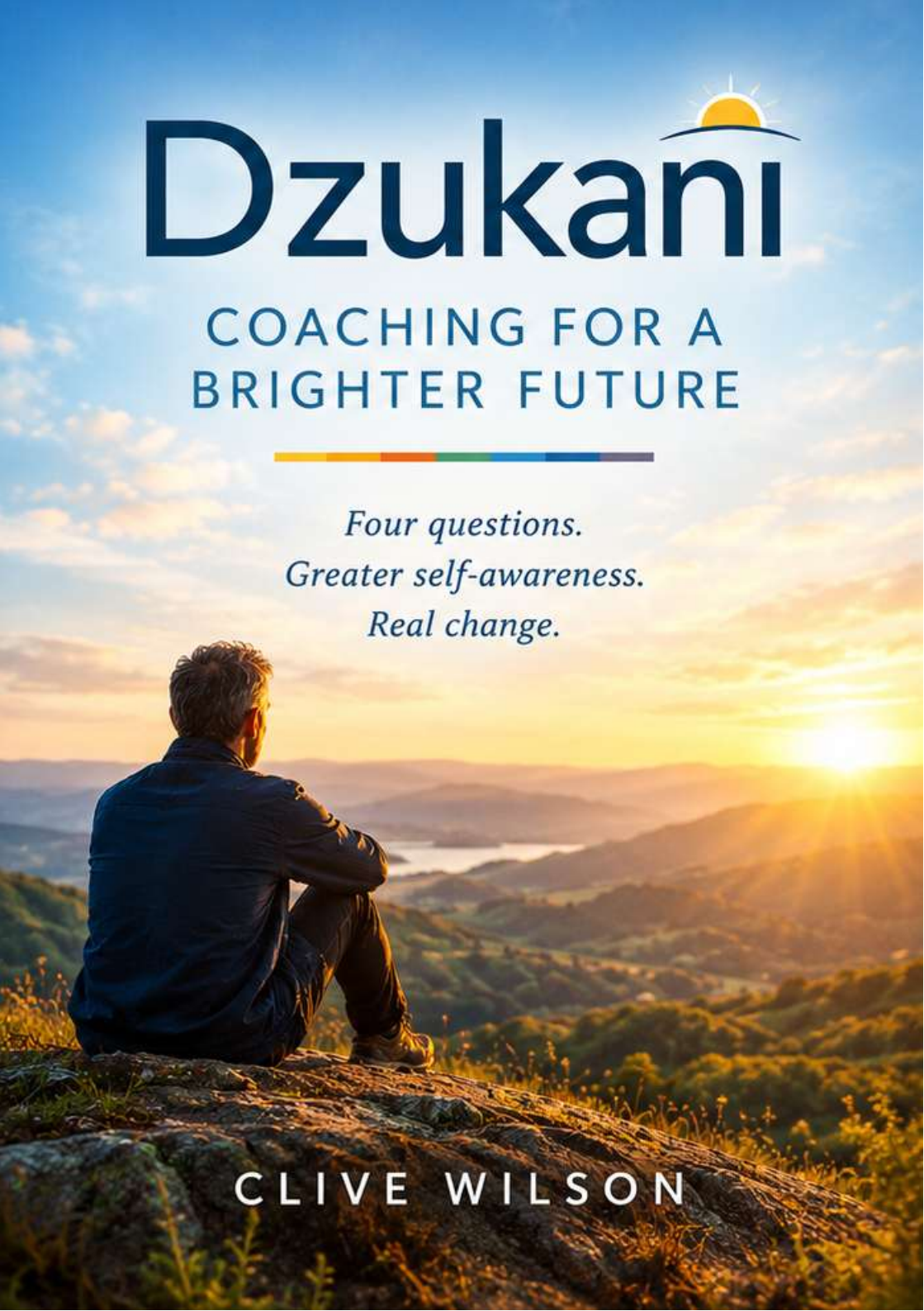
Dzukani

COACHING FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Four questions.
Greater self-awareness.
Real change.



CLIVE WILSON

Dzukani

Coaching for a Brighter Future

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Introduction

Why Dzukani?

So, there I was, having coffee with my friend and colleague Christophe in a delightful outdoor café in Malawi, when I heard someone say something at another table.

“What did they say?” I asked.

“Dzukani,” Christophe replied.

“What does that mean?”

“It means wake up. A mother might say it to get her children out of bed in time for school.”

I loved the sound of the word. It had a sense of power and urgency about it. There was something wonderfully direct in that simple instruction. Wake up! The day is beginning. Life is waiting. It's time to get moving.

I didn't know then that the word would eventually become the name of a coaching approach. Yet it stayed with me, quietly waiting for its moment.

A couple of years later, I was invited to deliver the closing keynote at the European Mentoring and Coaching Council's annual conference. I wanted to leave the hundreds of delegates with something meaningful, something they could take back into their work and use to inspire the people they coached and mentored.

I decided not to write my speech in advance. Instead, I wanted to absorb the conference, listen to the conversations and discover what seemed to matter most to the people in the room. I wanted the keynote to emerge from the experience rather than arrive as a prepared presentation.

One phrase kept recurring in conversations: "energy in the room".

I became increasingly intrigued by it. What did we mean when we talked about energy? What were we noticing when we said that a conversation had energy, that a person had come alive, or that something had shifted in a group?

During my keynote, I asked how many people in the audience studied consciousness, energy or quantum physics in their spare time. I was surprised to see most of the hands go up.

Here were hundreds of coaches and mentors, people whose professional lives revolved around helping others think, feel and act differently, who were also curious about some of the biggest questions we can ask about being human.

The response to the keynote was encouraging. I was invited back the following year to run a workshop exploring the theme of energy in greater depth.

That workshop became an important step towards Dzukani.

From energy to purposeful coaching

I wanted to explore how our experience of ourselves and the world around us might influence the energy we bring to a conversation, and how that energy might, in turn, influence what becomes possible.

We often talk about energy as though it were a mysterious quality that some people possess and others lack. We recognise it in everyday expressions: someone lights up when talking about a particular subject; a room becomes animated; a conversation suddenly feels important. Equally, we notice when enthusiasm disappears, when someone becomes hesitant, or when the life seems to drain out of an idea.

As coaches, we can learn to pay attention to these changes. They may tell us that something important is happening, although we cannot assume that we know precisely what it means. The task is to become curious, to notice and to ask questions that allow the other person to explore their own experience.

In the workshop, we experimented with conversations that moved through four deceptively simple questions:

Who are you?

What's happening in your world?

How are you feeling?

What do you need to do?

We explored these questions in coaching conversations, allowing each person's responses to shape what happened next. We gave each question ten minutes, a deliberate choice intended to slow the conversation and resist the rush towards answers and solutions. In a real coaching session, I would generally suggest around fifteen minutes for each question, while allowing the conversation to determine the precise timing. The coach listens not only to what is said, but to changes in voice, pace,

hesitation and enthusiasm. These may offer an opening for exploration, but the coach does not presume to know what they mean. The observation is offered sensitively, leaving the coachee free to explore it or let it pass.

The conversations could become surprisingly powerful. People sometimes became emotional, and tears were not uncommon. This reminded me that beneath the everyday concerns people bring to coaching there may be questions about identity, belonging, relationships, purpose and the lives they really want to lead.

Such moments call for care rather than celebration. Emotion is not proof that a coach has reached some hidden truth, nor should anyone feel obliged to explore further than they wish. The responsibility of a coach is to create a safe, respectful space in which people remain free to decide what they want to share and what they want to do with what they discover.

What interested me was how much could emerge from four straightforward questions. There was no elaborate diagnostic instrument, no complicated model for the coachee to learn, and no requirement to accept a particular theory about consciousness or energy.

There was simply a conversation, guided by curiosity, in which the person was invited to explore themselves, their circumstances, their feelings and their possibilities.

I began to see how these questions could provide the foundations of a practical approach to purposeful coaching.

And I remembered the word from Malawi.

Dzukani.

Wake up.

What does it mean to wake up?

The word is not an instruction to pull ourselves together, work harder or become a better version of somebody else's ideal person. Nor is it a suggestion that we have been asleep in any literal sense.

It is an invitation to become more aware.

We can spend much of our lives responding to circumstances, fulfilling obligations and following familiar patterns without stopping to ask whether our actions reflect who we are and what matters to us. We may be busy without being purposeful, successful by conventional measures without feeling

fulfilled, or so occupied with the demands of the present that we lose sight of the future we would like to create.

Sometimes we know that something isn't right but cannot put our finger on it. Sometimes we have a clear idea of what we want but struggle to turn it into action. At other times, we discover that the future we have been pursuing is no longer the future we want.

Waking up begins with paying attention.

