



12 Ways to Turn "I Don't Know" into an Aha Moment!

Often when our clients say, "I don't know," they really do know, but it's uncomfortable to face the answer. When we trust our instincts as a coach and help them speak that uncomfortable truth—whatever it may be—we may just be rewarded with an **"Aha!"** moment.

A client's "I don't know" can represent many things. Examples include that your client knows what they really need to do, but they're not ready to do it. It could be that they don't trust us enough yet and are afraid what we will think. They may be afraid to speak their truth because their inner critic thinks the answer is ridiculous or immature ("Don't be such a baby!"). Or, perhaps they think that if they say the answer out loud, they'll have to commit to doing something scary.

When people don't acknowledge what they're REALLY thinking, they're essentially rejecting a part of themselves. It means they're more focused on who they think they SHOULD be rather than who they actually are. It's likely that their "I don't know," their unwillingness to face the truth of what they think and feel is what's blocking them from moving forwards.

The answer isn't to help them act, but to help our clients face their thoughts and feelings honestly. Whether it's "I know I need to quit my job, and I'm afraid" or "It's petty, but I just don't want to apologize" or "I think I'm a coward; I'm terrified they'll laugh at me" or "I know I need to stand up to them, but I hate conflict and I'm afraid they'll end our friendship."

Now we have the truth—and something real to work with.

This can be deep work. *It's important to remember that if it was easy for our client to say aloud and acknowledge their truth, they would already have done so.*

When the client takes the bold and brave step to speak their uncomfortable truth, it's like taking the plunge—scary but exhilarating. Often a relief, too. Then, from their uncomfortable truth, you can look more deeply at their feelings, desires, fears, judgments, assumptions and limiting beliefs. You can help them move forwards.



12 Ways to Turn... cont'd

From here, you can help them break something hard down into smaller steps, discover new/better options or role play. You should also prepare backup plans should the worst happen. MOST importantly, you're helping your clients honor their whole person—the so-called "good" bits as well as the "bad."

Facing our truth, however painful, is what sets us free. This is often what gives us Aha! Moments

HERE ARE 12 WAYS TO TURN "I DON'T KNOW" INTO AN AHA MOMENT!

1. Simply use silence. Don't respond at all and wait calmly for their next answer.
2. "What is it like for you to not know?"
3. "How do you benefit from not knowing?"
4. "How do you feel right now, as you think about answering this question?"
5. Use only with sensitivity and in good rapport: "Hmmm. I wonder what are you pretending not to know."
6. "If you allowed yourself to speak aloud whatever you might be avoiding thinking and feeling, however childish, silly or petty it might seem, what would it be?"
7. Gently: "What's underneath the 'I don't know'?"
8. Slowly: "Take a deep breath, and just allow yourself to feel into the question for a moment. Relax into this 'don't know' place."
9. "So, if (what they don't know about) had a color/smell/taste/sound, what would it be?"
10. "I feel that too sometimes. Take your time, and let me know when you've thought of something."
11. "If you secretly knew the answer, and no one (not me, you or anyone else) could judge you or make assumptions, what would it be?"
12. "Imagine you're in a helicopter flying over the map of your life. What do you notice about your life from way up there? Looking down with this new perspective, how would you answer the question now?"

12 Ways to Turn... cont'd

Important: When we encourage our clients to reveal themselves, they must trust and feel safe enough to be vulnerable with us. What seems small or unimportant to us could be significant for them. Take your time. Be kind, compassionate and understanding. Remember to reflect on what they've said and confirm understanding, without judgment. Be a coach. Be YOU.

Now you need never feel caught by, "I don't know" again. Have patience. Use one of these responses, and you never know, it may even be YOU who has the **Aha** moment!

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