



HUMAN SYSTEMS
DYNAMICS INSTITUTE

Questions in Uncertainty

What do you do when you don't know what to do? Ask good questions!

When you are faced with the unknown . . . ask a question.

When the game has changed and you don't know the rules . . . ask a question.

When you are overwhelmed with surprise or chaos . . . ask a question.

Inquiry is a key adaptive capacity. When answers are few, questions are your wisest path forward. But, not all questions are created equal. We have habits of asking questions that we already know the answer to, or ones that we expect someone else to answer. Those aren't bad questions, but they may not be very useful if you are in a mess and looking for options to move you forward.

We have found six questions that help you see, understand, and prepare to influence patterns in chaos.

What are the three most important things about the present? This question draws your attention to what is, and keeps you from getting distracted by what was or what might be.

What do you want to be same or different in future? This question calls on your judgment, memory, and imagination to challenge what exists.

What is for sure, and what are your questions? This question draws you into inquiry, not only to question but also to find whatever certainty there is in the middle of the mess.

What contradictions do you see? Contradictions are important in chaos because they hold the energy for potential change. Find the contradictions, and you might find a door to the future.

What has surprised you recently? Surprise is a precious commodity in complex systems. They give you hints about what the future might hold.

What is one thing you can do to make a difference? This question moves you into action, so you influence what is to create what will be.

Nothing is intractable.

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What is one thing you can do to make a difference?

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