



Mind 4 Managing - 30 Questions for Managers

'90% of problems we have with other people can be solved without their involvement'

Introduction

For many years patients have been identified as being at the centre of everything the NHS does but if the people providing the care struggle to be in a good place they won't be able to give their best for the patients, the organisation or the NHS as a whole.

With pressures coming from all directions NHS Staff work in some of the most challenging and stressful conditions in any workplace.

There are many thousands of management books, websites and blogs which deal with the mechanics of managing and tell us to 'think differently' or 'embrace change' or 'work better' but what if we find it difficult? What if we struggle to think positive thoughts about the organisation or other people? Why do we find it so difficult to do what we want? What's happening to our minds!

Our minds are complicated machines which need managing if we are to get the best from ourselves and others and like training our bodies for a marathon or long bike ride or practicing on the golf course we need to purposefully train our minds so that they can be the best they can be.

We then need to keep gaining skills, being interested in people and purposefully practicing management. By being mindful of ourselves and others and continually scanning the surroundings for clues and signs we can gain valuable insights into the workings of people, management and the organisation.

Our work at OptimizeYou is all about helping people be in the best emotional place enabling them to manage themselves and other people more effectively.

In many circles it's called emotional Intelligence but as intelligence is seen as fixed I prefer to call it emotional or mind skills and these skills can be learned and with practice become second nature and part of everyday living.

So with that in mind this series of questions deals with the being rather than the doing and are directed at you the managers to ask yourselves along with some ideas on how to tackle the problems.

I've also left some space after each question so you can make you own notes, comments and plans.

Happy reading and thinking

Cheers

Paul

1. Are you aware of your own behaviour?

Most of us believe that we are in control of our behaviour, thoughts and emotions most of the time. The reality is that sometimes our minds are running our lives for us and we are far from in charge!

The problem is that our minds were designed in an age where the modern world didn't exist and the only thing that we needed was safety, a family, some friends and food. A very simple life really. Bring that same mind into our current situation and it can give us all sorts of problems and make us behave in ways which are unhelpful, unwanted and can get us into trouble when we least expect it!

Learning to manage the machine that is your inner mind will help you understand your own thoughts and feelings and be able to manage others.

2. Are you happy with the way you think and behave?

When we are calm, considered and feel in control it's easy to answer. However we can all think of instances where we got angry at a colleague and barked a response or received an email which elicited an angry missive back only to follow it up sometime later with an apology and a sense of regret at our outburst.

If we are not happy with this way of dealing with things we need to do something about it.

3. Are the people who work for you aware of their own behaviour?

Some people are more aware of their behaviour than others and that depends on a number of factors including their genes, parents and upbringing, education, learned behaviour or the influence of other people. They will of course also learn from previous managers styles and attitudes (as well as yours!)

With the right input and commitment most people can change the way they react to their own thoughts.

4. What does it mean to be a manager?

It's all too easy to get wrapped up in the details of 'doing the jobs' tasks and the wide array of day to dayness which comes with the title but if you look at the constituent parts it could be a mixture of organiser, accountant, HR specialist, timekeeper, disciplinarian, negotiator and leader. Another important role, and possibly the most important one is a people coach as really you are only as good as the people who work for you.

Write your own description of what being a Manager means to you.....

5. What do you think your people want from you as a manager?

What your people want from you may be different to the type of manager you are or want to be. It's a good idea to ask the question but you need to be ready for the responses! You can start by thinking about what they would want you to be like and also what you would like YOUR manager to be like.

6. What sort of manager would I like to be?

This is up to you. Note 5 characteristics that you would like to be as a manager

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

7. What's stopping me being that manager?

Over to you again and 5 things that are stopping you being the type of manager you would like to be

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Looking at it in this way allows you to see if the things that are stopping you being the manager you want to be are logical or emotional. Take some time to think about how much these are really stopping you. And which are just feelings.

8. Do you think about what you want to achieve before you start a days work?

Many of us start the day with a commute in our own world either being distracted by the radio, music or a challenging drive with a touch of road rage. This is followed by a hastily made cuppa and sit down at the PC to type out the first missive of the day or straight into the first of many meetings.

Creating space at the beginning of the day to think about people, problems, tactics and techniques means you start the day with a bit of a plan and maybe some goals you want to achieve.

9. Do you think and evaluate decisions before choosing an option?

Being decisive and making quick decisions is seen as a plus point for managers and that's great as long as you have all of the available information to allow you to make an informed decision. It is helpful to realise which part of your brain is making the decisions to ensure the conclusion you come to is based on logic and not emotional thinking.

10. Do your emotions stop you making difficult decisions?

This is not unusual as our brains are designed to stop us being hurt either physically or emotionally so sometimes we would rather not have a confrontation or a difficult conversation. This can lead to putting off the task, avoiding it by doing something else (ever hung the washing out on a work at home day instead of penning that difficult e mail?) or getting someone else to do it.

Whatever avoidance technique you've used if you don't deal with these situations they will play on your mind and set a 'gremlin' in your brain so that you won't be able to do it next time either.

11. Do you occasionally (or frequently) 'lose it'!

We all suffer from outbursts from time to time whether it's a hastily penned e mail response, a touch of road rage or a slammed door. This is an emotional response from our chimp brain and is quite normal but probably not helpful and usually results in later feelings of guilt followed by an apology.

Having an awareness of when this starts to happen is an essential part of training our minds to cope with stressful situations and other people.

A note on the 'Losing It' style

Some people use 'Losing it' as a management tool and way of getting what they want. This may work but only for a very short time until those on the receiving end either shut down, stop engaging, come out fighting or agree and join in fuelling the corrosive atmosphere. Either way you are not going to be getting the best out of people communicating this way.

