

Using contextually clean questions – “Fire-keeper”

A complete transcript of a 45-minute Symbolic Modelling coaching session
(September 2020)

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The following transcript accompanies [Context makes Clean clean](#), an article about contextually clean questions which describes ‘the ‘big-5 specialised questions’ referred to in the annotation below.

The transcript illustrates the use of contextually clean (specialised) questions during a Symbolic Modelling coaching session. A video recording of the session is available in the [bonus material of InsideClean Series 2](#).

We selected this transcript because it contains 12 specialised questions, an unusually high number for a session of this length. We are *not* suggesting this is exemplary. Rather we are using the session to demonstrate how the conditions created by the logic (inherent and idiosyncratic) of a client’s inner world mean these questions qualify as *contextually* clean.

NOTES:

Emboldened indicate words introduced by the facilitators and highlight the format of the Clean Language questions asked.

The 12 contextually clean questions are underlined and highlighted in **yellow**.

The phases of the Symbolic Modelling Lite process and the categories of the Problem-Remedy-Outcome (PRO) model used in the annotation are defined [here](#).

1	P: And what would you like to have happen?	Phase 2: Identify desired Outcome
2	C: I'd like to hone my leadership skills.	
3	P: And you'd like to hone your leadership skills. And when you'd like to hone your leadership skills, what kind of hone is that?	Phase 3: Develop desired Outcome landscape
4	C: Just, yeah. Refine them and make them really reliable. And I'm not quite sure what I have to do to make them like that.	The client's Problem is: "I'm not sure what I have to do" i.e. they don't know <i>how</i> to make the desired Outcome happen.
5	P: And so you're not sure, but you want to refine, to hone and refine and make those skills reliable. And when hone and refine, and then more reliable, where is that hone?	
6	C: The hone is in my hands.	
7	P: Anything else when that hone is in your hands?	
8	C: It's a two-hand thing, it requires both hands.	

9	<p>P: And it requires both hands, a two-hand hold, in both hands.</p> <p>J: And when it requires a two-hand hold and you have honed and refined your leadership skills, how will you know that you've honed them?</p>	<p>A big-5 specialised question</p> <p>Even though the client may be "not quite sure what I have to do" (C4), are they aware of the evidence or criteria that will let them know <i>when they have</i> "honed leadership skills"? This question invites the client to find out.</p>
10	<p>C: All the arrows that I fire will go into the black middle in the centre.</p>	
11	<p>J: The arrows that you fire will go into the black centre. Anything else about arrows that you fire into a black centre?</p>	
12	<p>C: It's the least – it requires the least energy, but maximum effect. You don't keep trying. You just – You shoot and it hits the centre.</p>	
13	<p>J: You shoot those arrows and it hits the centre. So what kind of arrows are those arrows that you shoot?</p>	
14	<p>C: Sharp and pointy and feathers at the back. When you go over, you can hear them.</p>	
15	<p>J: Sharp and pointy with those feathers at the back. And so what happens just before you fire?</p>	<p>Invites the client to start self-modelling the <i>process</i> for firing those arrows.</p>
16	<p>C: I'm just really centred and focused, but I also – and that's probably more important, – because I can do the centred and focused, but where do I, where do I shoot? Where's the aim? So I know – the ultimate thing is I know where to aim for.</p>	
17	<p>J: So to know where to aim.</p> <p>P: And when you know where to aim, where is that know, when you know where to aim?</p>	
18	<p>C: I can see it, But it's more like a – the body knows, the body can see somehow.</p>	
19	<p>P: The body knows and the body can see. Anything else about that knows when the body knows and can see.</p>	
20	<p>C: Yeah, you don't engage the head too much. It's more like, where is the energy of the target.</p>	
21	<p>J: And where is the energy of the target when a body knows. And when a body knows, where does a body know?</p>	
22	<p>C: And it just, it knows around here, in the shoulders or in the – yeah, I guess so. It knows in the shoulders, it turns to where, where it perceives the energy,</p>	

