I told her how to move her hips and her arm and she wouldn't do it.

I. Okay. Now give up everything else and just do that. She says, well, they can't that and keep my foot in this place. Aha. then let your foot go and just do what I'm teaching you.

But people get stuck in these positions, right? Well, he can't possibly mean that. And so they just create their own reality with that, even with teachers, which is really kind of foolish.

The accountability dialogue is designed to create observation without judgment. Now this one's very recent, it's 1992. Okay, that's, this one's been in my pocket from 1992. Right?

You see kids, right? With their families or, you know, husband and wife, girlfriend, boyfriend, et cetera, employees, whatever. And you'll create, You'll see a lot of resistance created.

It's like, because people are asking the wrong questions. For example. Why questions are almost always misleading and create problems. So if someone says, why did you become an acupuncturist?

I would literally, to be honest, have to download my entire life because everything that I did on some way led me to this place. Now there were, you know, some inflection points.

Tony Robbins and the Quality of Questions

You know I met my first acupuncturist. Okay. Inflection point, I meant Peter Ralston inflexion point. So there are inflections points, but really I'd have to communicate all of it.

And so why questions just open this huge, uh, uncom, incommunicatable problem. But even more importantly than that, so you see, um, mom talking to her son.

Bob, why did you leave the door open? So it usually becomes an accusation. Why did do that? Why didn't you do. Right. So, right. And so you've already set it up to have conflict.

Now, hopefully you can create resolution around that, but why start it? You could always start with, and I learned this a long time ago. Never accuse people of anything.

Always ask them a question. Uh, did you steal the a hundred dollars out of the safe, right? Whatever. But not why did do or you did, but did. Just ask him a questions or did leave the door to the garage open.

Yeah, I did. Okay, great. Thank you. I would appreciate it if you'd shut it because the dogs then get into the garage and when I come home and park my car, the dog's can run out.

Oh, okay. Sure. Now that I know why. And so you can solve so many of these conflicts before they start. So the first question on the accountability dialogue is, Did you make a commitment?

Now, these are very good to do with yourself, right? Like, I made a committment to a podcast today. As you well know, we've gone through about a hundred iterations today of computers not working, of software not work, the internet one not.

I'm learning the computer more and more with all these problems. And so the question is, did you make a commitment? And, so, the answer for me is yes, I made a committment.

Now, it could be, no, i didn't make commitment, and then you go, oh, i thought you did. No, I just said that would be a good idea. So, then, you want to create a commitement if that's indeed important for both of you, or if you're going solo, that it's important to you.

And so that's the cause alignment. And again, these are non-judgmental. It's hard for people to get that at first. But once you go through this dialogue a few times, it becomes clearly it's just about accountability.

Right. Just about telling the truth. So did you make a commitment? If I say, no. Okay. Yes, I did. I made a committment. Second question is, did keep the commitment.

Now, the interesting thing here, is there essentially only two answers. And only one of them is yes. So when I would ask questions, right? I'd say, did you make a commitment or did keep your commitment?

If they even hesitated, you knew they didn't. If you said, well, they knew you didn' And so what's powerful is if they just drop the crap and say no. No, I didn''t keep my commitment.

Great, now we're clear. Yeah. Well, you know, the police had the street blockaded and I had to go three blocks around. I don't care. Right. That's irrelevant.

Did you keep the commitment? And what I would tell them is the more difficult it is to keep commitment, The more power they gain. Right. The more power.

I gave a kid an assignment once of getting a particular book by the next apprentice meeting. And he came in, did you get the book? Well, okay, that means no.

So we went through this whole story, this song and dance about it wasn't in stock and then that the publisher didn't have it in the stock. At least I was impressed that he went to the publishers and I said, was it available anywhere in Well, yeah, they had a copy in France.

Why didn't you go to France? Well that's ridiculous. Okay, I've got a briefcase here and in my briefcases $500,000. So if I promised you the $ 500,00 for getting that book, would you have gotten it?

And they go, well, yeah, okay. Then you don't have a strong commitment because you could have done it. And so to start putting things in that realm, that's where life changes.

That's power comes from. Personal power is the ability to have your word stand in the world, right? Okay, so did you keep the commitment? And they say, well, no.

What got in the way? Now the purpose of that question is to isolate whatever the block is. Well, you know, I put it off for, You know I had it on my list and I Put it Off and then I didn't realize that they were going to be closed on Saturday and Sunday.

So they're supposed to get a plumber to come out.

The Accountability Dialogue Framework

I figured it wasn't an emergency. so I, put It off and they are not open on saturday or sunday. Okay so the plumbing job didn' get done. Right? So what got in the way?

Well, my putting it off. Okay. Now, could you have kept the commitment? And that's, their answer to that has to always be yes, if you're gonna make progress.

Yes, yes I could have the kept commitment. It would have been really difficult, it would've been a hell of a lot of work, but I would could've kept a commitment, great, awesome.

And so, That's really so that they have control, right? You're giving them their power back. Yes. If they go, no, I just couldn't do it. Then they, have no power.

if they can say, yes, Yes, I can do that. I could have done that, then they get their, powerback. They have the ability to create control. Um, and what would have to happen?

And so they're going to have take responsibility. And that sentence, the answer always starts with I. So if you say,

uh, what have had to happened? The first word that has to come out of their mouth is the word I So they say, well, the sun would have had to come up.

That's not, that's, not you have no control over that. What would you not have to do? I would've had. To contact the plumber the first time it came up in my list.

Great. Uh, what are you feeling now? And this is actually to create compassion. They're going, I feel really crappy. I let you down, you know, let myself down.

