

The Great Question Toolkit **LIBRARY**

Guidelines for the Library

1. **Pause.** Pause and realize that this is MY list, of books that moved or inspired ME. Ultimately, the goal is for you to find what inspires YOU ... and to read more.
2. **Not Limited to a Single Element.** I would be hard pressed to take any of these books and to suggest that they help you with only one element of the art of the ask. They are powerful precisely because they are not limited in that way.
3. **Get to Work.** In the end, no one's reading list matters except your own. In my list, you will notice that this library is only that, a list of books and their authors, plus a truly brief added description. Let the list inspire you, but then plan to do your own looking into each, starting with not using my links (none provided here in the library) but your own searching and researching methods.

Alphabetical by Title

A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future

– Daniel H. Pink

Nothing short of an awakening to the fact that each and every one of us, no exceptions, has a creative brain and not just a rote, follow-the-other one. Dan also offers a straightforward and enlightening framework for tapping that right-side of your brain, enticingly defined by: Desing, Story, Symphony, Empathy, Play, and Meaning.

Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature

– Janine M. Benyus

The original book that shows us – as the subtitle makes clear, that our human innovation ought to more often be inspired by the *rest* of nature (we are, after all, part of nature). What's often missed that Janine doesn't, is that *how* nature asks should be part of our thinking even when we're not looking for ideas.

Brain Rules: 12 Principle for Surviving and Thriving at Home, Work, and School

– John Medina

The challenge with most books about your brain is, well, they are too brainy. Most get lost in the science and the language and fail to draw out the meaning and show you how to use it. John's *Brain Rules* does the refreshing opposite.

Creativity, Inc.: Overcoming the Unseen Forces that Stand in the Way of True Inspiration

– Ed Catmull

This is the story of Pixar, told by one of its founders. It is also the story of the power of questions, curiosity, and creativity infused into an entire culture. While Pixar was (and largely still is) a company driven to create, their lessons apply everywhere.

Critique Is Creative: The Critical Response Process in Theory and Action

– Liz Lerman and John Borstel

John and Liz have spent decades developing a process around critique in and of the creative process. Their Critical Response Process is battle-tested, refined, and yet open to ongoing experimentation. Even where you not to use it, you can still benefit from its lessons.

Cross-pollination: The Marriage of Science and Poetry

– Gary Paul Nabhan

Long ago before Gary was a friend, I wanted to interview this fascinating scientist, Franciscan monk, and deeply creative soul. He agreed, on one condition: of his dozens of books, he wanted me to read this one first. If you're wondering why, read this short and beautiful book and see.

I Never Thought of It that Way: How to Have Fearlessly Curious Conversations in Dangerously Divided Times

– Monica Guzman

The title itself tells you a lot. The subtitle refreshingly tells the truth. This book takes you on a journey to explore not just how you can have such conversations, but why you even should.

Learning From the Octopus: How Secrets from Nature Can Help Us Fight Terrorist Attacks, Natural Disasters, and Disease

– Rafe Sagarin

If Janine Benyus's *Biomimicry* is the bible on the topic, this book asks you to dive in and see just what asking as nature does looks like. The range of examples alone is worthy of the read, but on top of that, you'll feel inspired to do so nature-asking of your own.

Life Lived Wild: Adventures at the Edge of the Map

– Rick Ridgeway

Rick Ridgeway has lived – and is still living – an extraordinary life. Least you think of him as just the legendary mountaineer he is, this book (one of his many) takes you on the greater journey across his first eight decades, and into the mind of wise, deeply knowing, adventurous soul.

Make Just One Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions

Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana

This is a wonderful manual for injecting question asking into the classroom, where it is shockingly and sadly mostly missing. While it is tailored for that precise use, its insights and hard-won lessons tell us much about questioning anywhere, and are worthy of your time to explore and understand.

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success

Carol S. Dweck

Mindset is in the category of bibles, in the sense that it is a book that captures an innovative even as it is instinctual observation made by its author: We are born with both a growth and a fixed mindset. The two things shape our life paths. Knowing what each is and how to use each is a vital life lesson. Dweck shows you both the basis for the observation, and how easy it is to lean into growth, even if you've been trained and practiced to do the opposite.

Play: How It Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul

– Stuart Brown

Stuart is an MD. Long ago in that practice, he began to note how often play entered in as a factor for both his patients and his care of them. He began logging it, looking at play harder, and eventually establishing an institute for its further study and knowledge sharing. This book tells you the What, How, and Why of that journey.

Rebel Leadership: How to Thrive in Uncertain Times

– Larry Robertson

This new century, now a quarter old, is what I call the new abnormal – a time when there is no longer a steady pattern of change leading to a long-term period of status quo. Change is the status quo. Some leaders understand this and more, make it central to their organizations and

competitive advantage. This is a book about the patterns across how and why they do. It's also the key framework to successful leadership in this new abnormal in which we now all live.