Who am I, really, beneath the roles I play and the expectations I carry? What is happening in my world, and how am I responding to it? What are my feelings telling me about what matters? What choices are available to me, and what might I do differently?

These questions don't guarantee easy answers. Life is too complex for that. They can, however, help us see our circumstances more clearly, recognise possibilities we had overlooked and make choices with greater awareness.

Purposeful coaching is about helping people make those discoveries for themselves.

Why purposeful coaching?

Over many years, my work has centred on purpose: the difference it makes when individuals, organisations and societies have a clearer sense of why they do what they do and of the future they want to create.

I have come to think of purpose not simply as a statement of intent, but as a direction of travel. It connects what matters to us with the choices we make and the contribution we hope to make to the world.

Purpose is rarely discovered in isolation from our circumstances. Our values, beliefs, relationships, experiences and aspirations all play a part. So do the opportunities and constraints of the world around us. What feels possible in one set of circumstances may feel impossible in another.

Our feelings are part of this picture, too. Enthusiasm, discomfort, grief, anger and uncertainty can all draw our attention to something that deserves consideration. None should be treated as an infallible guide, but each can provide useful information when explored thoughtfully.

The four questions bring these dimensions together. They offer a way of exploring the relationship between the person, their world, their experience and their choices.

The aim is not to tell people what their purpose should be. It is to help them discover what matters to them and how they might move towards a future that feels more meaningful.

I call this a ***brighter future***. It doesn't have to be a grand ambition or a life-changing transformation. It might be a better conversation with a partner, a different approach to work, the courage to pursue an idea, or the decision to let go of something that no longer serves a useful purpose.

A brighter future begins wherever we are, with whatever choices are genuinely available to us.

A simple approach, used thoughtfully

Dzukani is deliberately simple. Its four questions provide a structure that is easy to remember and flexible enough to use in many different situations.

Simplicity, however, should not be confused with superficiality. Asking a good question is only the beginning. The coach must listen carefully, notice

what changes during the conversation, resist the temptation to supply answers and recognise when a question needs to be explored more deeply.

The questions are not a checklist to be completed mechanically. They provide a sequence for exploration, while allowing the conversation to move backwards and forwards as new insights emerge. Sometimes one question will occupy an entire session; sometimes the four will unfold naturally in a shorter conversation.

The approach also depends on the relationship between coach and coachee. Trust, respect, curiosity and the freedom to disagree are essential. The coachee is the expert on their own experience, while the coach brings the discipline of attentive listening and the skill of helping someone think in new ways.

Throughout this book, we will explore how to do this in practice. We will look at the four questions in turn, learn to notice the subtle signals that may indicate something important is happening, explore the contribution of Clean Language, and consider how coaching conversations can develop over time without creating unnecessary dependence on the coach.

We will also examine the deeper ideas that inspired the approach, while distinguishing what we can observe in practice from the theories we might use to interpret it.

You don't need to study consciousness, energy or quantum physics to use Dzukani. You don't need to become an expert in psychology, either. You do need to be genuinely interested in people, willing to listen and prepared to let go of the assumption that you already know what someone else needs.

Above all, you need to believe that people can often discover more for themselves than we can discover on their behalf.

An invitation

This book is written primarily for experienced coaches and mentors, but the questions are not exclusive to professional practice. They can be useful in leadership, personal development, relationships and the conversations we have with ourselves.

You might even choose to use them as a regular personal reflection. Who am I becoming? What's happening in my world? How am I feeling about it? What do I need to do now?

The answers will change as life changes. That is part of the point. Purpose is not necessarily a destination we discover once and then follow forever. It is something we can continue to explore as we grow, encounter new circumstances and discover new possibilities.

When I first heard the word Dzukani in that café in Malawi, I simply loved its sound. I had no idea that it would eventually give a name to an approach to coaching.

Now I see in it an invitation that extends well beyond coaching: to become more aware of ourselves and our world, to recognise what matters, and to take responsibility for the future we help create.

So, wherever you are in your life, and whatever has brought you to these pages, I invite you to begin with a simple question.

Are you ready to wake up to a brighter future?

Chapter One: Who Are You?

The first question invites us to explore the person, not simply the problem.

Four questions, one conversation

Dzukani begins with four simple questions:

1. ***Who are you?***
2. ***What's happening in your world?***
3. ***How are you feeling?***
4. ***What do you need to do?***

Their simplicity is deceptive. Each question opens up a different aspect of a person's experience, but the value of the approach lies in how we use them. These are not questions to be fired at someone in quick succession, nor are they headings in a checklist that the coach must complete before the session ends. They are the framework for a deeper conversation.

The questions are asked in a deliberate sequence, and the coach stays with each one long enough for meaningful exploration. In the European Mentoring and Coaching Council workshop, we allocated ten minutes to each question. In a real coaching session,

around fifteen minutes is a useful guide, not a rule: the conversation may need more or less time.

The structure is intentional. We often move too quickly when talking to someone, wanting to understand the problem, offer advice or find a solution. Even when we mean well, this desire to make progress can prevent us from discovering what really matters.

Dzukani encourages a different discipline. We stay with the question. We listen carefully to what is said and how it is said. We allow silence. We notice when the conversation seems to touch something significant, and we offer the coachee an opportunity to explore it further.

The first question, “Who are you?”, establishes the starting point.

Who are you, really?

Imagine being asked this question by a coach. Your immediate response might be to describe your work, your family, your responsibilities or the roles you play in life. You might talk about being a parent, a partner, a manager, a business owner or someone approaching retirement.

All these things are relevant. They tell us something about your life and the circumstances in which you find yourself. But they don't necessarily tell us who you are.

You might be a successful businesswoman who has spent years building a company. You might be a mother whose children have recently left home. You might be a manager who has always taken pride in looking after a team. Each description provides a starting point, but there may be much more to discover.

What gives your life meaning? What matters most to you? What do you care deeply about? What gives you a sense of fulfilment, and what leaves you feeling frustrated or dissatisfied? What have you come to believe about yourself, and are those beliefs still serving you?

These are the kinds of questions that may emerge as the conversation develops. The coach doesn't need to ask them all, and certainly shouldn't feel obliged to work through a prepared list. The task is to listen to the coachee and recognise where a deeper exploration might be valuable.

Following the energy

This is where the distinctive quality of Dzukani begins to emerge.

As people speak, their energy can change. Someone may become animated when describing an idea, hesitate when mentioning a relationship, or grow quieter when talking about something that has been troubling them. A change may be evident in their voice, their expression, their pace of speech or their willingness to continue.

The coach learns to notice these changes without jumping to conclusions about what they mean.

Suppose a woman is describing her family and briefly mentions her son. Her voice becomes quieter, and there is a sadness in her expression. The coach might say:

“I noticed a sadness in your voice when you mentioned your son. Would you like to say more?”

The woman may choose to explain what is troubling her. She may discover that the issue is more important than she had realised. Alternatively, she may prefer not to explore it. Either response is

acceptable. The coach has offered an invitation, not demanded an explanation.

Now imagine another woman describing her work. When she mentions an idea for a new business, her voice becomes more animated and she begins to speak with enthusiasm. The coach might respond:

“You seemed very excited about setting up your new business. Tell me more about that.”

The same principle applies, whether the change in energy is associated with sadness, excitement, uncertainty, anger, relief or something less easily described. The coach notices, shares the observation sensitively and allows the coachee to decide whether to explore it.

This is not about interpreting body language as though it provides a reliable explanation of someone's inner world. A quiet voice does not always mean sadness, just as enthusiasm does not necessarily mean that an idea is right for the person. The observation is simply a reason to become curious.

The coachee is the authority on their own experience. The coach's role is to help them explore it.

The importance of staying

Suppose the woman in our example begins to talk about her son. She explains that they have not been getting on particularly well and that she has been worried about him. The coach listens. Perhaps the woman pauses, struggles to find the right words or reveals something she has not spoken about before.

There is a temptation to ask another question, perhaps to establish what happened or to find out what she intends to do about it. But Dzukani asks the coach to resist moving on too quickly.

There may be more to discover here. What does this relationship mean to her? What is she experiencing as she talks about it? What has she come to understand about herself through this situation? The answers may emerge without the coach having to ask any of these questions directly. The woman's own words and changing energy may suggest where the conversation needs to go.

Sometimes the most useful response is a simple invitation to continue. Sometimes it is a gentle observation. Sometimes it is silence.

Silence deserves particular attention. Many of us are uncomfortable with it. We feel obliged to keep a

conversation going, perhaps by asking another question or offering a reassuring comment. Yet a pause can give someone the opportunity to think, feel and make connections that would otherwise be lost.