23	J: Knows in the shoulders and it turns where it perceives the energy. And so when that body knows and it turns, where does a body knows like that come from?	Phase 4: Explore landscape Another big-5 specialised question The “body knows” where to aim and presumably it has acquired that knowledge from somewhere and through a skill-building process (which parallels what the client’s desired Outcome requires). The question invites the client to identify the <i>source</i> of that knowledge.
24	C: [Pause] I guess it's experience. ... Yeah, from long, long time ago, even from maybe ancestors or – I guess it's the gut’s reaction. Yeah, at first I thought it was from the breath, but it's deeper.	The client is discovering tacit knowledge.
25	P: It's deeper. It's the gut reaction reaction. And when it’s a gut reaction, and it's deeper, anything else about that gut reaction?	
26	C: It's calm and strong.	
27	P: It's calm and strong gut reaction. And when that gut reaction is calm and strong, does that have a size or shape?	Another big-5 specialised question The client refers to their reaction as “it” which occupies an area (in the “gut”), implying it likely has a size and/or a shape. The question invites the client to further attend to the <i>form</i> of her experience of “gut reaction”.
28	C: It's oval and it's red.	
29	P: And it’s oval and it's red	
30	C: And it's cave-like.	
31	P: Oval, red and cave-like ... [C: Yeah] And it's calm and it's strong. J: And where could the calm and strong of that gut reaction come from?	Second use of this big-5 specialised question. The question continues to trace the <i>source</i> of “the ultimate thing is I know where to aim for” (C16).
32	C: It's a fire. And it's a well-tended fire.	
33	J: Where could the well-tended of that fire come from?	Third use of this specialised question.
34	C: [Chuckle] The hands of the fire-keeper.	“Hands” again (see C6).
35	J: And hands of the fire-keeper. And what kind of hands are those hands of that fire-keeper.	
36	C: [Pause] They also look like my hands, they’re a lot smaller.	

37	J: So the hands of that fire keep look like your hands. And so anything else about a fire-keeper with hands like that?	
38	C: Busy fire-keeper.	
39	J: A busy fire-keeper, who can tend a fire, well-tend a fire. P: And what happens just before that fire-keeper tends that fire with those hands?	
40	C: She needs to get the wood.	
41	P: And she needs to get the wood.	
42	C: [Pause] Yeah.	
43	J: And can she get the wood?	Another specialised question It enquires as to the Fire-keeper's <i>ability</i> to do what "she needs to" do for the client's desired Outcome.
44	C: Yeah, but it's like a good old task. Keep the fire going and get the wood. And not just get the wood. The wood needs to be the right size as well.	
45	J: So it needs to be the right size of wood. And it's a good old task for that fire- keeper to tend that fire. And so when that fire-keeper can tend that fire with those hands and that wood, what would that fire-keeper like to have happen?	Another big-5 specialised question Since Fire-keeper can tend a fire and get wood it's likely she also has <i>intentionality</i> .
46	C: [Chuckle] Yeah, be less busy. Just be more cool and have less of a, less of a task, sort of tend that fire more [Pause] I don't know. It's kind of get one log, put it in, sit back. Yeah. I think actually maybe either the wood could be bigger. But it's – She gets tired, you know, and then kind of the fire ebbs down and then, yeah, needs attention again to get it going. And then it might, might take too long to get going.	In the PRO model: - The <i>Problem</i> is "busy", the size of the task and "tired". - To "be less busy" and to "have less of a task" are <i>Remedies</i> . - "To tend the fire more" is a <i>desired Outcome</i> .
47	J: And she would like to be cool - it to be less of a task. And what kind of cool is the cool of a fire keeper?	
48	C: Something to do with confidence, and well-measured, well-measured. It doesn't feel like a physical cooler, but a kind of a heady cooler – cool in the head.	
49	J: Cool in the head, confidence. P: Well-measured. Anything else about that cool-in-the-head, well-measured confidence?	
50	C: I'm sure there is, and it's a struggle to get to it right now.	

