

The Positive Friction Cheat Sheet

10 Tricky Questions to Spark Breakthroughs

The goal of these questions is to move away from "What are you doing?" and towards "How are you thinking?" Use these when you feel the conversation is becoming too comfortable or when a person seems to be taking the path of least resistance.

Tips for Delivery:

- The Smile & Soften Technique: *Deliver these questions with a curious, warm tone. The friction should be in the topic, not the delivery.*
- Permission to Challenge: *Start the session by saying, "I'm going to ask some difficult questions today to help us stress-test this. Is that okay?"*
- Silence is a Tool: *After asking a tricky question, wait. Don't fill the silence. Let the person sit with the friction until they find their own way through it.*

To Challenge Assumptions

1. "What evidence are you using to support that conclusion, and what would happen if that evidence were proven wrong?"
 - Why: This forces them to separate facts from feelings and prepare a "Plan B."
2. "If you had to argue the exact opposite of your current position, what would your strongest point be?"
 - Why: This builds intellectual empathy and helps them spot weaknesses in their own logic before someone else does.

To Explore Alternatives

3. "Suppose the 'standard way' of doing this was off the table. How else could we achieve the same goal?"
 - Why: This removes the safety net of "how we've always done it" and encourages lateral thinking.
4. "If we look at this through the lens of [a different department/client/stakeholder], how would their priorities change our approach?"
 - Why: It breaks the "silo" mentality and introduces external friction.

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To Stress-Test the Plan

5. "If this project were to fail in six months, what is the most likely reason why?"
 - Why: Known as a pre-mortem, this allows you to discuss failure in a safe, hypothetical space.
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6. "What is the one part of this plan that you are secretly most worried about?"
 - Why: This gives them permission to be vulnerable and voice gut feelings they might have been suppressing.

To Encourage Growth & Ownership

7. "I'm playing Devil's Advocate here, but why should we do this now rather than in six months?"
 - Why: This tests the urgency and the strategic timing of their ideas.
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8. "You've given me the 'safe' answer. What's the 'brave' answer?"
 - Why: This creates a gentle nudge to move beyond the minimum requirements.

To Navigate the Disagreement

9. "We seem to be looking at this differently. What do you know that I don't, or what am I seeing that you aren't?"
 - Why: This frames the conflict as a "gap in information" rather than a "clash of personalities."
10. "If I were to completely disagree with your approach, how would you convince me otherwise?"
 - Why: It puts them in the driver's seat, requiring them to use persuasion and data to defend their vision.