A coach who can remain quietly attentive, without appearing impatient or anxious, gives the coachee permission to take their time. This is not passive listening. It requires concentration, empathy and a willingness to let the other person find their own words.

The coach must also resist the urge to make the conversation fit a personal theory. If the woman talks about her son, the coach should not assume that the issue is guilt, family expectations or a particular pattern of behaviour. Those possibilities may or may not be relevant. The coach's task is to remain open to what the woman discovers and describes for herself.

What does “Who are you?” reveal?

As the conversation deepens, the question may lead towards values, identity, relationships, beliefs, ambitions or a sense of purpose. It may reveal a gap between the person someone believes they ought to be and the person they would like to become. It may uncover a strength they have overlooked, or a

commitment that has quietly shaped their choices for years.

Consider a woman who describes herself as someone who has always put other people first. At first, she speaks of this as a positive quality. As she explores it, however, she begins to recognise that she sometimes neglects her own needs and has difficulty saying no. She might discover that caring for others is genuinely important to her, while also recognising that she wants to find a healthier balance.

The coach does not need to tell her that she should be more assertive, or suggest that she has been living the wrong way. The discovery belongs to the woman. She may decide that something needs to change, or she may simply gain a clearer understanding of herself. Either outcome can be valuable.

This illustrates why the first question should not be treated as a preliminary formality. Understanding who we are is not simply about collecting information. It is about creating the conditions in which we can examine our experience and discover what matters to us.

Nor should we assume that every conversation will lead to a dramatic revelation. Sometimes the result is

a small shift in perspective, a clearer understanding of a long-standing concern or a recognition of something the person already knew but had not fully acknowledged. The value lies in the quality of the exploration, not the drama of the outcome.

Giving the question its time

In the conference workshop, the ten-minute allocation required participants to stay with the first question for a period that might initially have seemed unusually long. In everyday conversation, we often move on much sooner. We ask a question, hear an answer and respond with another question. The exchange can be perfectly courteous and still remain relatively superficial.

Dzukani challenges this habit. Rather than mentally preparing the next question, the coach gives their attention to the person in front of them and allows the first question the time it deserves.

Around fifteen minutes is a guide, not a rule. Some conversations need less time; others warrant staying longer. What matters is that the coach does not move on merely because an answer has been given or the next question is waiting.

There is a difference between allowing time for depth and trying to force depth. The coach cannot manufacture a meaningful discovery by probing relentlessly, nor should they press someone to discuss something they would prefer to leave alone. Empathy includes recognising boundaries. If a coachee does not wish to explore a subject, the coach respects that decision.

The discipline is to give the question space, not to insist on a particular result.

Beginning with the person

“Who are you?” is the first question in Dzukani because the person matters before the problem is examined, before feelings are explored and before actions are considered. The question invites the coachee to bring more of themselves into the conversation.

The coach's discipline is to remain with that question long enough for meaningful exploration to take place. They listen to the words, notice changes in energy, offer invitations rather than interpretations, and allow silence to do its work. They do not assume that they know what the coachee is feeling or what the conversation ought to reveal.

Only when the first question has received sufficient attention does the coach move to the second: "What's happening in your world?"

The sequence matters. So does the space between the questions. Dzukani asks us to slow down, pay attention and trust that a conversation given time and care may reveal more than one conducted in a hurry.

The first question is not simply an opening. It is the beginning of the work.

Chapter Two: What's Happening in Your World?

Moving from the person to their world

The first Dzukani question, *Who are you?*, invites the coachee to explore who they are, what matters to them and how they see themselves. The second question, *What's happening in your world?*, turns attention towards the circumstances in which they are living and working.

The distinction is useful, although the two questions are closely connected. We cannot fully understand a person without understanding something of the world they inhabit. Their relationships, responsibilities, opportunities, pressures and experiences all influence how they see themselves and what they believe is possible.

Imagine a woman who begins a coaching conversation by talking about her work. She has a demanding role, a family to care for and a growing sense that she is being pulled in too many directions. It would be easy to focus immediately on time management, delegation or setting boundaries. Those might eventually prove helpful, but first we

need to understand what is actually happening in her world.

Perhaps she is carrying responsibilities that nobody else recognises. Perhaps she enjoys her work but feels increasingly disconnected from her family. Perhaps the real difficulty is that she no longer believes in what her organisation is trying to achieve.

We cannot know until we give her the opportunity to explore her situation in her own way.

What is happening, and what matters?

The question is deliberately broad. It does not ask the coachee to identify a problem, explain a difficulty or arrive with a particular objective. It invites them to describe what is happening and allows the important issues to emerge.

For one person, the focus might be a challenging relationship with a colleague. For another, it might be a new opportunity, a decision about the future or a feeling that something in life needs to change. Someone else may begin by describing several apparently unrelated events before recognising a connection between them.

The coach's role is to listen and help the coachee explore what matters to them. That requires curiosity, patience and a willingness to let the conversation unfold without deciding too early where it should lead.

A man might describe a promotion that he has worked towards for years. On the surface, it sounds like good news. As he talks, however, he becomes quieter and more hesitant. There may be a concern about the additional responsibility, a reluctance to leave a valued team or something else entirely. The change in his manner gives the coach a possible opening for exploration, but it does not tell the coach what the concern is.

This is an important distinction. The coach can notice what is happening without claiming to know what it means.

Not rushing to the solution

Many of us have been conditioned to solve problems. When someone describes a difficulty, we instinctively search for answers, offer advice or suggest what they might do next. In everyday conversation, that can be helpful. In coaching, it can also prevent us from understanding the situation properly.

A coachee who is struggling at work may initially believe that the answer is to change jobs. Further exploration might reveal that the real issue is a lack of recognition, a conflict with their values or a loss of confidence. Changing jobs could still be the right decision, but it is worth understanding what is driving the desire before reaching that conclusion.

Dzukani asks the coach to resist the urge to move towards solutions too quickly. The second question deserves the same attention as the first. We need to understand the coachee's world before moving on to how they feel about it.

This does not mean the coach must remain passive. A thoughtful question, a brief reflection or a moment of silence can all help the coachee look more closely at what they have described. The important thing is that the intervention serves their exploration rather than directing them towards the coach's preferred explanation.

The energy within the story

As the coachee talks about their world, the coach listens to the words and pays attention to how they are spoken. There may be changes in pace, tone or volume, a moment of hesitation, a sudden burst of

enthusiasm or a silence where the conversation had been flowing easily.

These changes may indicate that something deserves attention, but they do not prove a particular feeling or meaning. Excitement, relief, pride, anxiety and sadness can be difficult to distinguish from the outside. The coachee, not the coach, is the authority on their own experience.

Suppose someone becomes noticeably more animated when talking about a project. The coach might simply observe, “You seem to come alive when you talk about that project.”

That may be enough. The coachee might explain what the project means to them, discover something they had not previously recognised, or take the conversation in a different direction. They may also choose not to explore the observation. All are legitimate responses.

Notice what the coach has not done. They have not assumed that the coachee is interested in the project, excited by it or eager to pursue it. They have offered an observation and left its meaning open.

The way such an observation is delivered matters too. Tone of voice, timing, a pause and the coach’s

manner can determine whether the words feel like an invitation to explore or a judgement about the person. There is no universal formula. The coach must remain attentive to the individual and the relationship.

We will explore this in more depth in our chapter on Clean Language, including how the coach can avoid introducing assumptions and help the coachee discover their own meaning.

The value of silence

A good coaching conversation does not have to be filled with questions. Sometimes the most useful thing a coach can do is to allow a little space after the coachee has spoken.

People often need time to hear their own thoughts. A pause may allow a new connection to emerge, give an emotion room to be recognised or simply help someone decide what they want to say next. If the coach immediately asks another question, that opportunity may be lost.

Silence can feel uncomfortable, particularly to a coach who believes they must keep the conversation moving. Yet the aim is not to maintain a steady flow of words. It is to create the conditions in which the coachee can explore their experience.

Nor should silence be treated as a technique that must produce a particular result. Sometimes it is reflective; sometimes the coachee is simply thinking. The coach does not need to fill it or explain it. Being present and allowing the person time may be sufficient.

A world of connections

What happens in one part of a person's world rarely exists in isolation. Work affects family life. Relationships influence confidence. Financial pressures can shape decisions about health, time and opportunity. A change that appears to be purely practical may have a deeper significance for the person concerned.

Consider someone who is thinking about reducing their working hours. The immediate conversation might concern income, workload and the arrangements needed to make the change possible. As the coachee explores the situation, however, they may begin to recognise that the decision is also about how they want to spend the next stage of their life, what they value and what they feel they have been missing.

The coach should not impose these connections or search for hidden meanings simply because they might be there. They should allow the coachee to make connections in their own time. Sometimes the issue is straightforward and practical. At other times, exploring the wider context reveals possibilities that were not apparent at the beginning.