51	J: What's happening?	Another specialised question It was prompted by: - A shift in the client's nonverbals. - An indication that the client may be experiencing a problematic ("struggle") response in-the-moment.
52	C: Well, the head thinks it needs to solve this now. [Pause] And it gets tired.	
53	J: Trying to solve it. (C: Yeah) So the head thinks that, and what does the body think?	A novel question "The head thinks" but this does <i>not</i> presuppose "the body thinks" and therefore this is a mildly leading question. It would have been cleaner to ask 'And what does the body know?'
54	C: The body thinks it's warm enough. You're just right.	
55	J: And the body is warm enough. You're just right. And the head thinks it wants to solve it. P: And it gets tired. J: So when that's what the body and the head – what would you like to have happen now?	Standard PRO response to a <i>Problem</i> of an incompatibility between Head and Body.
56	C: It would be nice if the me that tends the fire could take up more space and become bigger. And my idea is you need – I need shorter steps and energy consumed that way. Shorter steps in getting the wood. And I'd be like two steps to the fire, three steps to the wood. The distances would become shorter. And I think I'd have to calculate less. The head would have to calculate less.	New desired outcome.
57	J: And the head would have to calculate less. And so when the head is calculating less, what's happening to a head that calculates less?	
58	C: [Pause] The energy can go down. And, yeah, go to that cave [Pause] And to the body, which is so much wiser. It's like [Laugh] it's like, I'm getting white all here. And it's like the soot clears and it's all sort of a bit uncomfortable, but it's – the left side is clearing up. There's white inside of my, of my head now, on the left side.	First indication of <i>changes</i> in the client's metaphor landscape.
59	J: And there's white, and then what happens?	Phase 5; Maturing changes

60	C: It actually looks, it looks a bit like, you know, when you have a – what do they call it?– targets, where you aim arrows at. And it's, it feels like that kind of white from the white, black and white, they alternate. Right? Then it's almost cork-like, painted, cork painted white. [Pause] And [Pause] Yeah, it's just a perception of an energy going down. [Pause] And it's quite, quite small. [Pause] And it's somewhere in my lower left now. Lower left belly, left inside of my belly. [Sigh. Pause] And it's somehow merging with energy that was there below to form a big – it's, it's almost like a – it actually goes this way around [Hands gesture]. It's like, an eye, eye-shaped, eye kind of like thing. [Pause] And I get the impression my right-hand side is of a different quality [Smile. Pause] And if I give in to this bodily sensation now, I'd be probably be curling up, like that [body enacts curling. Pause. Sits up]. That feels really nice now, all the way down there.	Many indications of changes happening in-the-moment.
61	J: So it feels really nice all the way down there, that energy. And the right-side is a different quality.	
62	C: And it, you know, it's really, it's white energy. It's kind of the good kind of energy.	
63	J: So when there's that good kind of energy, that white energy, on the left side of your belly – what happens to a fire keeper that tends a fire?	
64	C: She kind of goes: Oh, I wonder if I have to be in this cave with the fire. It's, it's much, it's not a fire that needs to light the darkness. It needs to be seen from – She wonders, can we take this outside? Take the fire outside. It could be much bigger there as well [Pause].	New wonderings.
65	J: So she wonders whether you can take that fire outside and it could be much bigger. P: And when she wonders that, what would that fire like to have happen?	C60 indicates that “fire” has “needs” which provides the condition for a similar big-5 specialised question as C45.
66	C: It thinks that's a good idea. There's a choice between the protection having, of being protected in that cave. But the other choice is [Sigh] being in the light in the outside, and it can burn a lot bigger. And other people could come round it and tend it or be warmed by it, and attracted.	
67	J: That's the choice [C: Hmm] What kind of choice is a choice like that?	
68	C: It makes sense. And it seems kind of the obvious choice now. And of course it's stepping into completely new environment.	
69	J: A completely obvious choice, to step into a new, completely new environment. What kind of step is that step, that steps into a new environment?	

