Tools for the art of the ask element: CONTINUATION

Rules for Tools

1. The best attitude for using tools in the art of the ask is to "play."
2. Each tool offered here is described in a summary form.
3. Where added explanation is warranted, reference links may be provided.
4. References may be a longer explanation, a video, an article, a book, or even a reference to an organization that can offer more or added explanation (even further tools).
5. Tools are not listed in any particular order, which might otherwise imply rank.
6. Any tool hear can absolutely be used to practice ANY of the five elements.
7. If a tool came from a specific person or source, it will be noted after the tools name.

Start with a Glimmer (Yvonne Marchese)

Good old reliable *Choose to Be Curious*. This radio show, conceived of and hosted by interviewee Lynn Borton, never fails to turn up some practice supportive of great questioning. Episode 315 with Yvonne Marchese was no exception.

Marchese is **an embracer of curiosity and play**. She's also someone who not only allows change, but invites it. For her, all of it begins with a daily exercise: Start with a glimmer.

A glimmer is:

- Something bright, or that brightens you in a non-visible way
- Something unexpected, even if the unexpected part is how something familiar makes you feel
- Importantly, something you can build on easily
- And also, something you can find a lot easier than you'd think if you just look knowing it's there

This tool appears in the Continuation section. Continuation is that part of the art of the ask that can sometimes be really hard. This simple tool whispers: "No it's not … if you allow it to start simply."

I don't even have to tell you what a glimmer is, and better that I don't. You already know. You just might not be looking – actively, confidently, hopefully.

3 Questions and 1 Rule (John Hunter)

I believe you could take endless lessons from interviewee John Hunter and his World Peace Game. You can hear John talk about it in his wonderful and viral TED Talk. And you can read about it in the following articles: one, two, and three.

But let's hone in one what makes the game work.

What you first need to know are a few basics about the Game:

- Real. The World Peace Game is in fact about attempting to solve the World Peace Conundrum.
- Very Real. "There's a thirteen-page crisis document with 50 interlocking problems" around which play takes place. The problems are true to life, involving some of the most challenging issues to *actual* world peace. "We have ethnic and minority tensions," John explained. "We have nuclear proliferation. There are oil spills and environmental disasters. Water rights disputes, breakaway republics. Famine, endangered species, and global warming."
- Multi-sensory. The complexity of the game is represented physically too. "It's played with hundreds of pieces on four different levels." Land, sea, air, and space.
- No Hiding. There are very real roles the game asks the students to assume—prime ministers, arms dealers, a saboteur, even a weather god. It all creates an environment so uncertain that "if one thing changes, everything else changes. . . .
- Complex. There are literally thousands of possible actions that a [player] might take" and no single right solution. This baseline context allows players to create their own contexts—in fact, leaves them little option but to do just that.
- Stunning. Here's the arresting part. The game is played by nine and ten-year-olds. Fourth graders. Over the span of a week, two dozen elementary school children wrestle with the literal challenges to world peace. Neither John nor the game tell them how.

The only thing John does is to **create the space to ask, think, and explore**.

Let me repeat that for your own asking environment purposes:

> The only thing John does is to create the space to ask, think, and explore.

After describing it, John gives the students two simple objectives. "First, *all* the problems must be solved. And second, *everyone* must finish the game better off."

Then, he offers them **three questions to use as guides**:

1. Can you afford to pay for that?
2. Can you deal with the consequences?
3. And does it make sense?

None of it *answers* anything. Neither does John, and that's where the rule comes in. The rule, as it turns out, is for the teacher: The Game is the teacher. It in essence says, the kids will figure it out by the questions and the invitation and power to ask alone.

Take a look at those questions once more. What if they were your own guides? What if you couldn't default to easy answers, or someone else's? Cost, consequences, and sense drive a lot of good asking, and good answers. You might want to think of the World Peace Game as an inspiration, and its questions and rule as a true tool …

The Question Formulation Technique (Luz Santana and Dan Rothstein)

This is rare Toolkit tool where the ask is of you to simply "go there."

Interviewees Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana are the founders of The Right Question Institute, and also coauthors of *Make Just One Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions*.

At the core of their excellent book is the Question Formulation Technique, or QFT. As they describe it, "QFT is a rigorous, scaffolded protocol that facilitates learning how to ask better questions." It combines a range of forms of asking, from convergent, to convergent, to metacognitive. While it is very targeted and aimed at use in the classroom (mostly in high schools), it offers well-researched insights into things we should think about when we formulate our questions.

Your mistakes would be to see it as a technique and protocol not aimed at you, even if you are a teacher concluding that it's just too much for you to try with your class. If you did, what you'd be missing is the nuance that lies in each part of their protocol, and what it can teach anyone using any protocol.

