

FINE POINT

The Transition Question

Thinking Environment

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THE TRANSITION QUESTION

It looks like a little thing: *an untrue assumption causes a true assumption to stop us*. But it is a big thing.

It also is thrilling. Think about it: no longer does a fact or circumstance or future action or someone else's view have to stop us in the present from reaching our goal. If it is a felt goal and an achievable one, and if we have been stopped from doing it by an assumption that is true or possibly true, we can finally achieve it because of this question.

This question in that sense is a de-victimising question. It brings us back to our inherent capacity for choice.

In a sentence the definition of the Transition Question is: a question that finds the untrue limiting assumption that causes a true assumption to block our goal.

Example:

Janes' goal:

'To speak to Sam'

True Assumption: 'Sam might laugh at me.'

Transition Question:

It's true that Sam might laugh at you. What are you assuming that causes that to stop you from speaking to him?

Untrue assumption: 'I am unworthy.'

'I am unworthy' is the real block. 'Sam might laugh at me' is not. The untrue assumption is the actual key limiting assumption. Until this moment in the session it has been covered up by the true one which has gotten all of the Thinker's focus for years. The Thinker has been aware only of the true assumption, while unawarely living as true the untrue one, sometimes all of their life.

The Words

So this question has a big job to do, and every single word is needed to get the job done. Every single word of the question matters. Let's break it down:

'It's true that (insert assumption)....'

The Thinker needs to hear their chosen true assumption afresh in order to focus explicitly on exactly that assumption. If the Partner says just, 'It's true,...', the Thinker may slide into other assumptions that are similar but not exactly the one they assessed as true. If this happens, the search for the untrue one will fail.

'What are you assuming?' vs 'What assumption are you making?'

Using the 'active verb form for 'assumption' ('what are you assuming') rather than the passive noun form ('what assumption are you making') seems to give the Thinker quicker and easier access to the untrue assumption.

Verbs and nouns affect the mind differently. Verb forms of a concept can speed up thinking. Noun forms can slow it down. So for the Thinker to hear and then speak the verb form, 'I am assuming that...' rather than the more sluggish, lower-impact noun form, 'my assumption is that....' can speed up their access to the assumption.

'What are you assuming...?' vs 'What is it you are assuming...?'

People often want to add those two extraneous words ('is it'). But they are not needed, and extraneous anything slows anything down, especially thinking.

'What are you assuming that causes that...?'

There are two 'that's' in this question. Both 'that's' are crucial.

The first 'that' refers to the fact that an assumption is being sought. It makes it clear that the Thinker is looking for a second assumption, one that has an impact on the first assumption, ie, causes it to stop them.

If the question instead read: 'What are you assuming causes that to stop you?', it would be an entirely different question. It would be asking not specifically for a second assumption at all, but for anything that might be causing the true assumption to stop the Thinker. We are in search of a second assumption (an untrue one ultimately) that causes the first assumption to stop the Thinker, and so we need the first 'that' to direct the Thinker to look for an assumption that is causing the first assumption to stop them, not for just any old thing that could cause the first assumption to stop them.

The second 'that' refers to the true assumption as restated in the first part of the Transition Question: 'It's true that....' This is why it is important for this Transition Question to begin with a re-stating of the true assumption exactly and in full. The Thinker needs to be freshly focused on that true assumption in order for this second 'that' to be clear in its reference.

What is not in the Transition Question?

The word 'about' does not appear in this question. But it invariably wants to butt in. This is forgivable because the common 'assume/assumption' idiom in English contains the word 'about': 'assume about'/'assumption about'. And the most common 'assumption' question in our general parlance is, 'What assumption are you making about that?'

But 'about' is by definition directive and restrictive. It tells the Thinker what the second assumption they are making has to be about. It does not allow the Thinker to find an assumption that has impact on the first one, but is not about the first one.

The Transition Question, on the other hand, does not restrict what the second assumption is. It allows it to be about anything. And this is important, as it turns out, because more than likely the untrue assumption being sought will not be about the true assumption; it most likely will be about the Thinker or about life in general.

For example:

Jane's Goal: 'to speak to Sam.'

True Assumption: 'Sam might laugh at me.'

Untrue Assumption causing that one to stop her: 'I am unworthy'. It is not about Sam.

If the Partner says, 'It's true that Sam might laugh at you. What are you assuming about that that causes it to stop you?', Jane might well respond with something like, 'I am assuming that Sam might not agree to see me.' And that will also be true. And if the Partner asks again using the same 'about that' format, Jane might respond with, 'I am assuming that Sam will kick me out before I finish.' And so on with one true assumption after another. Using the word 'about' can drive a loop of 'true's'.

But when the Partner makes sure that the question has no 'about' in it, the question then lets the Thinker find assumptions that are not explicitly about Sam or even about the goal of speaking to him. It lets the Thinker find the untrue assumption about anything, including about the self or the world.

And that is the Transition Question's one and only purpose: to unearth an untrue assumption that is inside a true assumption, causing the true one to stop the Thinker.

Some people think this question's purpose is to startle the Thinker, to confuse them for a moment so that they are catapulted out of their thinking rut and can see things differently. That is nice. But that is not the question's purpose.

Its purpose is only, and breathtakingly, to find the untrue assumption that lives inside a true one causing the true one to stop the Thinker's progress towards their goal. That's it: untrue inside true causing true to stop them. How wonderfully fit-for-purpose is that?

In the bigger picture I think of the Transition Question as the process of de-victimising the Thinker. They go from being stopped by a truth to finding the untruth inside it that can then be replaced by a liberating new truth. No more victim.

'What are you assuming that causes that to stop you?'
Stunning.