

TLP Five-Minute Read Over Coffee – The beauty and fragility of questions

I have recently done a series of sessions working with managers - reflecting on their own management styles. These sessions were focused on both giving the language to my clients in being able to identify and describe how they manage people but more importantly giving them the space to really think about their strengths and areas for development as managers.

I found the sessions rich in the openness and honesty shown by the managers I worked with. The sessions also reminded me of a simple truth that has been one of my most profound learnings over recent years.

💡 A question is a beautiful thing!

➡ The right question at the right time can help someone connect deeply to themselves. It might sound obvious but it actually does not feel like that to me.

➡ Questions are also very fragile things. They can quickly turn into judgements or assumptions. They can be clumsy and confusing. It can be easy to ask multiple questions all at the same time! They can be mechanical and out of sync with the moment you are in.

➡ A question also needs oxygen - what the questioner does next really matters. If you ask an incisive questions but then simply move on in a rushed and restless way - the question just fades away.

➡ As with all things - I am constantly looking to improve how I ask questions. Both in work and my private life I can catch myself after a question with a reflection like 'wow that was simply not a question buddy - that was you making a judgement disguised as a question!'. So while it will always be an imperfect science - what I do recognise is that I reflect much more deeply on how I ask questions and how I listen after that.