See. Solve. Scale.: How Anyone Can Turn an Unsolved Problem into a Breakthrough Success

– Danny Warshay

If there is library of books that really demonstrate an understanding of what separates successful entrepreneurship from rumor and bluster, this should be on the top shelf of it in importance. Danny is a seasoned and repeatedly successful entrepreneur. He has taught entrepreneurship for decades, and also established the entrepreneurship center at Brown University, considered one of the best. If you plan to innovate, at least successfully, read this.

Six Degrees: The Science of a Connected Age

– Duncan J. Watts

While a bit older now, there are few books that bridge science and experience better than *Six Degrees*. More importantly, the insights in this book about connectedness, what it is, how far it encompasses things in our lives, and how we can go about observing it more impactfully than most of us do are evergreen.

Subtract: The Untapped Science of Less.

– Leidy Klotz

Read that subtitle again. How often are we told less is more? Maybe your answer is often, but chances are you do nothing to actually pursue the insight. Leidy pursued the insight, openly, scientifically, and with clarity. There is much to gain from this book, even if it appears less.

The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters

– Priya Parker

“How and why we meet, and why it matters.” That is in fact what this book is about. You didn't know you needed to know these things, but you do. They not only make you and us who we are, the knowledge proves pivotal to everything and anything we do. Gather close, take up this book, and read deeply.

The Battle for Your Brain: Defending the Right to Think Freely in the Age of Neurotechnology

– Nita Farahany

If you like books that give you new insight, scare you half to death with what you don't know, then show you why, rather than being scared you should be encouraged – then this is your book. Nita comes from a fascinating mosaic of backgrounds, that include neuroscience, the law, brain technology, and genetics. All of it play into her survey of how we should be preparing for the future we are already living, far more than you likely know.

The Hungry Mind: The Origins of Curiosity in Childhood

– Susan Engel

Susan is one of the foremost researchers in early childhood curiosity. This book combines her work and her extensive survey of the work of others in this area. If you want a great overview of the research and thinking in this space, you should be hungry for *The Hungry Mind*.

The Language of Man. Learning to Speak Creativity

– Larry Roberson

When I chose to write *The Language of Man*, I did so in part because of how narrowly I find creativity to be thought of, studied, and understood. As is my approach in all of my books, I began with a broad study of what had been studied, then began my own study of what creativity looked like in actual practice, and for what patterns repeated, no matter where creativity was applied. I spoke with nearly 70 MacArthur Fellows as an important part of that. Explore this book if you want to understand our common language and its importance.

The Mattering Instinct: How Our Deepest Longing Drives Us and Divides Us

– Rebecca Newberger Goldstein

Rebecca is a philosopher and perhaps because of that training, a deep thinker as well. Her books, all of them excellent, ask you to be the same for a time. *The Mattering Instinct* is arguably a culmination of her work over the years. It gets to an intriguing insight about what really drives us, how, how it can be a conflicting driver, and why all of it matters more than you know.

The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference

– Malcolm Gladwell

Even though Gladwell now pans some of his own historic work (I'm still not sure why), this book is deeply insightful about how little things add up, and how we can more consciously make them add up in ways we want. Gladwell is a great storyteller too, and this book offers some of his best.

The Tough Stuff

– Cody Royle

While Cody doesn't always position it this way, *The Tough Stuff* is one of the very best broadly applicable leadership books I have ever read. His focus is coaching, and specifically in sports. But his book is about what it means to be human and a leader. Really, it's about becoming both, and what you need to keep in mind.

The Undoing Project

– Michael Lewis

Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky are the researchers we now credit with having created the psychology space of heuristics and biases. This book is about how the two of them made their way into and then made this vital area of study. And it's a Michael Lewis book, so it reads like an adventure story.

Ungifted: Intelligence Redefined

– Scott Barry Kaufman

This was Scott Barry Kaufman's first book, and for me, still his best. It takes the topic of intelligence (though it's about so much more), and turns it on its head. It looks beneath our stubbornly sticky impressions of intelligence, and for that matter people, and reveals what we truly ought to know about ourselves and others.

Wait: The Science of Delay

– Frank Partnoy

Yup, the science of delay. Or in my parlance, lessons in the value of a pause. This book spans a wide spectrum – of topics, of areas of science, of definitions of delay – and brings you out the other side with an understanding that will change the way you think about anything you do, while showing you how to do it better.

Wanderful

– David Pearl

David of the Street Wisdom and Wander Walks fame I write about in *Great Question*, has taken the fundamental observations of both and expanded on it in book form. David is a master storyteller and a terrific guide to making the world around you your very own creative assistant.

World Peace and Other Fourth Grade Achievements

– John Hunter

I love this book, in no small way because I love and remain slightly in awe of the Game it's about and the person who created it. *World Peace* takes you into the fascinating journey of where the World Peace Game came from, how it has evolved over the last nearly five decades, and the important impact it has and continues to have. If you haven't yet decided to take the time to read the book, do yourself a favor and at the very least watch John's TED Talk.