12. Do you get frustrated by the actions of others?

Being frustrated by others is a common problem. There are many reasons for it from having expectations of others which are not met, unreasonable expectations to poor communication and inadequate training.

We can work on these areas but we have to be aware of the underlying cause.

13. What are your beliefs?

Beliefs are things that we **believe** in life to be true and these are different to real truths. We could believe that we will one day win the lottery or that we should always be happy. You may also believe that life should always be fair, that other people should always respect you and your opinion or that people should say thank you when you let them in to the queue of cars at the exit of the hospital!

Depending on your thinking these may be helpful or unrealistic.

14. When something goes wrong do you blame others or look to yourself for the answers

Blaming other people is a common action when something goes wrong. It's a safety mechanism to save us from our own thoughts and anguish! Blame has a corrosive effect on us and others and seeking the truth is much more productive and stops things going wrong the next time.

15. What is your purpose in the organisation?

Your Purpose is different to your job. Your job is to do the tasks that are allocated to you, the people you are responsible for and the people you report to. Your purpose however may be to bring happiness and comfort to those around you or to ensure that the company is financially stable.

16. Are you able to see situations from another person's perspective?

Viewing situations from another point of view is a powerful tool and can give us an insight into the way other people are thinking. Dealing with change, people, problems and situations benefit from viewing from another angle and can result in us seeing a more imaginative solution.

17. When was the last time you said thank you for a job well done?

Our emotional minds seek praise of others where as our logical mind gets pleasure internally for a job well done. That's not to say praise isn't a good thing and it's great when people appreciate what we've done.

A written thank you has more power as it shows you've taken time and effort to do it.

https://www.ted.com/talks/laura_trice_suggests_we_all_say_thank_you?referrer=playlist-what_makes_you_happy

18. Do you believe your people should be happy in work?

I always get a bit of a giggle when I mention happiness and work in the same sentence but there is no reason why work shouldn't be a pleasurable experience! Of course we can't be happy all of the time as our brains are not designed that way but work can be pleasurable for a number of reasons apart from the work.

Great people, friendly atmosphere and a sense of purpose all go in to making a happy and effective workplace.

https://www.ted.com/talks/dan_gilbert_asks_why_are_we_happy

19. Do you find it easy to have difficult conversations with people?

This can be as simple as telling someone that they can't have a day off or that they need to work when the roster says and not when they want to. We all feel that certain something when we are not enjoying the experience which can stop us in our tracks.

Being aware of what is happening in your mind can help deal with the emotions you feel when these tasks come along.

A bit of a funny but gets the point across! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28N2p3smEsw>

20. Would you rather do the job yourself or teach someone else to do it?

Ah yes we've all fallen into that trap! We do this for a number of reasons, to save time, we don't trust anyone else to do as good a job as we would or we like to help and save someone else the effort. The outcome of doing this however could be that you take away the persons purpose, their role and their confidence.

Taking time to teach and coach does the opposite and builds people's skills, capability and self esteem and will save you time in the long run!

21. Are your expectations of yourself and other people realistic?

We all have expectations both of ourselves and of others. If we expect everyone to be happy all of the time then we are going to be disappointed as that's just not realistic, it's life. Expecting nothing to change is also pretty unrealistic as again life throws up unexpected challenges. Expectations of yourself can also be unrealistic especially if you're a perfectionist and a more realistic expectation could be that you will always try to do your best.

Keeping a check on whether expectations are realistic or not is a good exercise.

22. Do you reflect on what has been achieved by yourself and your team?

It's all too easy to continually concentrate on what there is still to do as opposed to what you've achieved but it's important to celebrate along the way even if it is to yourself. Team progress should be celebrated frequently bringing a feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction in one's self and bring a sense of team to the people you manage.

Don't worry there will always be more to do so you won't run out of celebration time!

23. Do you enjoy change?

There have been hundreds of books written on this subject and most of them look at patterns of change but one thing all change programmes have in common is that they all affect people and people are individuals.

Change is experienced as a threat to our emotional minds as it involves unfamiliar circumstances, places, feelings and people. It is normal to feel this way but we need to ensure that we are not reacting to the emotional messages our mind is giving us and we look at it with logic and information.

24. Do you believe that people can learn to be a great manager?

In education it's called the 'Growth Mindset' and is the belief that we can learn and change how we are and what we do. If we believe that what we have at the moment is all we've got then we stagnate and stop ourselves progressing.

Developing a growth mindset in your team can improve performance and get the very best out of people.

https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve

25. How do you react when you are stressed?

When we are stressed (or tired or in love!) our emotional brain takes over as the rest of our mind is busy trying to sort out the problem. One of the ways to deal with this panic thought is to create space between you and the immediate problem.

If you get the feeling you are losing control press the pause button, take 3 deep breaths and think about the solution. Creating space in your mind for logic to take over is key to surviving a stressful moment.

26. How are you at taking advice?

Advice and criticism could be interpreted in the same way if we are not careful! Our logical mind will see it as advice and guidance whereas our emotional mind will view it as a slight on our character, our work or our team.

Be aware which part of your mind is interpreting the message you are being given.

27. What are your feelings when your team is criticised?

Your team at work is part of your Troop and they are important to you. You look after them and they look after you so when criticism comes in you feel it personally. It's normal to feel that way but you need to be aware of how you deal with it to make sure you make the best of the situation.

28. When was the last time you praised yourself?

When was the last time you gave yourself a large pat on the back?

29. What was the last great piece of advice someone gave you?

One for you to ponder

30. What was the last great piece of advice you gave someone else?

Again one for you to think about

And finally

So how did you do?

We like nothing better than visiting new place and talking to people so next time you feel like you need a chat and are willing to put the kettle on give us a call.

Paul Lewis

Optimizyou.co.uk

07808 305 250