As but one example, Dan and Luz were the originators of the Question Burst tool, the one borrowed by many, but attributed by few to Luz and Dan's keen insights. Check out their work looking for just such powerful tools and a furthering of your asking education.

S.A.S.U., or Say It and Shut Up (Greg Galle)

How do we exchange with one another? This is a focus of the work of many of the interviewees. It has resulted in as whole slew of techniques for playing with the idea (e.g. a Question Burst; a BRAIN Huddle), all the way to full methodologies (e.g. the Creative Response Process; Question Formulation Technique). Interviewee Greg Galle shared one that while in the same zone as some of the others, takes a different and valuable twist.

It's kindly called SASU. Here is **how Greg describes it works**:

1. We have teams share ... an idea, one they want feedback on.
2. The team has the floor until they are done sharing the basics.
3. Then the group will give the team feedback. But as they do, they must do so in one of the following forms:
    - I like …
    - I wish …
    - I wonder …
    - Or in unequivocally open-ended questions.
4. The feedback is expected to be succinct, one thought, one question, just one.
5. In response, all the presenting team can say is thank you, and take notes. That's it.

Why is this so powerful, I asked Greg. He said this. "Most often, we are taught how take an idea presented to us, or even to take feedback, and to disassemble. We start taking it apart, being critical, but most often not thinking critically. Our feedback and our defenses in the face of it amplify this tone.

"By limiting ourselves as reviewers to the sentiments of what we like, wish, or wonder, we adopt a different lens. As responders to feedback on our work, by only thanking, we no longer need to defend … we preserve space to take the feedback in – all of which is liberating. For both sides, there's a gift of being enabled to actually listen. The feedback is MUCH more constructive."

A Check for a Better Question (Moni Guzman)

Monica Guzman has a lot to share about how we can ask, listen, and interact in more productive ways in her book I Never Thought of It that Way. The CARE Test for a good question is one good reference point to have in your toolkit. **It works this way**:

The name CARE gives insigt into how it works:

- **C.A.R.E** stands for: Curious, Answerable, Raw, and Exploratory. When these components are present, Moni writes in her book, more fulfilling conversations are more likely to follow.

- **Curious** – suggests that, at least by this test, our questions ought to be driven by one primary goal: to fill the gap between what you know and what you want to know with new knowledge.

- **Answerable** – is your check for a question for which the person being asked doesn't need anything outside of themselves to explore … it doesn't expect anything from them they can't provide.

- **Raw** – could also be called pure, or true. It's a question where nothing else is baked in, a question that prompt answers (and exploration), not an objection of defense.

- **Exploring** – means that the question asked is not demanding of 'right now' or 'forever' answers. I's just, as interviewee Teri Sun put it, going there. Going there just to see.

Exploring the Adjacent Possible (Stu Kauffman)

With nearly 500 interviews conducted for my books to date, and with some of the most fascinating people on the planet, I don't play favorites. That said, one of the most intriguing I ever did was with chaos theorist and MacArthur Fellow Stu Kauffman.

My favorite take-away from this conversation was his concept of **the Adjacent Possible. Here is how it works**:

- **A Boundary Around Us.** Most of us don't think about it, but there is a boundary around each of us at any one point in time. It's a boundary around whatever we know, whomever we know, and whatever we've experienced to that point. I think of it as our known-zone. Outside that boundary is everything else. Everything we don't know, and sometimes stand in awe or even fear of.
- **A Chalk Line.** The thing is, that boundary is porous and elastic, Stu believes. We can cross that border any time we choose. And when we choose to do so, we don't have to swing for the fences – a though that often stokes our fear and keeps us inside our known-zone.
- **A Toe Across the Line.** Putting a toe across the line of most anything is something most of us conclude can't do much harm. Stu would tell you it can do enormous good, including being the catalyst to new and better. Making it a habit is something her highly suggests, because when you do, three things happen:
    1. **You See New Outside Your Zone.** It may be obvious, but when we put a toe or take a walk across the boundary of what we know in any one moment, we can't help but see new things. No matter how small, that changes us. The more we do it, the more the change accumulates, and the more discerning we become about what we want to change and adopt, or don't.
    2. **You See New Back Inside Your Known-Zone.** Even after a toe dip, when you have gone into a new space, you cannot help but see newly or see new things in your known space. Again, what that is might be small, maybe on its own inconsequential. But repeated journeys out then back in accumulate to more and greater, and to more and greater insight and even control of what you choose to embrace.
    3. **Your Known-Zone Expands.** When you step into the possible that lies just adjacent to you, and when you do it repeatedly, and as a matter of habit, you actually EXPAND your borders and your known-zone. You draw into it that possibility you only thought must be far, far away and hard to get at.

I’ve come to believe that one of the best ways to advance ourselves, including our art of the ask, is by making a habit of going into the Adjacent Possible. You might too, and all it takes is a toe in the water beyond your borders.