

Get started!



- 1 Print and cut out the questions on p. 2
- 2 Complete a challenge written underneath one of the questions
- 3 Visit www.weand.me/connect for video tutorials and group activities
- 4 Check out how the cards in the deck are color coded below

 questions that are **FUN AND LIGHT**  questions that encourage **SELF REFLECTION**  questions that are **A BIT DEEPER**

We hope this document is both fun and remarkably useful to you. Beyond that, we hope it creates and inspires connections and conversations that otherwise may not have occurred!

Please connect with us if you are experiencing a lack of trust in your workplace. We would be delighted to help your organization break down communication barriers and increase trust, connection, and engagement.

Continually curious,

Will Wise + Chad Littlefield

Co-founders of 



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What is something you have recently discovered that you are excited about?

www.weand.me

Ask this question to a co-worker you already know well.

What is the strangest thing you believed as a child?

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Text this question to a family member you'd like to reconnect with.

How did you learn your most important lesson in life?

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Send a picture of this question to somebody you admire.

What is something you know really well?

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Start your next meeting off with asking this question to your team.

What is one of your favorite topics of conversation?

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Ask this question to a person in your life that is tough to connect with.

What would you do differently if nobody would judge you?

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Cut this question out and give it to somebody you'd like to inspire.

What are your hopes for what the future holds for you?

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Send a picture of this question to somebody close to you.

What is something that amazes you?

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Tape this question to the water cooler in your office.

If you could give one piece of advice to a large group of people, what would it be?

www.weand.me

Ask this question to three people who have 30+ years of experience.

What is the most adventurous thing you have ever done?

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Bring this question to the table at your next lunch meeting.

What made you smile in the last two weeks?

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Ask a colleague this question over the phone instead of "how are you?"

What is one thing you want to accomplish in your lifetime?

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Mail this question to a friend who has since moved away.



ASK POWERFUL QUESTIONS

Create
Conversations
That Matter

WILL WISE

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#AskPowerfully

Join the movement to help foster a culture of conversations that matter. Start by learning from this excerpt of *Ask Powerful Questions* by Will Wise.



The Asking Powerful Questions Pyramid™

After years of working with others to teach them the importance of real conversation, I experienced another pivotal moment in my life, one which propelled me to write this book. The catalyst moment happened during a ten-day silent retreat. I was reflecting on my life, my teaching, and suddenly connections between concepts clicked. I could see clearly how I would set about sharing this knowledge about powerful questions with a larger audience. The Asking Powerful Questions Pyramid appeared. Ever since that moment, I have been sharing these concepts with folks in many different professions, from CEOs of global corporations like Mead and GE to entrepreneurs at tech start-ups. My life has not been the same since.

As we move through the text, we will start from the bottom of the Pyramid with Intention and travel upwards. The foundational skills at the lower end of the Pyramid increase your ability to work on skills further up the Pyramid. Each skill builds upon its predecessor. As you ascend, you will strengthen your ability to



ask powerful questions in a variety of situations. Students excel when they practice a level before moving to the next level.

It is also useful to note that if you are practicing skills at a particular level and things are not working, you can diagnose the problem by stepping down the Pyramid, checking on your tools at each level and ensuring that you are fully implementing them. For example, if you are using skills on the Empathy level and are finding it difficult to connect, you revisit your Listening skills. If something still feels awry, readdress Openness. Still not working for you? Step down to Rapport. Finally, take another pass at exploring your Intention. Head backward down the Pyramid, stopping at each step and examining your tools. One exception to this procedure is the concept of intention. Intention and its tools are so foundational that you can return to this level at any time, from any other skill on the Pyramid. We will discuss this more in Chapter 1.

You might be wondering why this model is a Pyramid rather than a triangle. There are two major reasons. First, each layer has depth. It falls off the two-dimensional world into a world full of rooms, hallways, and places yet unknown. Second, there are multiple ways to describe each layer. The words Intention, Rapport, Openness, Listening, and Empathy can describe one Pyramid face. Rotate the Pyramid and you can use the following statements to describe the layers as well: I am willing to know you, I see you, I hear you, I get you, and I feel with you.