The purpose is not to make every situation more complicated. It is to understand enough of the coachee's world for whatever follows to be grounded in their reality.

When the world feels overwhelming

Sometimes a coachee arrives with so much happening that it is difficult to know where to begin. They may move rapidly between problems, describe several competing demands or struggle to separate what they can influence from what lies beyond their control.

The temptation may be to help them organise everything into a list of priorities. That can be useful later, but the first need may simply be to give them time to describe what they are experiencing.

As the conversation unfolds, the coach can help them stay with one part of the story long enough to

understand it. A brief reflection may help them notice a recurring concern. A carefully chosen question may clarify a relationship or bring an overlooked possibility into view. At other times, listening without interruption may be the most valuable response.

The coach should not assume that the coachee must leave this part of the conversation with a complete understanding of their circumstances. Greater clarity may emerge gradually. The immediate aim is to give the situation the attention it deserves, rather than rushing towards a solution because the story feels complicated.

Staying with the second question

The second question can reveal the practical circumstances of a person's life, but it can also expose tensions, relationships and opportunities that have not yet been fully recognised. It deserves enough time for the significant elements to surface.

The coach must also remember that noticing something does not create an obligation to pursue it. An observation is an invitation, not a demand. The coachee remains free to explore it, leave it aside or take the conversation elsewhere.

Looking towards the next question

By the time we move on, the coachee may have a clearer picture of their circumstances and of what matters within them. They may have recognised a connection they had not seen before, or simply had the opportunity to describe their situation without interruption or judgement.

The next question, *How are you feeling?*, moves the conversation towards their emotional experience of the world they have described. We do not need to anticipate the answer. Having given the person and their circumstances sufficient attention, we can now invite them to explore how they are experiencing it all.

The four questions provide a clear structure for Dzukani. Within that structure, the coach must remain open to what emerges, attentive to changes in energy and careful not to assume what those changes mean.

The discipline is to stay with the question. The skill is to listen without taking over. The opportunity is to help the coachee discover something that belongs to them, rather than supplying an interpretation of our own.

Chapter Three: How Are You Feeling?

Feelings emerge from the conversation

By the time we reach the third Dzukani question, *How are you feeling?*, something important has already been happening.

The first question, *Who are you?*, invites the coachee to explore their identity, values, beliefs and understanding of themselves. The second, *What's happening in your world?*, brings their circumstances into view: their relationships, responsibilities, opportunities, challenges and the wider context in which they live.

These two subjects are intimately connected. How we see ourselves influences how we interpret the world around us. Our experience of that world, in turn, can reinforce our sense of who we are, challenge it or bring it into question. Feelings arise, in part, from the interaction between the two.

Imagine someone who sees themselves as a capable and independent person but finds themselves increasingly dependent on others. Their circumstances may create frustration, sadness or a

sense of vulnerability. Someone who values fairness may feel anger when faced with an unjust situation. A person who sees themselves as a caring parent may experience conflicting feelings when work commitments prevent them from spending as much time with their children as they would like.

In each case, the feelings are connected to the relationship between the person's understanding of themselves and their experience of the world.

This is a living example of a central idea behind Dzukani: purpose emerges through the interaction between who we understand ourselves to be and how we experience our context. Feelings are one way in which that interaction becomes apparent to us.

We do not need to explain all this to the coachee. Nor should we tell them what they must be feeling. The first two questions will already have brought experiences, thoughts and feelings into the conversation. The third question gives the coachee an opportunity to turn their attention towards that experience and explore what it means for them.

Making feelings conscious

Many people are more accustomed to describing events than exploring their feelings about them. They

can explain what happened at work, what somebody said or what they need to do next. Asked how they feel, they may respond with a practical assessment: “It’s difficult”, “I just need to get on with it” or “There’s no point worrying about it.”

These responses are not wrong. They may be entirely appropriate, or they may be the beginning of a deeper exploration. The coach should resist deciding which.

Our upbringing, culture and working environments can influence how readily we acknowledge feelings. Some people have learned to put them aside and concentrate on getting things done. Others may struggle to name what they feel, particularly when several emotions are present at once.

Dzukani does not require the coachee to produce an emotional account on demand. It offers space for them to notice what is already there and explore it in their own way.

Consider a man who has described receiving a promotion. He initially says that he is pleased. As he reflects further, he recognises a mixture of pride, apprehension and uncertainty. He is excited by the opportunity but concerned about the effect on his family. The feelings were part of his experience

already, but he may not have fully acknowledged how they sit alongside one another.

The value of the third question is not that it creates feelings. It helps the coachee become more aware of the feelings arising from their experience and consider what they might be telling them.

Listening to the person

As the coachee explores their feelings, the coach continues to listen carefully and notice changes in energy. A person might speak more quickly, become quieter, pause unexpectedly or show a visible change in expression. These changes may offer an opportunity to explore something further, but they do not tell the coach what the person is feeling.

If a coachee falls silent while discussing a family relationship, for example, the coach should not assume that they are upset. They might be sad, angry, relieved, thoughtful or simply searching for the right words.

A simple observation may be enough: “You've gone quiet for a moment.”

The coachee can decide whether to explore it. They may explain what has happened for them, return to

their original story or choose not to pursue the observation. The coach's task is to remain attentive without taking ownership of the meaning.

How an observation is delivered matters. Tone, timing and the relationship between coach and coachee all influence whether it feels like an invitation or a judgement. This is one of the reasons Dzukani requires us to listen as carefully to how we respond as to what we say.

Allowing feelings to be what they are

Sometimes exploring feelings brings a person into contact with something they have not previously acknowledged. They may recognise disappointment beneath anger, loneliness beneath a busy life or fear beneath an apparently confident decision.

Such discoveries can be significant, but emotional intensity is not the measure of a successful coaching conversation. A quiet realisation may be just as valuable as a powerful emotional response. Sometimes the person simply becomes clearer about something they have known for a long time but have never quite articulated.

The coach must not manufacture emotion or encourage the coachee to feel something in

particular. Nor should they assume that a difficult feeling must be uncovered before the conversation can move forward.

The aim is to give the coachee permission to notice and explore whatever is present. That includes feelings they welcome, feelings they find uncomfortable and feelings they may not yet have words for.

If someone becomes tearful, the coach does not need to rush in with reassurance or try to make the feeling disappear. Equally, they should not treat the tears as an invitation to probe further. A moment of quiet presence, allowing the person to decide what they want to say or do next, may be the most respectful response.

The coachee is not a problem to be fixed. Their feelings are part of their experience, and they deserve to be met with care rather than judgement.

Giving the question its time

The discipline of Dzukani remains the same. We give the third question sufficient time rather than moving on simply because we have reached an apparent conclusion.

At the EMCC workshop, each question had ten minutes. In a real coaching session, I would generally encourage around fifteen minutes for each, while allowing the time to vary according to the conversation. The purpose is not to impose an arbitrary limit on someone's feelings. It is to resist the tendency to hurry towards action before the person has had the opportunity to explore what matters.

There is no requirement for the coachee to identify a particular emotion, reach a breakthrough or resolve an internal conflict. Sometimes the exploration will be brief and straightforward. Sometimes it will reveal something that changes how the person understands their situation.

The coach's responsibility is to make space for that possibility without trying to determine the outcome.

From feeling to action

As we approach the fourth question, *What do you need to do?*, the coachee may have a fuller understanding of their circumstances and their own experience of them. They may recognise why a decision feels difficult, what they care about most or what has been preventing them from moving forward.

This understanding can influence what happens next. An action that initially seemed obvious may no longer feel right. A possibility that had been overlooked may become more attractive. The coachee may decide that something needs to change, or they may discover that a different understanding of their situation is enough for now.

Feelings do not automatically determine the right course of action. They are an important part of the picture, alongside values, responsibilities, circumstances and practical realities. The fourth question will invite the coachee to consider what they need to do in the light of everything they have explored.

For now, our task is to help them recognise and understand their own experience. The first two questions have brought the person and their world into focus. The third explores what happens within the person as those two meet.

The question is simple. The opportunity is to become more conscious of what that interaction means, and how it might inform what comes next.

Chapter Four: What Do You Need to Do?

From understanding to action

The first three Dzukani questions have taken us on a journey. We have explored who the coachee understands themselves to be, what is happening in their world and how they are feeling. We have given them time to consider their circumstances and to recognise what matters to them.

Now we reach the fourth question: *What do you need to do?*

This is where the conversation turns towards action. Yet the question is not simply an invitation to produce a list of tasks or set a goal. It asks the coachee to consider what, if anything, they need to do in the light of what they have discovered.

