



## **Hello and welcome again!**

For many of us in the Northern hemisphere, April is a month of rebirth and renewal – in waking up to all its senses again, nature heralds the dawn of a new season of opportunities. In many ways, our lives follow a similar rhythm, from Spring, to Summer, to Fall and then Winter, each being marked by characteristic differences. As I look back to the latest cycle in my life, I realize that I have been influenced by many critical and yet simple concepts. One of the concepts which has had the greatest impact on the quality of my life is that of a “primary question”. According to Anthony Robbins, this is the dominant question we keep asking ourselves and which determines what we consistently notice and experience in life.

First, let me explain why that might be. Some of you will be familiar with the foundational idea that “what you focus on, you get more of”. In other words, whatever filter we apply to a given situation will shape our experience of that situation. Let's imagine for instance that someone has a history of what they consider to be “failed” relationships. As a result of how they view their history, they might approach any new relationship asking themselves, “Is this relationship going to fail again?” This question will tend to create a self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby they will focus on whatever might go wrong with their new partner, rather than pay attention to what might be going well and what they could do to improve areas that are not perfect yet.

Now, our primary question is said to be cross-contextual and is most noticeable in stressful situations. Going back to the example above, we could extrapolate that the person might apply the “failure” filter to a number of other contexts than intimate relationships. That person's underlying primary question in life could be, “Am I going to fail?” Although a number of other factors come into play as well, this primary question will undoubtedly have an impact on the course of action the person will choose when presented with what they might perceive as a stress-inducing opportunity, like a promotion at work. If they strongly value change and adventure, they might still choose to accept the promotion despite their fear of failure. However, if they value certainty and security instead, they will probably prefer to stay within the perimeter of their comfort zone and are likely as a result to decline an offer that would otherwise force them to face their fear.

What could be an alternative primary question such a person might choose to ask themselves in order to achieve more of what they want? As a general rule, studies suggest that the best types of questions are solution-focused “How” and “What” questions that begin with the end in mind. Notice what comes up for you when you ask yourself, “How could I succeed?” or “What can I do to make this work?” Now compare it with what comes up when you ask closed “Yes/No” questions or justification-prone “Why” questions, like: “Am I going to fail?” or “Why do I keep failing?” I wouldn't be surprised if Anthony Robbins's words, “The quality of our life depends on the quality of the questions we ask ourselves”, started to make real sense...



***Tips to find out what your primary question might be...  
and to replace it by a more supportive one***

It is important in this process to remain flexible and open – the point is not to find the absolute “perfect” question but to become aware of disempowering thinking patterns so you can replace them with more resourceful ones that bring you closer to what you actually want.

- 1- Remember a specific time in your personal life where you were stuck. What were you focusing on? What main question might have you been asking yourself?
- 2- Do the same exercise remembering a specific situation in the context of work this time. What were you focusing on? Again, what main question might have you been asking yourself?
- 3- Now find the common denominator between both questions and come up with a more open and solution-focused “How” or “What” type of question that you know would have supported you better.
- 4- In the future, whenever you catch yourself stuck in a situation, take a moment to notice what you are focusing on and refocus your experience by resorting to the new question you have come up with – or with any other solution-focused question you can think of in the moment. Repeat this process time and time again until it becomes a habit.

**If you find you have been bumping against a disempowering thinking pattern, behaviour or situation for some time and are determined to move forward, then feel free to book an introductory session via email at [sophie@essencialcoaching.com](mailto:sophie@essencialcoaching.com) or phone 604 985 4499. You will notice the difference focused action makes in your life!**



*“Some men see things as they are, and say, ‘Why?’  
I dream of things that never were, and say, ‘Why not?’”  
(George Bernard Shaw)*

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