People want to be seen. They want to know that you hear them (Openness), get them (Listening), and can feel what they are feeling (Empathy). Each of the Pyramid's layers communicates a desire to make a connection—a desire to truly discover someone. Using the tools in this book, you will be able to travel through these layers of connection bravely and ask questions that will have a powerful effect.

After years of practice, failure, teaching, and studying, I now have tools to share with others that help them deal with the hard and awkward moments of life. These tools have been helpful in many different settings. I have used these concepts to train people to facilitate conversations about subjects that are often taboo, such as race and gender relations, and to help business leaders better mentor their employees in one-on-one coaching sessions. It brings me great pleasure to see people's faces light up when they discover how they can use this material in their own lives. As their ability to ask powerful questions increases, they ask more powerful questions of themselves as well. The people who really excel with this process are doing two things: asking powerful questions of others *and* asking powerful questions of

themselves. This has become so habitual that I now believe the practices have become intertwined. A transformation happens for these people, as it did for me on the bus. I was questioning what I wanted to *get* from the world and I was burdened by heaviness. That weight lifted the moment I started asking how I could *give* and took the time to marvel at the world's gift of lightness. The tools in this book have been a continuous inspiration for me because of the impact they've had on others. One particularly memorable transformation I was fortunate enough to be a part of involved a former college student, Brad, who told stories of being white and growing up in a black culture. In Brad's mind, the world was "out to get him and his peers." When he spoke, his eyes would be revealed from under his hiding place—an immaculate baseball hat (complete with stickers still on it). His cheeks would turn red, his hands would turn into fists so tight that his knuckles turned white (except for the one pointing at his current victim), and the F-word was his poison. Brad was like a dangerous snake ready to strike.

He carried so much anger that it was difficult for him to learn. As an instructor intent on developing leaders, that was a problem for me. My students go through a difficult selection process to be in the class, so someone on my team must have seen something special in him, and yet it was rare that I saw anything but anger in him.

Once he learned to ask questions of himself, his life began to turn around. You can get a sense of his transformation from his communication below.

In an email he sent after the class, Brad wrote, "Before

taking this class and learning this material, I blamed the police, I blamed the school administration, I blamed the culture, but I forgot one thing—I forgot to blame myself.”

Upon reflection after the class, Brad shared this post on social media. “It’s painless to pretend like we are victims in this life, putting off our happiness to the circumstances presented. Is that really how you feel though? Do you really feel that helpless? If so, why? If so, what’s holding you from seeing all this magic? Saying, ‘It’s not my fault, it’s yours.’ Swallow those words and smile. Take responsibility for your journey. Take pride in it. Look at you! You started as a seed, shot out a vagina, and now you’re skipping around a flying spaceship through a galactic cosmos. Such a special opportunity to feel bliss in this short existence we call human. It’s open for you to see, I know this, and you know this. How do we experience reality fully? Where to start? Why do we choose to read, or watch or counsel or drug ourselves, having been taught to seek only outside for answers? Why have we never been told to ask ourselves? It’s not too late to start.”

When Brad began this journey of asking questions, unbeknownst to him, he became an explorer. He started the journey as an expert, fully knowing how the world was and what to expect of it. When it did not go as he expected, he learned to blame everyone and everything around him. As his ability to ask powerful questions grew, he fully stepped into a new role as an explorer embracing the unknown, open to dancing with the mystery we call life. He is now having conversations that matter.

Chapter 2

Rapport

I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard, and valued; when they can give and receive without judgment; and when they derive sustenance and strength from the relationship.

— Brené Brown⁴ —



The Power of Being Present

What is Rapport?

rapport |ra' pôr; rə-| noun

a close and harmonious relationship in which the people or groups concerned understand each other's feelings or ideas and communicate well: *she was able to establish a good rapport with the children | there was little rapport between them.*

ORIGIN mid-17th cent.: French, from **rapporter** “bring back”
From the New Oxford American Dictionary

Can you remember a time when you met someone new and “hit it off” right away or felt like you had known this person for a long time? The two of you just clicked.

