



The Magic Questions to Solve any Problem

The Manual for your Car.

In the last article we introduced the 'Magic Questions'. These are a simple set of questions used by people to help them solve their problems. They encourage people to take responsibility for themselves without blaming.

Here is a case study about Ed. As a parent he wanted to more effective, and to have peaceful and happy people.

*'So Ed, I'm hearing about how you want to be more effective and have a peaceful family and happy children, but tell me, **What actions have you been choosing to achieve that?**'*

Ed grimaced.

'To be honest, I have just been letting the children do their own thing, and snapping at them when it gets too much for me.'

So has that worked? or have you been successful in doing this?' I asked.

'No', he replied.

'So what is your plan?'

I gave Ed a notebook and a pen. He wrote. 'I need to change everything!'

'OK', I said. 'Imagine you gave that plan to your team at work. What would they think?'

Ed laughed. 'They'd be overwhelmed and frustrated. Where would they start? What could they do? I really need to make this plan simple and do-able today.'

He took the pen and began to write.

1. 'Tonight I'll switch off the T.V. After my partner and I have cleaned up and the kids are in bed, I'll share with her what I have learned today. I need to get her onside.' Ed corrected himself quickly. 'I mean she has great ideas too. We sometimes talk about them but we don't do anything.' I'll read her Jacqui's story that you gave me.'

2. 'Then we will brainstorm all of our ideas to improve our familyand make sure we get some time to ourselves. I think a lot of our reactivity comes from being too busy and trying to do too much.'

Ed was quiet for a while. Then he smiled and wrote.

3. 'This is so big that we need to make a mind map! It's so easy and helps us break it down into small bits we can work on.'

I finished our session by explaining a simple acronym, WASP. This is an easy way to remember the questions to ask when you want to solve any problem.

- 1. What do you **WANT**?*
- 2. What have been your **ACTIONS**?*
- 3. Have you been **SUCCESSFUL**? (give yourself a score out of 10)*
- 4. If you have not been successful, what is your new **PLAN**?*

Next week Ed and Sandra came up with the following plan.

ED AND SANDRA'S PLAN

What do we want?

- *We want to be happy, relaxed, have better relationships and to be better organized.*
- *We want our kids to be happy, well adjusted and responsible.*
- *We want them to have a successful and meaningful life.*

What have we been doing? (our Actions)

- *Rushing, yelling, punishing, bribing, threatening, nagging, blaming criticizing.*
- *Has this been successful? No*

So what is our PLAN?

1. As parents, be responsible for meeting our own needs.

- *Stay on the Open Roads.*
- *Adequate sleep. To bed by 10.30pm*
- *Exercise – 3 times each week.*
- *Eat healthier food*
- *Make time to have fun together as a couple each week.*

2. Help our children learn to be responsible.

- *During the next few weeks spend some special focused time with each child. Listen to their ideas about what they want in the family. Negotiate if what they want is not realistic.*
- *Help create a unique picture with each child that represents their gifts, strengths and what they want in their life and family.*
- *Draw pictures and cut and paste pictures from magazines. This will represent their personal vision of what they want.*
- *Then ask the children; What will you need to do to achieve all of this? Get their ideas and help create a chart to make life easier in the family, and improve the skills they need to get what they want.*

What will we do to help the children achieve this?

- *Encourage children daily - notice improvement and effort.*
- *When plans don't work, keep off the Dead End Roads.*
- *Talk to the kids, help them improve their plans.*
- *Keep asking the WASP questions, especially,*
- *Is what you are doing helping you get what you want?*

To get buy-in from the children, have a short Family Meeting weekly.

- *Make sure we have drinks and some good food.*
- *Start by telling the children that we want to work on ways to make our family happier. Ask for their ideas.*
- *Introduce the Open and Dead End Roads charts and post them in a prominent place. Tell them that we will be trying to use the Open Roads and suggest that everyone will be happier if they use these roads.*
- *Talk about one Open Road each week. Lead a discussion about what each word means. Give examples of each road and tell stories that demonstrate how using the open roads lead to happier relationships.*
- *Each week, ask for suggestions for fun things to do as a family, and each child takes a turn to choose.*

Boundaries

- *As parents, we will always explain if finances, time or circumstances prevent certain activities. Although children make suggestions, as parents we always have the final say. The main guide for the family will be the Open Roads. Our family motto is; Everyone will be safe and loved in our family, and take responsibility for meeting their own needs without stopping others from meeting their needs.*

How to Deal with Dead End Road Behaviours

- 1. Keep on the Open Roads ourselves, and keep connecting with each child.***
- 2. Give one reminder, if our child's behaviour is likely to hurt them or someone else.***

3. There is a very clear understanding in our family:

- *If there is conflict or disagreement, we always work it out using WASP or the Open Roads.*
- *Always allow our emotions and the children's emotions to settle before we discuss the W.A.S.P. process*
- *Sometimes, we just need some space. Allow everyone to find a relaxed space to work things out for themselves before they work it out with family members.*
- *Use the strategies from Doug Dragster's Magic Book and The Get Happier Toolbox. Watch a video of problem solving with Ivan.*

Remember we support each other.

We are a parenting team. Take time out if needed.

Ask each other for help!