That distinction matters. If we had started by asking what they wanted to achieve, we might have arrived at an action plan without understanding the person, their circumstances or what was driving their desire for change. By following the four questions in sequence, we give the coachee an opportunity to reach a more considered response.

The answer may be a practical action, a difficult conversation, a change of direction or a decision to stop doing something. It might also be a change in how they see a situation or themselves. Not every valuable coaching conversation ends with a new task to complete.

The purpose is to help the coachee discover what feels appropriate and meaningful to them.

What do you need to do?

The wording of the fourth question is deliberate. It does not ask, “What are you going to do?” or “What is your action plan?” Those questions can be useful, but they assume that the coachee is already ready to commit to a course of action.

“What do you need to do?” allows a wider exploration. The answer may concern something the person needs to do, something they need to stop doing, something they need to understand more clearly or a conversation they need to have with themselves or another person.

Consider a woman who has described feeling increasingly frustrated at work. During the earlier questions, she has explored her values, the pressures she faces and her growing sense that her

contribution is not recognised. She initially thought she needed to find another job.

By the time she reaches the fourth question, she may have a different perspective. Perhaps she realises that she needs to discuss her role with her manager before deciding whether to leave. Perhaps she recognises that the organisation no longer fits her values. She may even decide that the situation is acceptable after all, once she has understood what has been troubling her.

The coach should not favour one outcome over another. The value lies in the coachee making a more informed choice.

Purpose gives action its direction

This fourth question connects directly with the wider purpose of Dzukani.

As we explored in the previous chapters, our feelings arise, in part, through the interaction between who we understand ourselves to be and how we experience our world. Those feelings can help us recognise what matters, where there may be a conflict and what deserves our attention.

Purpose can begin to take shape as we make sense of these experiences. We may recognise something we want to protect, a contribution we want to make or a change that would bring our lives into closer alignment with our values.

Action then becomes a way of expressing that emerging sense of purpose.

Imagine a man who has spent years building a successful career. As he explores his identity and circumstances, he recognises that although he enjoys his work, he has been missing opportunities to contribute to his community. He had assumed that the answer was to retire early. Through the conversation, he begins to see other possibilities: mentoring younger colleagues, volunteering his professional skills or reducing his working hours to create space for something new.

His purpose has not necessarily changed. His understanding of how to express it may have developed.

This is why Dzukani does not begin with action. We first give the coachee the opportunity to understand themselves and their world more fully. The fourth question then invites them to consider what that

understanding means for the choices available to them.

The coach must not take over

When a coachee begins to identify possible actions, the coach may be tempted to help by suggesting alternatives, pointing out opportunities or recommending what they would do in the same situation.

Sometimes a suggestion can be useful, provided it is appropriate to the relationship and the coachee's needs. However, Dzukani places particular value on helping people discover their own answers. The coach needs to be careful that their ideas do not displace the coachee's emerging thinking.

Suppose a coachee says they need to have a difficult conversation with a colleague. The coach might immediately ask when they intend to have it, what they will say and how they will prepare. Those may become useful questions, but it can be worth pausing first.

Is the coachee clear about what they want from the conversation? Have they considered what matters most to them? Are they ready to act, or is there something else they need to explore?

The coach does not need to ask every possible follow-up question. Sometimes a simple reflection, followed by a pause, will allow the coachee to develop their own thinking.

The responsibility for deciding what to do remains with the coachee. The coach helps create the conditions for a considered choice rather than taking control of the decision.

When the coach has a concern

Dzukani places great importance on the coachee discovering their own answers and taking responsibility for their decisions. However, this does not mean that the coach should remain silent when they have a genuine concern about a proposed course of action.

Coaching is a human relationship. The coach brings their own experience, judgement and instincts to the conversation. Sometimes, as the coachee describes what they intend to do, something may prompt the coach to pause. The proposed action might appear impulsive, the consequences may not have been fully considered, or the coachee may be responding to strong feelings that could look different after a little time.

The coach should take such instincts seriously without assuming they are necessarily right. Rather than telling the coachee what to do, they can share their concern openly and respectfully.

For example, the coach might say, “I wonder whether this is a decision you might want to give a little more thought to before acting.”

This leaves the decision with the coachee while inviting them to consider whether they are ready to act. Another useful response might be to ask, “What do you think the consequences of that decision might be?”

This question can help the coachee look beyond their immediate objective and consider the wider implications for themselves and others. What are they hoping will happen? What else might happen? Are there consequences they have not yet considered? How might the decision affect something else that matters to them?

Sometimes the most useful suggestion is simply to sleep on a decision. Strong feelings can influence our judgement, whether we are angry, excited, frightened or relieved. When there is no urgency, allowing time for reflection can help us see the situation differently.

Of course, some circumstances require prompt action, and delay is not always the wisest choice.

The coach should be careful not to disguise their own preferred answer as a question. Their concern is a contribution to the conversation, not a verdict on what the coachee should do. The coachee may consider the concern and still decide to proceed, and the coach should respect their right to make their own choices.

There are circumstances, particularly where safety or serious harm may be involved, when a coach has responsibilities that go beyond simply offering an invitation to reflect. We will explore these boundaries further when we consider Clean Language and its limitations.

Respecting a person's autonomy does not mean withholding an honest concern. It means expressing that concern in a way that supports thoughtful choice rather than taking the choice away.

From intention to commitment

There is a difference between recognising what needs to be done and actually doing it. A coachee may leave a conversation with greater clarity but still feel uncertain about taking the next step.

This is not necessarily a failure. Some decisions require further thought, additional information or conversations with other people. Others involve risks that cannot be resolved simply by thinking more carefully.

Where the coachee is ready, the coach can help them explore what their intended action might look like in practice. What is the first step? When might they take it? What could make it difficult, and what support might help?

These questions are useful when they serve the coachee's intention. They should not become a routine checklist imposed on every conversation.

A woman who decides she needs to set clearer boundaries at work might begin by identifying one responsibility she can reasonably renegotiate. Another coachee may need to speak with a family member before making a decision. Someone else may decide to give themselves a week to reflect before committing to anything.

The appropriate next step depends on the person and their circumstances. What matters is that the action, if there is one, belongs to the coachee.

When the answer is not yet clear

Sometimes the fourth question reveals that the coachee is not ready to decide what to do. They may have gained a better understanding of their situation but need more time to consider the implications.

The coach should not treat this as a problem that must be solved before the session ends. The four questions provide a structure for exploration, not a guarantee that every conversation will produce a clear action plan.

A coachee might decide that they need to gather more information, seek advice from someone with relevant expertise or return to an issue in a future conversation. They might recognise that the situation is outside their control and that their most useful response is to change how they approach it.

There is also value in recognising what does not need to change. Sometimes people arrive believing they must do something because they feel uncomfortable or because others expect them to act. Exploring the first three questions may reveal that their feelings are understandable and that no immediate action is necessary.

The coach should allow this possibility. The objective is not activity for its own sake, but greater awareness and more considered choice.

Completing the conversation

At the end of a Dzukani conversation, the coach can invite the coachee to reflect on what they are taking away. What has become clearer? What matters most now? Is there anything they want to do as a result?

These are invitations, not additional questions that must be asked in every session. The conversation may already have reached a natural conclusion.

The coach should also be willing to hear that the coachee has not arrived at a definitive answer. Clarity can take time, and the significance of a conversation may only become apparent later.

The four questions are designed to work together. The first explores the person, the second their world, the third their feelings and the fourth what they need to do. Each question builds on the exploration that has gone before, creating the opportunity for action that is informed by a deeper understanding of the person and their circumstances.

A structure, not a script

Dzukani offers coaches a clear structure, but it is not a script to be followed mechanically. The four questions are asked in sequence, and each deserves sufficient time. Within that structure, the coach must remain responsive to the person and the conversation.

Some coachees will identify an action quickly. Others will need more time to explore what they have discovered. A coach who is attentive to the person will recognise the difference and resist the temptation to impose an outcome.

The fourth question completes the sequence, but it does not bring the coachee's development to an end. What they discover may influence subsequent conversations, future decisions and how they understand themselves over time.

The aim is not simply to help someone decide what to do next. It is to help them make choices with greater awareness of who they are, the world they inhabit, how they experience it and what matters to them.

That is the promise of Dzukani: a simple structure for conversations that can lead to deeper

understanding, a clearer sense of purpose and more meaningful action.

Chapter Five: Clean Language, Clearer Understanding

The power of what we say, and what we leave unsaid

Throughout the four Dzukani questions, the coach is listening for what matters to the coachee. We have explored how a brief observation, a well-timed pause or a simple question can open up a conversation. We have also seen how easily a coach can influence the direction of that conversation by introducing an assumption.