It happens at the most unexpected places for me: on the train, on the bus, on the plane, at a party, while waiting in line. About twenty years ago, I received an unexpected invitation to connect while in a flight.

I had just settled into my seat when a woman twenty years my senior said, “Hello.” I was surprised at her willingness to connect. We began a conversation that flowed as if we were old friends. I discovered that her passion was pottery, and I became so absorbed in the conversation that the hours flew by. I was full of wonder about the process of making clay into pots, and I learned about a unique glazing that no one else was using that created interesting

textures and colors. It was like I was “in” on a family secret. Her passion was contagious. When the flight was over, I was left with a desire to see what was unique about how she created her pots. As we were disembarking she called out, “You have my card. Come and visit while you are in town. Really!” And later that week I did just that. The shapes and textures of the hand-thrown pottery in her studio were something I’d never seen before, and I was impressed. So impressed that I figured out how to send one to my mom through international mail. What happened between the potter and me was effortless, fun, and fully engaging. In hindsight, I can see that what connected us was our natural, genuine curiosity about who this other person was in the world.

How do moments like this happen? This book is designed to help us find ways that we can contribute to a world in which these connections happen more often.

What makes connecting with others so hard and yet so delicious when it happens? I know some people who make connecting with others look easy. What is it about them that makes it appear effortless? For me, connecting with others is a choice and it is work. It’s rare that it happens without any effort on my part. Honestly, I could be in a room full of people and remain disconnected unless I make such a choice. I’m constantly generating reasons why I shouldn’t connect with this person or why that person would not want to connect with me.

It is easy for me to come to work and focus on what needs to be done and allow all the relationships and people present to

get “in the way” of getting my work done. It’s also easy for me to justify my choice, saying to myself, “I have important work to do and I can connect with them later.”

Yet often, I cannot “really” get my work done without these people. I can move some things in the right direction, I can set things up for success, but ultimately, the people around me are part of my work in some way. When I connect with them, the work flows with much more ease than when I don’t connect. They offer a suggestion I could not see, or they offer me support with a simple head nod.

This brings us to the delicious part. When I am connected with those around me, I am connected with something much bigger than myself. Their fears and desires are equal to mine, and yet, in some way, I am not burdened by them but actually uplifted. Knowing their fears, knowing their desires, and “getting them” results in moving our work forward in meaningful ways that lift all of us to the greater good. Like a great meal, it becomes a full-body experience. Something that you smell, taste, touch, see, and hear. Something that is so present that it exists only in the now.

The endeavor of asking meaningful questions starts with intention and connection. Connecting with people is fundamental to asking a powerful question. Connecting arises before you even ask a question and continues throughout your time with a client, student, parishioner, coworker, etc. It is my belief and experience that if you establish a connection with someone, then they will respond to your powerful questions more honestly and freely. Even other communications will be better received if you have established an authentic connection.

What is the process of how you connect with other people,

including strangers? We have now come to the second level of the Pyramid, *Rapport*. For some of you, the word “rapport” might have some bad juju associated with it. If you do a Google search on “rapport building,” you will get many hits on manipulative tricks for increasing your odds of having sex or increasing your sales success. I learned (and taught others) those tricks because I thought that they would help me start relationships. However, I ultimately came to know that these “tricks” built relationships that were fake. When there was real work to be done, the relationships failed to have enough substance to create collaboratively. In this book, the goal is to avoid these sneaky tactics disguised as shortcuts to successful relationships.

Here, the intention is to build connections that matter so that each of us can do the work we were meant to do. It will require us to take risks and to be vulnerable, and the reward will be new and fulfilling conversations.

I would suggest that rapport means building a relationship of trust or moving toward trust. Although rapport is a noun, *Rapport Building* takes a certain amount of work. It takes action. We will examine steps you can consciously take to create rapport.

But there’s another element to rapport that is harder to describe. It is in those moments when we see the other person as they are. Somehow, we are open to their humanity, their fears, and their dreams.

The person is NOT:

- ▶ in the way or someone who you need to work around
- ▶ a key player to get something from
- ▶ someone that we’re trying to impress

They just are. When you experience a moment of rapport with another person, you each feel safe in being yourselves. This allows you both to be fully present. When that occurs, it brings me joy that this person is present with me in that moment. Their eyes have that “shining” (a little extra gloss that happens to eyes when you are experiencing something that is real and heartfelt) that you see when you are truly connected. My intention is clear of any needs or desires other than the desire to connect with another person. It’s not coming from a place of loneliness but a place of sheer curiosity. What would your work be like if that could happen more regularly?

What happens during those magic moments (like the one I experienced with the potter) to make people feel connected—moments in which trust is present? Each person makes a choice to be totally present with the other person and does not allow their fears to control the conversation.

► **Trap: The fears**

Our objective is to remove all the barriers to establishing rapport. Most barriers to human connection are based in fear. People commonly name two fears that are barriers in the way of connecting with others. First is the **Fear of Being Unloved**, also referred to as the Fear of Being Rejected. It is often camouflaged as not being accepted or unliked. People in my classes will frequently say things like, “I’m afraid that if I take a step toward connection, the other person may not take that step.” Then thoughts arise, like, “I’m not going to be accepted,” or “I am not going to be liked.”

The second named fear is closely related to the first: **Fear of Looking Stupid**. By attempting to make a connection, people fear

being judged. They say things like, “I may do something that is abnormal and then I will look stupid to the person that I’m trying to connect with.” I’m sure we could list hundreds of additional fears here, but it’s possible they are all offspring of these two. They are all real fears, and we could be in therapy for years addressing all of them—or we could simply do two things: first name the fear and then find an antidote.

Allow yourself to be brave and name the fear (however you want to refer to it). This will give you the ability to face it head-on and the opportunity to begin understanding it. So often, we let fear steer us, as if we have a nameless, invisible companion whose hands are on our shoulders, whose job it is to steer us away from the very things that we really want to do. Once you name the fear, you can acknowledge it, be thankful for its counsel, and then you can make a choice to lean into it by using the antidote.

**What is one
thing or
situation that
scares you?**

**What things
hold you back
from doing
what you
really want
to do?**

Hi!

Chad and Will here.

We are mildly obsessed with relationships, group dynamics, learning & development, connection, and team performance. We design and deliver trainings, programs, and keynotes that actually work. And we've got the data to prove it. We'd be happy to share our success stories, whether helping tech startups like Typeform.com or Fortune 500 companies like Jetblue.

We believe...

- ▶ **Leaders accomplish more by asking powerful questions** than by commanding and controlling
- ▶ Deeper **human connection fosters more engagement** and **better performance**
- ▶ **People, purpose, and planet** are just as important as profit
- ▶ Interactive experiences have more impact than powerpoint slides because **people learn by doing**

Not only do we believe these things, we are genuinely excited about making them a reality for each organization we work with.



Chad Littlefield, M.Ed.

Co-founder, CEO

As a speaker and professional facilitator, Chad designs fun, challenging, and engaging experiences and tools that break down communication barriers. He has spoken at [TEDx](#) and is the author of the *Pocket Guide to Facilitating Human Connections*. He also led the design team that created *We! Connect Cards™*, which are now being used to **create conversations that matter** within companies in over 50 countries around the world and on 6 of the 7 continents. (Free deck if you live in Antarctica.)

Chad lives in Asheville, NC with his wonderful wife, Kate, though they both travel often for business and adventure.



Will Wise, M.Ed.

Co-Founder

Will Wise has over two decades of experience **custom building leadership programs** for corporate and nonprofit groups. He has earned a reputation as one who can transform groups and people into their best selves. Tens of thousands of people have been empowered with positive communication skills after spending some time with Will and We!™ Most recently, Will has also added author to his list of accomplishments with the release of his new book, *Asking Powerful Questions*.

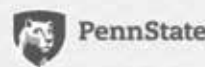
Will lives in State College, PA with his amazing wife, Heather, and their three children.

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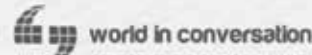
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- ▶ Learn **collaboration skills** your team can use *that day*
- ▶ Leave with concrete tools to **navigate difficult conversations**