That's great. You did let me down and you did like yourself down And now you're changing that you are going to change that. Your going develop power. And so this I want you to feel the power that your have.

Because you have committed to doing this. You know that you're capable of doing. So don't waste time feeling bad about it. That doesn't help anybody. It doesn' help you.

Guilt that never helps you and your guilt is not going to help me. Right? So what are you feeling now and what's the lesson? And that's to empower them.

And so they're going kind of reiterate. The lesson is that to act appropriately and promptly and keep my word so that I feel great about. Um, now then you ask another thing, which is, is your commitment consistent with your purpose?

Well, what do you mean? That's a good question. You said you're going to get the plumbing, the plumber out here. Is that consistent? With your. Well yeah, yeah.

My, my purpose is to live in harmony, uh, with everybody in the household. And if I don't get, we're gonna have poop all over the floor and it's not going be very, it was not gonna go very well.

Okay. And you don't need to do this. Are you committed because it's important to you? To you, not to me. Is it important? And that's to create accountability.

So again, if you can imagine in a family, If there was, there were dialogues like that, rather than why did you keep, why didn't you close the door? I did close a door.

Well, no, the doors open. You must have left it open? Well no. And I'm really angry that you always blame me for everything that happens. That's because you do everything bad, right?

And so you get into these horrible situations. Yeah, you're not even talking. Yeah, you're just blaming back and forth and then someone takes their basketball and goes home.

And so by doing the accountability dialogue, and it doesn't have to be word for word and eventually it won't once you get familiar with it, but by creating that, did you create a commitment?

Now I used to do it with my son. I'm going to, I would drive him to school in the morning. And, you know, did you make a commitment to have your shoes on in time so we can leave?

Yeah, I did. And then we go through the accountability dialogue. Now his problem was that he and his mom have very different communication styles. So as he's, when he does get ready and he is ready on time, she'll off and then start asking him questions.

Right? Can you do this after school? I want this done." And he would then freeze and talk to her and we'd be late. So we had a rule, no talking in the morning.

Right. If you want to have those conversations, have them after-school, but not before school, because then you're always going to be And your commitment is to be on time.

And part of that commitment, is because otherwise I won't drive you to school, right? So, I mean, there is a little carrot in the stick there. But again, if you go back to those simple, non-blaming, accountability dialogue types of questions, then things get done magically, simply, and without blame.

So anyway, that's what I have to say about questioning today. I love how it gives you the power over your life again. Yes, I can do things. And it causes you to think outside of the culture that you created of how life should be and allow yourself to grow into ways that have envisioned or the purpose that your wish.

That's amazing. As I experienced and would point out to people I was working with, start with small things, you know? Don't promise that you're gonna…

So when I was with Robbins, The last day of the graduate, so every day you had a stretch and a cookie. And the stretch was you have to do something totally and completely outside of what was reasonable for you to.

Like we did a couple of world record fireworks. We climbed a pole and dove off and grabbed a trapeze. I mean, crazy stuff. But then we had, we have a, a.

A cookie and the cookie was he would bring in. the person that he thought was the best at what they did in the world.

Applying Accountability in Family and Daily Life

And then he would question them so that you could hear their syntax. Like what were they thinking when this occurred? Like, you know, one guy was a dog, the bounty hunter who got big on TV later and got all buffed up.

But when he was with Ralston in 90. He was this little skinny guy, but he had the highest record for bringing in violent felons of any bail person in the world.

And he would bring in more felon in a month, many times more than the entire police department of that city would. So Robbins is questioning him. How do you think about this?

and the bottom line is the way he approached it is he would call the mothers of the people that were on the run and he'd say hi Mary my name is dog the bounty hunter and I'm gonna catch your son And if I don't, and you better hope I catch him, because if i don´t, he's considered armed and dangerous.

Do you know what that means? Well, it means he has a gun. Actually, It means they're supposed to shoot him. Right? He's armed, dangerous, so if anything goes down, other than him laying on the ground with his face down with no weapon, they´re probably gonna shoot them.

Okay. Now what I can promise you is if I arrest your son, he will not be harmed. He'll have to go to jail and do, you know, go through court, et cetera.

But he won't be harm when we arrest him. And you can check and I'll give you all my past people that I have brought in on bail charges and none of them has been hurt.

I promise if you don't tell me where your is, it will end up very bad. The mothers, almost a hundred percent of would tell dog where their kids were, right?

Because he wasn't threatening them. He was promising them to help and to save their precious babies, so he would do that. We'd see one of those every day.

And then the last episode or the day was called Night Out. So you'd show up at this room with an apple, a quarter, and a map. And you had to travel a minimum distance away.

This was in Austin, Texas, and create a difference in the world and get back by the next night. And the stories that

people told, it was crazy. I set up a, um, a series of lectures in the San Antonio school department to teach people about accountability, right?

Another guy got a ride on a plane to France and back. I mean, it was insane. Once you get that level of commitment. And the thing is it creates a reference experience.

Okay. When you go, oh, I don't think I can do this. Now, wait a minute. You had an apple, a quarter and a map, and you change things in the world.

Closing Reflections on Commitment and Growth

So how can you say you can't? Anything's possible. Absolutely. And so, yeah, those are a couple of the people that I really owe a lot to are Peter Rolston and Anthony Robbins.

Wow. Well, thank you for sharing your experience in the stories. It makes me understand even more why the quality of our questions are so important and, and it kind of gets outside of her own thinking or some people say stinking thinking at times and allow ourselves to see things that we may not have been able to before.

And so, so thank. Absolutely. I'd like to thank you all for joining us with The Balancing Point today, and we look forward to seeing you next time. Thank you.

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