

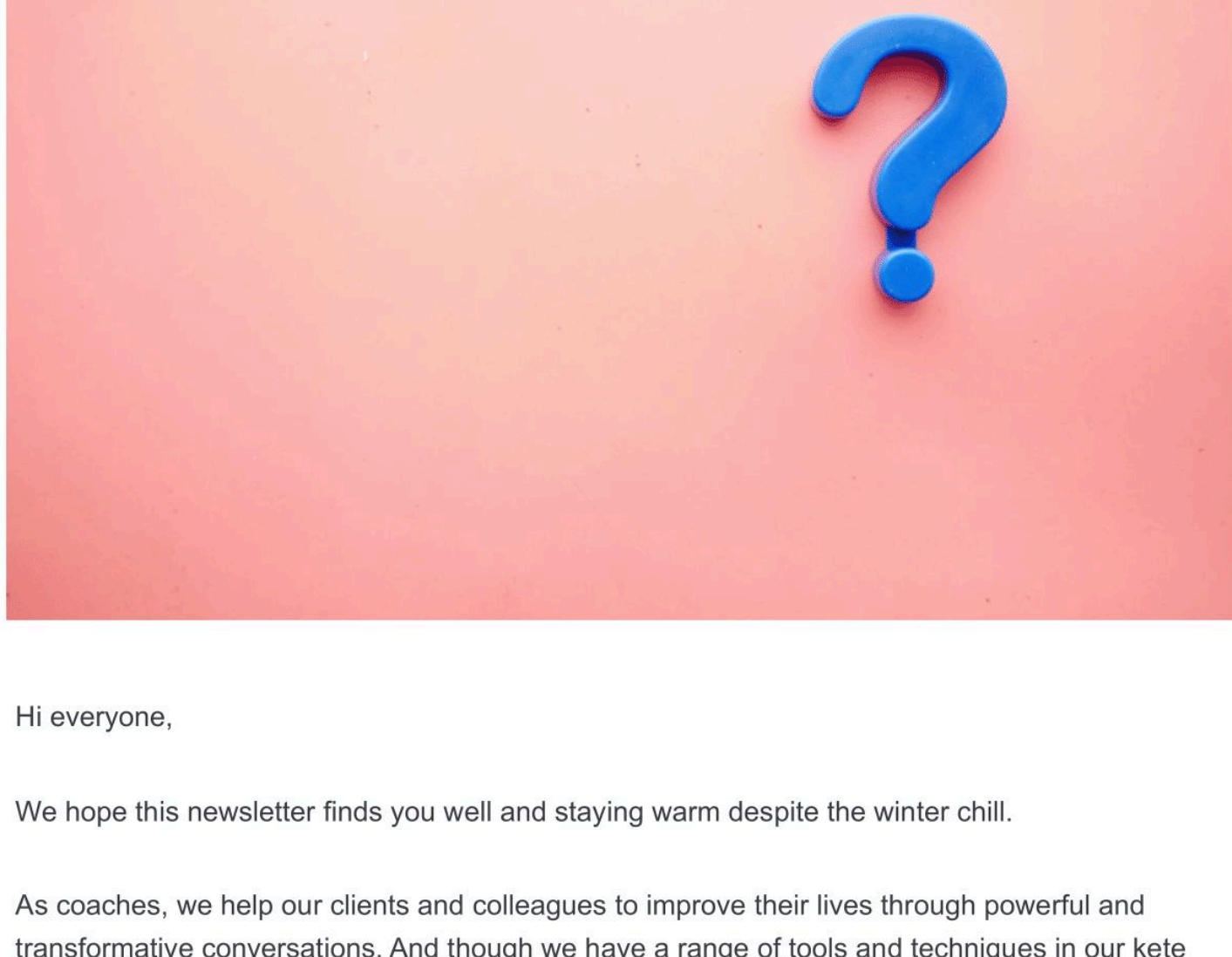


THE ICC ACADEMY NEWSLETTER

THE NEWSLETTER FOR GROWING GREAT COACHES

JUNE 2025

Powerful coaching questions for your kete



Hi everyone,

We hope this newsletter finds you well and staying warm despite the winter chill.

As coaches, we help our clients and colleagues to improve their lives through powerful and transformative conversations. And though we have a range of tools and techniques in our kete (basket), one of our most powerful tools is also deceptively simple: a **good question**.

Today we're going 'back to basics' and share some of our favourite coaching questions. We've loosely organised these using the GROW model that people often step through in a session: setting a **goal** or intent, discussing their current **reality**, exploring **options**, and then deciding what they **will** do, before the session wraps up. Let's get started.

What would be the best use of our time, today?

After settling in and building rapport with your client, you'll want to shift into the substantive part of the session. This question helps your client prioritise what matters most to them, amid all the possible topics they could discuss.

What's the real challenge here, for you?

This question comes from *The Coaching Habit* by Michael Bungay Stanier. It helps clients dig beneath the presenting issues and articulate what they truly care about.

For example, say your coaching client is talking about their work week and how they feel highly stressed and close to burnout. When you ask, "What's the real challenge here, for you?" they might pause and realise that they're burned out by the kind of work they're doing—filling their days with emails and firefighting short-term issues, rather than focusing on meaningful, long-term work. Or they might realise that the stress is affecting their marriage, their relationship with their kids, or their health.

(Side note: this question also adapts well for everyday work conversations—try "What problem are you trying to solve here?" It helps teams clarify their focus and align on the core issue. Otherwise, you risk generating a wide range of solutions to a wide range of problems—making it hard to agree on a meaningful path forward.)