This brings us to an important principle of Dzukani: the coach's task is not to tell the coachee what their experience means, but to create the space in which they can discover what it means for themselves.

Clean Language offers a way of putting that principle into practice.

Developed by the late David Grove and subsequently explored and taught by others, Clean Language is an approach to questioning that seeks to minimise the assumptions a coach introduces into a conversation. It encourages the coach to work with the coachee's own words and descriptions, rather than

unconsciously replacing them with their own interpretations.

The word *clean* does not mean that a conversation must be free of influence. Every question and response has some influence. It means making a conscious effort to reduce the assumptions and meanings that we introduce, allowing the coachee's own understanding to develop.

For Dzukani, this is especially important. If purpose emerges through the interaction between how a person understands themselves and how they experience their world, we need to be careful not to impose our own interpretation of that interaction.

The assumptions hidden in questions

Most of us ask questions with good intentions. We want to understand, help someone think or encourage them to explore something further. Yet even a well-intentioned question can contain an assumption that changes the conversation.

Imagine a coachee describing a project at work. As they talk, their voice becomes more animated and their expression changes. The coach notices this and says:

“You seem to come alive when you talk about that project. What is it about it that interests you?”

The first sentence is an observation. The second introduces an assumption: that the coachee's response is driven by interest.

Perhaps it is. But perhaps the project represents relief after a difficult period, pride in an achievement, a sense of belonging or an opportunity to prove something to themselves. The coach cannot know simply from observing a change in energy.

A shorter response may be more useful:

“You seem to come alive when you talk about that project.”

Then the coach waits.

The coachee might explain what the project means to them. They might pause to consider it, or they might take the conversation somewhere unexpected. The coach has offered something to notice without deciding what it means.

The difference may appear small, but it matters. The first response begins to direct the coachee towards a particular explanation. The second leaves the meaning open.

Working with the coachee's words

One of the simplest ways to reduce assumptions is to pay attention to the language the coachee actually uses.

Suppose someone says, “I feel as though I'm carrying the whole team.”

A coach might respond, “You need to learn to delegate more effectively.” That may be a reasonable suggestion in some circumstances, but it introduces an interpretation and a possible solution before the coachee has explored what they mean.

A more open response might be, “Carrying the whole team?”

Repeating a person's words in this way can give them an opportunity to hear what they have said and decide whether they want to elaborate. The coach does not need to improve the expression, translate it into professional terminology or explain what it reveals.

The coachee may say that they are doing everybody else's work. They may explain that the team depends on them because they do not trust others to deliver. Or they may discover that the phrase captures a

feeling of responsibility that extends well beyond their job.

The coach could not know which meaning was intended. By staying close to the coachee's words, they allow the person to develop their own description.

This does not mean that every phrase should be repeated mechanically. Repetition can sound artificial or irritating if it is poorly timed. The coach must judge whether reflecting a word or phrase is likely to help, and remain attentive to how the coachee responds.

Questions that leave room for discovery

Clean Language includes a set of distinctive questions designed to explore a person's experience without supplying an interpretation. Some of these use the coachee's own words and ask them to consider what else is connected with the experience, what it is like or what might happen next.

For example, if a coachee says, “I feel stuck,” the coach might ask:

“What kind of stuck?”

Or:

“And when you're stuck, what happens next?”

These questions may sound unusual at first. Their purpose is not to make the conversation complicated, but to help the coachee explore their own description rather than accept the coach's explanation.

The first question does not assume that being stuck means lacking confidence, motivation or ability. The second invites the coachee to explore their experience and its consequences without deciding in advance what they will discover.

A coach does not need to memorise a long list of questions to work in this way. The deeper skill is to listen carefully, notice the language being used and resist the urge to fill gaps in understanding with assumptions.

Clean Language is more than a collection of question types. It is a discipline of attention and restraint.

The power of a simple observation

As we have seen throughout the Dzukani chapters, a short observation can sometimes be more helpful than another question.

Coaches often feel that they should keep asking questions to demonstrate that they are listening and helping the conversation progress. Yet a question always asks something of the coachee. It invites an answer, requires thought or directs attention towards a particular subject.

An observation can work differently. It gives the coachee something to notice without requiring them to respond in a particular way.

Consider a coachee who has been describing a difficult decision. They speak confidently about the practical advantages of one option, but become quieter when discussing what it would mean for their family.

The coach might simply say, “You've become quieter as we've talked about your family.”

This does not tell the coachee that they are worried, conflicted or reluctant. It makes a change in the conversation available for them to consider.

The response will depend partly on the coach's tone, timing and relationship with the coachee. The same words can sound curious, supportive, challenging or judgemental. There is no universal formula that guarantees the right response.

The coach must pay attention to the person, not just the words they are using. If the observation does not seem helpful, they should be willing to leave it there and continue listening.

Tonality, presence and choice

Words do not operate in isolation. Their effect is shaped by the way they are spoken, the moment in which they are offered and the relationship between the people involved.

A gentle observation followed by a pause may give someone room to think. The same observation delivered abruptly might make them feel scrutinised. A question intended to be open can sound as though the coach expects a particular answer.

This is why Clean Language cannot be reduced to a technique that works automatically. The coach needs to be present, attentive and responsive. They must notice not only the coachee's changing energy but also the effect of their own interventions.

The coachee should remain free to explore an observation, disagree with it, correct it or decline to pursue it. The coach's intention is to open a possibility, not to create an obligation.

This requires humility. We may have a strong impression of what is happening, but our impression is not the same as the coachee's experience. We can share what we notice while accepting that we may not understand it fully.

Clean Language and the Dzukani questions

The four Dzukani questions provide a clear structure for the conversation. Clean Language helps the coach work within that structure without taking ownership of the coachee's meaning.

When asking *Who are you?*, the coach can use the person's own words to explore how they understand themselves, rather than assigning them an identity.

When asking *What's happening in your world?*, the coach can help the coachee describe their circumstances without deciding prematurely which events matter most.

When asking *How are you feeling?*, the coach can make room for feelings to emerge without labelling them or assuming what lies beneath them.

When asking *What do you need to do?*, the coach can support the coachee in exploring possibilities without steering them towards the coach's preferred solution.

The structure remains firm, but the conversation within it remains open. Clean Language helps the coach maintain that balance.

The limits of Clean Language

Clean Language is a valuable discipline, but it is not an absolute rule. There are times when a coach needs to do more than offer an open question or reflect the coachee's words.

The most important consideration is safety.

If a coachee describes an intention to harm themselves or someone else, reveals a serious safeguarding concern or appears to be at immediate risk, the coach cannot simply continue exploring the person's language as though nothing has changed. They may need to ask direct questions, express concern clearly, seek appropriate professional support or follow relevant safeguarding and emergency procedures.

The precise response will depend on the circumstances, the coach's role and competence, and any professional or organisational obligations that apply. Coaches should understand those responsibilities before they encounter a crisis, rather than relying on improvisation in the moment.

There are also less urgent situations in which the coach's judgement matters. As we discussed in Chapter Four, a coachee may appear ready to take an impulsive decision without having considered the consequences. The coach can share a concern, invite reflection and suggest allowing time before acting, where that is appropriate.

Such an intervention does not abandon the principles of Clean Language. It recognises that the coach has responsibilities within the relationship as well as a commitment to the coachee's autonomy.

Clean Language is intended to reduce the assumptions we introduce, not to prevent us from expressing a genuine concern. Nor does it mean that the coach must avoid all interpretation internally. We naturally form impressions as we listen. The discipline is to recognise the difference between an impression and something we know, and to avoid presenting the former as fact.

There are limits to our knowledge, and there are limits to what coaching alone can achieve. Respecting those limits is part of responsible practice.

Creating the space for discovery

The real value of Clean Language lies in what it makes possible. By staying close to the coachee's words, offering observations without imposing explanations and allowing silence, the coach creates space for the person to discover meanings that might otherwise remain unexplored.

Sometimes that discovery is dramatic. More often it is quieter: a new connection, a different way of seeing a familiar situation or a clearer understanding of what matters.

The coach cannot manufacture these discoveries, and should not try to. Their task is to create the conditions in which they can happen.

This brings us back to the central principle of Dzukani. The four questions guide the conversation from identity, through context and feelings, towards purposeful action. Clean Language helps the coach remain open to what emerges at each stage.

The coach provides the structure, attention and care. The coachee brings their experience and discovers what it means to them.

The coach's task is not to tell the coachee what their experience means, but to create the space in which they can discover what it means for themselves.

Chapter Six: Following the Energy

The life beyond the coaching room

When I first explored the idea of energy in coaching, I was interested in what happens when two people come together in a conversation. We know from experience that something can change when we give another person our full attention. A conversation can open up new possibilities, help us see a familiar situation differently or bring an important realisation into consciousness.

