



## Episode 43: The One Tool You Need to Understand Others Better

Welcome to In the Right Direction podcast, where we believe you get to choose what's on your plate, you can manage the overwhelm, and that change is possible. I'm your host, Deb Elbaum, and I'm here to share insights and strategies to increase your happiness, one baby step at a time. Let's dive in.

Hi everyone, it's Deb. Today, I'm curious about how well you think you understand the people around you. Here's my question: on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all, and 10 being completely, how well do you really understand the thinking of those you live and work with?

What number did you say?

Here's my follow-up question. What would it take to move that answer up by just 1 number? What would it take for you to better understand the thinking of those you live and work with?

We all have a fundamental human need to be understood by and to understand others. Yet what gets in the way of understanding is a lack of clarity. We might not be clear in our own heads about how we feel about something, or we might lack the words to accurately describe our feelings. When it comes to others, we might not have the right questions to ask them to fully understand how they're thinking and feeling.

Today's episode will share one of the most versatile questions you can use – with colleagues, teams, friends, and family members – to increase your understanding of how someone else is thinking and feeling. In addition, it's also a question you can ask yourself to help you get clarity about how you're thinking and feeling in the moment.

A deeper understanding of ourselves and others is possible. It just takes a curiosity mindset and an effective coaching question.

This clarity-bringing question is called the 1 to 10 scale question. As in, on a scale of 1-10, with one being not at all to 10 being very, how fulfilled do you feel today?

One to 10 scales are truly magical, because they help thinking in a powerful way. They help move thoughts from vague ideas to accurately pinpointing how someone feels in the moment. Then, they offer an opportunity to move forward and identify next steps more easily in a structured way.

The 1 to 10 scale question is one of my go-to favorite coaching questions. It's easy to remember, it helps engage the other person's prefrontal cortex effective thinking, and it can bring some humor into a conversation.

Let me explain why I love this question so much and share some examples along the way.

First, this question is easy. Whenever you are trying to elicit information from someone, understand how they feel, or understand more clearly how you feel, all you have to do is start. On a scale of 1 to 10... and then make a question out of it.

For example, if I'm talking with a potential client and want to better understand their readiness for coaching, I can ask: On a scale of 1 to 10, how willing are you to try new mindsets and new communication strategies?

Now, here's where you can add in some humor. You need to define the end points. What the 1 and 10 refer to. When you describe these anchors of the scale, feel free to bring in lightheartedness. Because humor helps the brain relax, which allows it to think more easily.

In my example, I might say this. On a scale of 1 to 10, with one being: No thanks, I'm committed to the mindset I'm in and have no desire to see things differently, and 10 meaning, I'm ready for the new strategies right now, how willing are you to try new ways of thinking and communicating?

After you ask the question, remember to pause. Wait for them to digest the question and the scale, so they can respond with a number that accurately reflects how they feel.

Reflecting and answering is the part of the process that helps the brain. It's engaging their prefrontal cortex higher-level thinking. One of the ways our prefrontal cortex thinks is to make good choices. When our prefrontal cortex is engaged, it lets us assess a field of choices and choose intentionally. When you ask someone to choose a number on a scale of 1 to 10, you are asking their prefrontal cortex to engage. You're inviting their brain to think more effectively, which will help them get clearer about their thoughts and emotions.

The 1 to 10 scale question can also invite problem solving and action. It does this in a few ways. As a stand-alone, this question can invite further conversation because it helps you get data and information you can use to start a conversation. Suppose you ask someone about how prepared they feel to present to their board, and they say 3. You get to slow down and find out where they need support. Or suppose you ask someone how confident they feel about a decision, and they say 8. Great! You're ready to make that decision and move forward.

You can also ask a powerful follow-up question to invite further problem solving and action in a more structured way.

Here's how that sounds: After you ask the 1 to 10 scale question, ask this:

What would it look like if your answer was 1 number higher? What would you be saying, doing, or thinking differently?

Asking this question invites their brain to vision what more clarity, more confidence, or more readiness would be like. And because brains like to answer questions, their brain would be invited to think about what might be possible for them to do, say, or think differently. This suggests action and a clearer path to move forward.

Let's put this all together with an example.

A community leader and I were talking about an important speech he was crafting to share his vision for the community. His goal was to foster more person-to-person connection, with people both extending and accepting invitations to meet and spend time with people they had not previously met.

He wanted to get a sense of how open people would be to this idea.

I suggested he incorporate a 1 to 10 scale question and ask the audience to consider and answer a question like this:

On a scale of 1 to 10, how open are you to meeting new people in the community?

One means not at all; my iPhone has no more room for new numbers.

Ten means yes, please! I'm up for a new conversation right now.

After people answer this question, he could follow up with a question like:

What would it take for you to move your openness up just one number?

By asking this next question, he creates an opportunity for the audience to consider their openness, their current feelings and what might be possible to shift their thinking.

That's the power of a 1 to 10 scale question. Immediately, it creates deeper clarity and understanding. It also hints at a way to take action toward what might be desired.

Let's bring this to you. This week, I invite you to try out a 1 to 10 scale question with a colleague, family member, or even yourself.

When you want to understand someone else's or your own thinking more accurately, start with this phrase: On a scale of 1 to 10... and then fill in the rest of the question.

Define what 1 and 10 mean.

Give them time to answer, and if the answer is any number less than 10, ask this follow-up question:

What's one thing you could do, say, or think to move up one number?

Adding this 1 to 10 scale question to your repertoire of coaching questions will help increase understanding all around: your understanding of others, their clarity in their own head, and your understanding of how you might feel. It will help you build your confidence as a question-asker, a coach, and a leader.

Thank you so much for listening and being part of my community. If you found today's episode helpful and want to learn how to use coaching questions more with your team and colleagues, please reach out. Email me at [deb@debelbaum.com](mailto:deb@debelbaum.com) or go to [debelbaum.com](http://debelbaum.com) to schedule a complimentary consult. I look forward to it. I'm here to help you create your best self at home and at work, so that you're confident you're moving in the right direction for you.

Until next time!