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*“Fall in love with questions and end your love affair with advice”. **Peter Block***

By the time we reach young adulthood, we have been the recipients of a whole lot of “telling”. Parents, teachers, bosses and other authority figures, anxious to share their hard earned experience, have offered up volumes of advice, direction, scolding and well intentioned warnings. But how much of that do you actually remember? Think for a moment of someone who came alongside of you and asked what you thought? Can you remember an adult, teacher or even boss that asked good questions, showed interest and engaged you by drawing out your thoughts? These people are usually rare but are always unforgettable.

The ancient teacher Socrates knew that true learning started with the ability to use powerful questions in order to ignite understanding. The Socratic Method he pioneered is in short supply in our world today. Telling is faster than asking – and I hear much more telling and advocating in so many conversations that I hear honest inquiry. To improve in the area of skilled “asking”, start by asking a few good questions of yourself, such as: “Why do I fail to ask more questions?” “Do I have an addiction to giving advice? If so, what’s behind that?”

Some insight on our failure to ask questions comes from our cultural conditioning. American culture embeds in us from preschool the notion that some expert knows the Right answer and is tasked with teaching the rest of us. Quickly we learn that having the “right answer” in school and professional life is rewarded. Ever hear of anyone being promoted for “asking good questions and not knowing the answer”? Me neither. So, posturing and behaving as if you have a lock on the truth gets positive strokes. Secondly, as human beings we have a hard-wired need to feel important – to be viewed as valuable. By having - and telling - the right answer, we believe that others will approve of us and see the infinite wisdom of having us around!

Consider what could happen in your life if you spent twice as much time asking and half as much time telling....What changes might transpire in your relationships? In your work? What learning of your own could you explore as you tap into the wisdom and insight of others?

Ask.

## Ideas for Insight and Action

**# 1** - Identify the situations where you commonly “tell” vs. “ask”.



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**# 2** - Consider the motivation in those situations for you to “tell”.

**# 3** - Create an easy reminder to shift into genuine question mode when you catch yourself telling too much. (When I’ve heard the sound of my own voice for too long – that’s an easy reminder cue for me!)

**# 4** - Rehearse some “conversation starting” questions to have on hand.

“That’s interesting. Why do you think that is?”

“What’s this experience (dinner, holiday, whatever) like for you?”

“What’s the biggest problem you are trying to solve at work/in life?”

“What do you know now that you wish you would’ve known 10 years ago?”