Yet the energy in a coaching conversation does not begin when the coach and coachee enter the room. The coachee brings their experience of life with them: their relationships, responsibilities, ambitions, disappointments, beliefs and concerns. These are all part of the context in which they understand themselves and make sense of what is happening around them.

The coach's task is to help bring that experience into the room and create the conditions in which it can be explored.

To understand why this matters, we need to look beyond the immediate coaching relationship and

consider a more fundamental question: how does purpose arise?

The interaction between life and context

Each of us has a sense of who we are, shaped by our nature, experiences, values, beliefs and understanding of ourselves. At the same time, we live within a context that influences us and to which we respond.

These two things are not separate. Our understanding of ourselves affects how we experience the world, while our experience of the world affects how we understand ourselves. Through this ongoing interaction, possibilities emerge, feelings arise and our sense of purpose can develop.

Consider someone who values fairness and sees themselves as a person who treats others with respect. When they encounter an injustice, they may feel anger, sadness or a determination to act. Their response is not simply a reaction to an external event. It arises from the interaction between what has happened and what matters to them.

Someone else might witness the same event and respond differently because their experience, values or understanding of the situation differs. The event

alone does not fully explain the response. We need to understand something about the person and the context in which they experience it.

This interaction is central to Dzukani. Purpose does not necessarily arrive as a fully formed answer to the question, 'What is my purpose?' It can emerge as we become more aware of who we are, how we experience our world and what matters to us.

Feelings often provide important clues. Enthusiasm may draw our attention to something we find meaningful. Frustration may indicate a conflict between our values and our circumstances. Sadness may reveal something we care deeply about. These feelings do not automatically tell us what our purpose should be, but they can help us recognise what deserves further exploration.

The coaching conversation gives us an opportunity to bring these relationships into conscious awareness.

Purpose across the patterns of life

The idea extends well beyond human beings. We can consider the relationship between a living entity and its context at many different levels, from a single cell to an animal, a person, a family, a team, an organisation, a society and humanity as a whole.

Each exists within a wider environment and interacts with it. A cell's organisation and its relationship with its environment affect what it does and how it functions. An animal's nature and circumstances influence its behaviour. A human being responds to the world through a more complex interaction involving physical needs, emotions, beliefs, relationships and conscious reflection.

A team also has its own character, capabilities and aims. It operates within an organisational context that creates opportunities and constraints. The interaction between the team and that context influences what it can achieve and what becomes important to it. Similarly, an organisation exists within a society, and society within a still wider human and natural environment.

These are not identical processes. A cell does not reflect on its purpose in the way a person might, and an organisation does not have feelings in precisely the same sense as an individual. The point is not to claim that every form of life experiences purpose in the same way.

Rather, we can use a fractal perspective to consider how the relationship between an entity and its context, through which purpose emerges, applies

across different scales of life. The nature of the entity and its context changes, but the underlying relationship remains a useful way of thinking about how purpose takes shape.

This perspective also encourages us to recognise that purpose is not necessarily confined to one level. A person's sense of purpose may be influenced by their family, their work, their community and their understanding of humanity's place in the world. A team's purpose may contribute to an organisation's purpose, while the organisation's activities affect the wider society and natural environment.

The relationships are complex, and influence can flow in more than one direction. We should not assume that purpose at one level automatically serves the interests of another. A team's immediate objectives, for example, may conflict with the wider purpose of its organisation. An organisation's success may come at a cost to society or the natural world.

Recognising these relationships helps us ask better questions about the purposes we pursue and the consequences of our actions.

Bringing the wider world into the room

How does this understanding help a coach?

A coachee arrives with a particular concern, perhaps a difficult relationship at work or uncertainty about their next career move. It may initially seem like a straightforward problem requiring a decision. Yet, as the conversation develops, the coach may discover that the issue connects with something more fundamental.

The person who feels undervalued at work may have a strong sense of contribution and a need to feel that their work matters. Someone considering a career change may be struggling with a conflict between financial security and a desire to do something more meaningful. A manager who is frustrated by their team may be discovering that their own understanding of leadership no longer fits the circumstances they face.

The coach cannot know in advance what will emerge. Their role is to help the coachee explore the experience, notice what matters and discover possible connections for themselves.

This is why the second Dzukani question, 'What's happening in your world?', is so important. It invites

the coachee to describe their context rather than treating their concern as an isolated problem. The first question, 'Who are you?', helps explore the person experiencing that context. The third, 'How are you feeling?', brings the interaction between the two into greater awareness. The fourth, 'What do you need to do?', invites the coachee to consider what follows.

The questions are distinct, but the experiences they explore are connected. A realisation about the coachee's circumstances may change their understanding of themselves. A newly recognised feeling may reveal a value they had not fully acknowledged. A possible course of action may bring a different aspect of their purpose into view.

The coach helps the coachee explore these connections without deciding in advance where they should lead.

Following the energy

In practice, following the energy begins with careful attention.

The coach listens to what the coachee says, while noticing changes in the way they say it. A person may become animated when describing a project,

hesitate when discussing a relationship or fall silent when speaking about a decision. Their pace, tone, expression and posture may change. Sometimes the most significant moment is a pause in which the coachee appears to be considering something in a new way.

These observations are invitations to be curious, not evidence of a particular meaning.

Imagine a coachee describing the pressures of their job. They explain the long hours, the responsibilities and the frustrations of managing a team. When they turn to a project they have recently started, their voice becomes more animated and they begin to describe possibilities with enthusiasm.

The coach might simply say, 'You seem to come alive when you talk about that project.'

Then they wait.

The coachee may recognise that the project gives them an opportunity to be creative. They may discover that it is the one part of their job where they feel trusted, or that it connects with something they have wanted to do for years. The coach's observation has helped bring something into awareness, but the meaning comes from the coachee.

The same approach applies when the energy appears less positive. A moment of frustration, sadness or hesitation may be worth exploring, provided the coach remains sensitive to the person and the circumstances. Not every change needs to be pursued, and the coachee must always have the freedom to decline an invitation.

The skill is to notice what may be significant without assuming that we know what it means.

The energy of the coaching relationship

There is a further consideration. The coach is not simply an observer of the coachee's experience. The coaching conversation itself becomes part of the coachee's immediate context.

The coach's attention, words, silence and manner can influence what the coachee feels able to explore. A patient response may help someone approach a difficult subject. A rushed question or a judgemental reaction may close down a conversation that was beginning to deepen.

The coach's own responses matter too. Curiosity, concern, impatience or uncertainty may arise during a session. These feelings can sometimes offer useful

information, but they may also reflect the coach's own expectations, experiences or assumptions.

A coach who becomes impatient because a coachee seems reluctant to act might be tempted to push harder for a decision. A more reflective response would be to pause and consider what is happening. Perhaps the coachee is avoiding a difficult choice. Perhaps they need more time. Perhaps the coach has become too attached to the idea that progress must mean immediate action.

The coach's reaction is something to examine, not a conclusion about the coachee.

This requires self-awareness and humility. The coach needs to recognise their own contribution to the conversation and remain open to the possibility that their first interpretation may be wrong.

Purposeful action

As awareness develops, the coachee may begin to see their situation differently. They may recognise that a problem they have been trying to solve is connected with a value they have neglected, or that a decision they thought was obvious involves competing priorities.

This can change the nature of the action they choose to take. Rather than simply reacting to the immediate problem, they may begin to consider what matters most and what would represent a meaningful response.

The fourth Dzukani question, 'What do you need to do?', is an invitation to explore that possibility. It is not a demand to produce an action plan. Sometimes the right response is to take a practical step. Sometimes it is to have a conversation, gather more information, reconsider an assumption or allow time for reflection.

Purposeful action emerges from a clearer understanding of the relationship between the person and their circumstances. It does not require the coach to supply the answer.

Creating the conditions for discovery

Following the energy is not a technique that can be reduced to a checklist. It is a way of approaching another person's experience with attention, curiosity and respect.

The coach helps bring the coachee's world into the room, notices what appears significant and invites exploration without imposing an explanation. They

remain alert to possible connections between identity, context, feelings and purpose, while recognising that the coachee is the authority on their own experience.

Dzukani provides a simple structure for this work, but its effectiveness depends on the quality of attention brought to each conversation. The four questions give the coachee space to explore their life. Following the energy helps the coach recognise where that exploration may become particularly meaningful.

The wider idea is that purpose emerges through the interaction between a living entity and its context. In human coaching, we can help people become more conscious of that interaction, recognise what matters and consider how they wish to respond.

That understanding has value beyond coaching. We encounter the same interplay between ourselves and our circumstances throughout everyday life. We can learn to notice it, reflect upon it and respond with greater awareness, even when no coach is present.