70	C: [Pause. Sigh] Probably more than one step. To the place – to actually go outside it's maybe one step, but then you're not really, I'm not in the, in the, I'm approaching the new environment – well, the new fire-place. And it's, it's a fairly lonely step	"I'm <i>approaching</i> " suggests the client is embodying the metaphor in real time.
71	J: One step to approaching the outside and that's a lonely one step.	
72	C: Well, it's all fairly lonely there – kind of the fire and the fire keeper. It's fairly lonely. And there's no guarantee there'll be people in the new environment. It's the idea to attract them [Sigh]. Yeah.	
73	J: And that's the choice, to step into a new environment or to stay protected in the cave. P: When there are no guarantees.	
74	C: No guarantees. [Pause] And, kind of, it's one thing to find a new place for the fire, but all the while I'd have to leave it alone to find that place or go to that place and prepare it. And then. that cave-fire needs – how do, how do I – do I get it there safely? Or do I just start afresh? You have the elements and everything. It's, it's all doable. It's all doable. It's a question of, I don't know, doing it, making a plan. [Pause. Smile] I'm not great at making plans. [Smile] I have this idea and I have the vision and everything. I can see it. I kind of think, okay. Plan [shakes head].	
75	J: And so when there is this choice: stay in the cave protected or take the step outside, and that needs a plan, what happens to honing leadership skills?	
76	C: [Chuckles. Pause] A sensible thing would be to, to practice making a bigger fire. So, kind of, the interplay between body and head makes that easier. Because they're both quite good at what they do. It's the, the, yeah, the interplay between them.	
77	P: And what kind of interplay is that interplay between body and head?	
78	C: It's just both appreciating each other's skills and it's connecting and disconnecting again. It's not, I think they both like to be independent as well. And that they're good at being independent, each of them. But interplay? They would have to find out what kind of play that is.	
79	P: And when interplay, where is interplay?	
80	C: Probably in two different places outside, inside, swap around, see what works best. And it's, it's kind of in the middle of – Each in their own domain, but meet in the middle, and one going to the other. The head going to the body's domain and the body going to the head's domain, and play in between.	

81	P: Play in between at that meet in the middle.	
82	C: But there is a lot of movement.	
83	P: And where is that middle where they meet?	
84	C: If I were to mark it on my body, it would be, well, the centre of my, my body.	
85	P: The centre of your body. And when they meet in the middle interplay at the centre of your body, does that have a size or a shape when it meets in the middle?	The client refers to the "interplay" as an "it" (C80), that will occupy "the middle". Thus it is reasonable to infer it has a size and/or a shape. This specialised question invites the client to further attend to the <i>form</i> of her experience of "interplay".
86	C: It's a ball.	And as often happens, the client describes the form with a metaphor.
87	P: A ball. And what kind of ball is that ball?	
88	C: It's round and it's light. It could be a sun. It could be a ball of wool. But it's round and it can be moved. The first image that came to me is a sun.	
89	P: A Sun. A ball and a sun that meets in the middle. And is there anything else about that sun that meets in the middle?	
90	C: Big and bright, and it has short – what's it called, beams.	
91	P: Big and bright and short beams [Client Laughs] in the middle J: ... where a head and a body meets to find out what kind of play is an interplay. And so can head and body find out and meet in the middle?	This specialised question is used so the client becomes aware of whether "head and body" have the <i>ability</i> to "find out" (C78) and "meet in the middle" (C80).
92	C: [Chuckles] Funny that they hadn't thought of this before.	
93	J: So as they find out about that interplay and the meeting in the middle and that movement between the domains, what happens to honing leadership skills?	
94	C: Well, that's a task. Make it, make it a play, make it play – playful.	
95	J: Make it playful.	
96	C: Make it playful and it will – yeah – the honing will be in the playful.	
97	J: Playful honing.	
98	C: Yeah. They could take turns. Head and body need to find out when it's best to let the other one take over. And just what works. What, what strategies work. How are they at their best together.	

99	J: So what do you now know about honing your leadership skills?	Phase 6: Set down. Finishing the session with a mini- <i>Emergent Knowledge</i> routine.
100	C: It's – It's kind of, the word 'central' comes to mind. It's central to whatever happens next in my life, but it's, it's physically central and it's metaphorically central.	
101	J: So, you know it's central physically and metaphorically. And what difference does knowing that make?	
102	C: It opens up new ideas for games that I can play, when others play games, I don't know yet what kind of games I will be playing, but I will make it playful.	
103	P: You'll find out what strategies were best for doing that.	Penny is using the client's words from C98.
104	C: Yeah	
105	J: And so what difference does knowing that make?	
104	C: It's kind of there's more joy and more excitement around the next opportunity I will have in playing.	
105	J: More and joy and excitement. And what difference does knowing that make?	
106	C: It will make me seek out opportunities more than wait for them. Or it helps me to, to seek those opportunities out consciously. Step towards them rather than –	
107	P: Ah, [C: Laugh s] That's a different step! J: So are you okay if we leave you stepping towards those opportunities?	Penny is referring back to the "shorter steps in getting the wood" the client mentioned at C56.
108	C: Yeah. [Laughs] Thank you.	
109	J: Thank you.	