Paint 'success' for me

This prompt is adapted from Brené Brown, who often asks her teammates to "paint done for me" when delegating work. When your client *paints success*, they're describing, often in vivid detail, what a good outcome looks like for them.

For example, if your client wants to move from an operational role into a more strategic one, you might say, "Paint success for me." They might explain that, in a strategic role, they'd have more opportunity to weigh options and make judgment calls, rather than simply executing others' decisions. Or they might say they'd enjoy leading projects with bigger budgets, or having greater access to senior leaders and learning more advanced leadership skills.

Success will look different for every client because it's shaped by different underlying drivers, which you can explore with the next question...

What would that bring you?

This question helps uncover deep-seated desires and values. It becomes even more powerful when it's repeated, creating a reflective chain that leads to underlying motivations.

Let's continue with the previous example: a client wants to move into a strategic role because they want to think through the options themselves and decide how to proceed. Imagine the conversation:

"What would that bring you?"

"I think I'd enjoy the autonomy—the feeling that I'm calling the shots, rather than just responding to what others want."

"And what would that bring you, if you could call the shots?"

"I'd probably feel more in control of things than I do right now."

"And if you had more control, what would that bring you?"

"Hmm... I imagine I'd feel stronger, more confident, and more capable. And I think that would flow into other parts of my life. I'd see myself making strategic decisions and feel competent as a result."

"And if you felt strong and competent, what would that bring you?"
"I'd say... a sense of peace. I wouldn't be tossed around by the waves of life, but able to steer the ship."

Through continued questioning, you can draw a clear connection between an external goal, like getting a new role, and the internal needs driving it, such as the desire for competence, peace, or stability.

What will it cost you if things remain the same?

When clients reflect on their current reality (the "R" in the GROW model), they'll often identify barriers that are keeping them stuck. These may be situational—like "I can't progress as a manager until a senior retires"—but just as often, the real barriers are internal or psychological. One of the most powerful forces holding people back is inertia: the tendency to do nothing, because doing something requires clarity and energy.

The question shared by [Paperbell](#), "What will it cost you if things remain the same?" helps clients articulate the cost of inaction. It makes the downsides of staying the same more vivid, helping clients shift away from that undesirable future and toward something better. In short, it builds energy and motivation to move forward.

What would you tell your best friend to do? What feels like the warmer, more expansive option? What do you want to say 'hell yes' to?

These three questions help clients think through their options and choose a path forward. (You're not asking them to commit to a direction forever, but rather to try something, learn, and take the next step.)

"What would you tell your best friend to do?" is a favourite of author Daniel Pink. It works because it helps clients step back and view their situation more objectively. Advice we give others is often clearer than what we give ourselves.

"Which option feels warmer or more expansive?" is adapted from life coach Martha Beck. It encourages clients to move from their heads into their bodies, tapping into sensory and intuitive intelligence. Intuition is deeply powerful, and it's shaped by a lifetime of sensory inputs and lived experience. But because it's non-verbal, clients often need support to shift out of analytical thinking (the domain of the prefrontal cortex) and into more embodied awareness.

"What do you say 'hell yes' to?" is inspired by Derek Sivers' *Hell Yeah or No: What's Worth Doing*. If a client feels genuine excitement about a path forward, it becomes a head-and-heart decision and one they're more likely to follow through on. In contrast, paths chosen out of obligation often come with less energy and commitment.

What's already working, and how can you do more of it?

This question is inspired by "bright spots" thinking, as described by Chip and Dan Heath in their book *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*. When tackling a challenge, humans often default to identifying barriers and then trying to remove them. While that can be useful, it can be even more powerful to identify what's already working and then scale it up.

For example, if your client wants to reduce stress or avoid burnout, you might explore what happens on the days when they feel less stressed. Maybe they take a morning coffee walk, eat lunch away from their desk, or play team sport in the evening. These are existing success patterns that *already work*, so they deserve to be scaled up, or used more often.

What's your next step?

This simple but powerful question helps clients shift into action mode and reinforces their sense of agency. When a client commits to an action, be sure to ask when they'll do it and check in at the next session as a form of gentle accountability.

What was most helpful for you today?

This reflection question serves two purposes. First, it gets clients reflecting on the value of the session and reinforcing what was most valuable in the session. Second, it gives you insight into where you're having the most impact, so you can continue to refine your coaching practice.

Which brings us to our final point – which of these questions was most helpful for you today?

Thanks everyone, take care, and we'll see you next month.

The team at ICC Academy

Coaching for diversity, equity inclusion & belonging

DOWNLOAD YOUR FREE RESOURCE

2025 DATES FOR COACH TRAINING

FOUNDATION COACHING CERTIFICATE

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2025

- Module 1:** 13th and 14th August
- Module 2:** 27th and 28th August
- Module 3:** 10th and 11th September
- Module 4:** 24th and 25th September

TEAM COACHING CERTIFICATE

MAY/JUNE 2025

- Module 1:** 30th and 31st July
- Module 2:** 13th and 14th August
- Module 3:** 27th and 28th August

EXECUTIVE COACHING CERTIFICATE

JULY/AUGUST 2025

- Module 1:** 23rd and 24th July
- Module 2:** 6th and 7th August
- Module 3:** 20th and 21st August



ICC Academy

545 Parnell Road, 1052, Auckland

This email was sent to {{contact.EMAIL}}

You've received it because you've subscribed to our newsletter.

[Unsubscribe](#)