That is where we turn next: to Dzukani as a way of living.

Chapter Seven: Dzukani in Life

Beyond the coaching room

Dzukani began to take shape through coaching, but the idea behind it is not confined to coaching sessions. The four questions can help us explore our experience whenever we face a decision, encounter a difficulty or find ourselves responding strongly to something that has happened.

We do not need to be sitting opposite a coach to ask ourselves who we are, what is happening in our world, how we are feeling and what we need to do. These are questions we can return to throughout our lives.

The value is not in turning every experience into an exercise or analysing every decision. It is in becoming more aware of the relationship between ourselves and the world around us, giving us greater freedom to choose how we respond.

Much of life happens quickly. We react to a remark, become frustrated by a delay, feel anxious about a decision or become absorbed in the demands of work and family. Our reactions are often understandable, but they may not always reflect what

matters most to us. A little awareness can create space between what happens and what we choose to do next.

That space is where Dzukani can make a difference.

Who are you?

The first question invites us to remember who we are and what matters to us.

It is easy to become so occupied with the demands of everyday life that we lose sight of the values and aspirations we want to express through it. We may find ourselves pursuing goals because they are expected of us, maintaining habits because they are familiar or accepting circumstances because changing them seems difficult.

Asking 'Who am I?' invites us to pause and consider whether our choices reflect the person we want to be.

For one person, this may mean recognising the importance of family and making more time for the people they love. For another, it may involve creativity, learning, service or the desire to make a contribution beyond their immediate circle. Someone else may discover that they have been measuring their success against other people's expectations

rather than their own understanding of a worthwhile life.

There is no prescribed answer. The question is an invitation to become more conscious of our identity, values and aspirations, recognising that these may evolve as our lives change.

It can also help us respond more thoughtfully when our values are challenged. If fairness matters deeply to us, for example, we may want to consider how to respond to an unfair situation without allowing anger to determine our behaviour. Knowing what matters does not remove difficult feelings, but it can help us decide how we wish to act.

What's happening in your world?

The second question turns our attention to the circumstances in which we live.

We are shaped by our relationships, responsibilities, opportunities and limitations. Our immediate surroundings matter, but so do wider influences: the organisations we belong to, the communities in which we live, the society we share and events beyond our control.

Sometimes we become so focused on our own perspective that we overlook the context in which another person is acting. A colleague who appears uncooperative may be struggling with competing demands. A family member who seems distant may be dealing with a concern they have not yet shared. Someone who reacts unexpectedly may be responding to circumstances of which we know nothing.

Recognising context does not mean excusing every behaviour or abandoning our own needs. It means being willing to consider that our first interpretation may be incomplete.

The question can also help us see the wider effects of our own actions. A decision that seems beneficial to us may place pressure on someone else, affect a team or create consequences for the community. A broader view may reveal possibilities that were not apparent when we considered only our immediate objective.

We cannot understand everything that influences a situation. We can, however, become more curious about what we may be overlooking.

How are you feeling?

Feelings are part of how we experience the interaction between who we are and what is happening in our world. They can alert us to something that matters, although they do not always provide a complete or accurate explanation of what is happening.

Consider a situation in which someone speaks to us dismissively. We might feel angry, hurt, embarrassed or surprisingly indifferent. Our response may reflect the circumstances, our expectations, our relationship with the person or an experience from our past. Often several influences will be involved.

If we react immediately, we may say something we later regret. If we pause to recognise what we are feeling, we may have more choice about how to respond.

We might ask ourselves: What is this feeling telling me? What matters to me in this situation? Am I responding only to what has happened, or does it connect with something else in my life? These questions are not an invitation to analyse every emotion. They simply help us become more aware of our experience.

Sometimes a feeling needs to be acknowledged rather than resolved. Sadness may reflect a genuine loss. Anxiety may arise when something important is uncertain. Frustration may signal that a situation needs attention. We do not have to eliminate these feelings before we can act wisely.

Nor should we assume that a feeling must be followed. Anger may alert us to injustice, but it does not automatically tell us the best way to address it. Excitement may reveal an attractive possibility, but we still need to consider its consequences.

Feelings are valuable sources of information. We can listen to them without handing them complete control.

What do you need to do?

The fourth question invites us to consider our response.

Sometimes the answer is clear. We need to apologise, make a phone call, set a boundary, offer help or take the first step towards a goal. At other times, we may need to gather information, listen to another person's perspective or allow ourselves more time to think.

The question does not require us to act immediately. It asks what is needed, which may be different from what we feel compelled to do in the moment.

Imagine that a colleague has made a remark we find offensive. Our immediate reaction may be to confront them angrily. By pausing to consider who we want to be, what is happening and how we feel, we may decide that a calm conversation would be more constructive. Alternatively, the circumstances may call for a clear boundary or formal action. The point is not that reflection always leads to a softer response. It helps us choose a response that better reflects the situation and our values.

Sometimes we will decide to do nothing for the time being. That can be a deliberate choice rather than avoidance, provided we have considered what is at stake and whether delay is appropriate.

Dzukani is concerned with purposeful action, not action for its own sake.

A different way of meeting everyday life

The four questions can be used together when we have the time and inclination to reflect. They can also become a quiet habit of awareness that informs how we behave.

When a conversation becomes difficult, we can remember that the other person has their own identity, context and feelings. We may still disagree with them, but we can listen more carefully before deciding how to respond.

When we face a decision, we can consider what matters to us, what circumstances we need to take into account and how our feelings may be influencing our judgement.

When we feel dissatisfied with life, we can look beyond the immediate source of frustration and ask whether something more fundamental needs attention. Perhaps our daily activities no longer reflect our values. Perhaps a relationship needs care, or we need to reconsider how we are using our time and energy.

These reflections do not guarantee an easy answer. Their value is that they help us approach the situation with greater awareness and a wider perspective.

They can also help us become more attentive to other people. Instead of assuming that we know what someone needs, we can ask, listen and allow them to explain their experience. Instead of rushing to solve a

problem, we can first try to understand what matters to the person concerned.

In this sense, Dzukani is as much about how we relate to others as how we understand ourselves.

From individual purpose to shared purpose

The idea extends beyond our personal lives. Families, teams, organisations and communities also exist within wider contexts, and their purposes emerge through their relationships with the people and environments around them.

A team may be focused on meeting its targets while overlooking the effect of its working practices on its members. An organisation may pursue growth without considering the wider consequences of its decisions. A community may concentrate on immediate concerns while struggling to see how they connect with larger social or environmental challenges.

The Dzukani questions can help us widen the conversation. Who are we as a group? What is happening in the world around us? What are we experiencing as a result? What do we need to do?

These questions do not remove conflicts of interest or guarantee agreement. They can, however, help people become more conscious of their shared circumstances, differing perspectives and the purposes they wish to pursue together.

A group's purpose should not simply be assumed to be the sum of its members' individual purposes. The relationships between people, their shared context and their collective decisions can create new possibilities, as well as new tensions. Purposeful action therefore requires attention to both the needs of the group and its effects on the wider world.

This is especially important when we consider the relationship between human activity and the natural environment. Our choices affect other people, other forms of life and the conditions on which future generations depend. A wider understanding of context encourages us to consider these consequences rather than treating our immediate interests as the only ones that matter.

Waking up to a Brighter Future

The word *Dzukani* carries a simple invitation: wake up.

In everyday life, waking up means becoming more conscious of what is happening within us and around us. It means recognising that our reactions are influenced by who we are and the contexts in which we live. It means being willing to look again at familiar situations, listen to other perspectives and question assumptions that may no longer serve us.

It also means recognising the limits of our understanding. We cannot know everything about another person's experience, predict every consequence or resolve every conflict. Wisdom involves remaining curious while accepting that some uncertainty will remain.

The four questions offer a practical way to cultivate that awareness. They can help us understand ourselves, appreciate our circumstances, recognise our feelings and choose our responses more purposefully.

We will not always remember to use them. We will sometimes react too quickly, misunderstand another person or make a decision we later reconsider. The aim is not perfection. It is to develop a habit of reflection that gradually influences how we live.

Dzukani began as an approach to coaching, but its underlying idea is much broader. Purpose emerges through the interaction between a living entity and its context. In our own lives, we can become more conscious of that interaction and more thoughtful about what follows from it.

We can bring that awareness into our relationships, our work, our communities and the choices we make every day.

A brighter future does not simply arrive. It is shaped, in part, by how we understand our world and how we choose to participate in it.

Dzukani invites us to wake up to that possibility.

The Dzukani Approach

Feelings arise from the meeting of who we think we are with how we see our world.



1. Who are you?
2. What's happening in your world?
3. How are you feeling?
4. What do you need to do?

A STRUCTURE FOR MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS