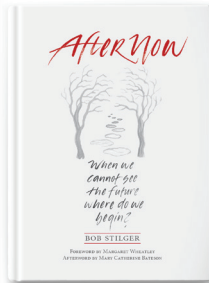


After Now

*An Invitation
to Create a Future Together*

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www.AfterNow.Today
for more information
about the book

AfterNow:
When We Cannot
See the Future, Where
Do We Begin?

All around the world new futures are being imagined, new societies are being born. People are stepping forward and asking questions about what is important in their lives, their communities and their businesses. They are listening to each other and forming new collaborations and partnerships to make our world a better place.

This little piece is a companion to *AfterNow*. Many of the ideas in *AfterNow* evolved through our collaborations over many years, will you join them? Will you begin to ask yourself and others questions that matter?

We hope the stories and ideas in this book inspire you to think about your own life, the life of your community, and the future you want. You know from the book that we believe the future is something we create together. We believe it is created by dialogue. And we believe dialogue happens when we sit with powerful questions.

We want to invite you into a little experiment with this book. We invite you to create mini-FutureSessions to talk with friends, neighbors, colleagues and community about the things you care about.

Interested? Terrific!

Here's how you can get started:

1. **Review the description of FutureSessions.** Go back and read Chapter 3 again, especially the first steps about settling your own self, creating an inviting BA and inviting others in. Then have a look at the PDF on Methodologies on the AfterNow.Today website. Above all, remember – hold yourself in a posture of respect, curiosity and generosity, letting go of your judgments of others and what they believe.
2. **Design your FutureSession.** Use Google Translate to have a look at www.ourfutures.net to see what's going on with FutureSessions all across Japan.
3. **Choose the Setting:** FutureSessions can take place most anywhere. They can be large or small, formal or informal, with friends, family or community-wide. At

the beginning, we suggest you might want to start small with a familiar group and then branch out later.

Here are some possible places to start:

- Invite your family into an after-dinner dialogue. Perhaps it begins like a game and everyone writes on a piece of paper a phrase - not an essay - about what would make the life of the family better. Sit in a circle and share your phrases with each other, perhaps using a talking object to make sure each voice is heard, and then ask people what's come up as they have listened to each other. Host the dialogue that begins to emerge.
- When having an after-work drink with co-workers, propose a more serious conversation about what would make your workplace better.
- At a small dinner party with friends, suggest talking about what's important in your lives.
- If your group is smaller than 15, maybe you begin with a dialogue in a circle. If it's more than 15, perhaps you begin with people speaking to each other in pairs, and then harvest from the pairs into the whole room, and then perhaps have a deeper question for a few rounds of World Café (see AfterNow Methodologies PDF). Consider ending a conversation with this question: Who else might we want to invite together to explore this question?
- Host an evening with friends, using story-telling trios. Ask people to share a story of a time in their life when they were truly happy. Follow that with a World Café where the first and second rounds use the question: *What does your heart yearn most for?* And then a third round with the question: *What needs to shift for this dream to be born?*
- Encourage a small group of friends to have an afternoon picnic in a park. After people have arrived and chatted over chips and dip, ask them to form pairs and go for a 15-minute walk talking with each other about a powerful question you introduce. As people come back together, sit in a circle and pass a talking object to share what ideas came up during the pair dialogues.

- Invite people to an evening dialog, using World Café if the group is more than 15 and a circle if it is smaller. Begin with a round of wild brainstorming -- just get people thinking about and listing out different indicators for success. Then ask people to talk about what's important to them. *What would they like to invite into their lives?* And then next ask them to see if they can come up with some indicators that would help them see their progress.
- Be a little more daring and invite a small group of people together – family, co-workers or friends. Ask people to form a pair with someone they don't know all that well. Then pull out Play Doh - that stuff like modeling clay in colors that kids use! For the first 20 minutes, the first person uses the Play Doh to make a model of their life - shaping the different aspects of their life. Ask them to describe what they are shaping to their partner.

After 20 minutes, ask them to stop, stand up and look at the model, and for 5-minutes talk about what part of the model needs to shift because it no longer serves them. Then fold up the clay and the second person goes through the same steps.

Twenty minutes may seem like a long time for each round and people may resist – invite them to begin. You'll be amazed at how quickly the time disappears. And, watch the energy. If it takes 10 minutes and everyone gets fidgety, move on.

4. **Choose the Questions:** From the list in the pages below, choose questions to use in your group. We've included a "hot pepper scale." You may want to start with the milder questions and work your way up to the hottest. Please feel free to change them and make them your own.
5. **Choose the Approach that Works for You and Your Session:** Appendix B describes a number of different methodologies you might use to host dialogs around these powerful questions. Pick and choose the ones that seem like they would work the best for you.

PLAY!

Enjoy. Experiment.

Use different questions and use different approaches and see what happens!

6. **Share your experience** with us on www.AfterNOW.today. Let us know:

How did you invite people to join in the conversation? Who came?

What questions did you consider?

What new ideas or actions came from the session?

What's next?

With your permission, we'll share your experiences and insights on our website and add them to the global movement to create new futures that work for us all.

Be curious. Follow the question.

Deepen the question.




From time to time answers may appear.



But what is most important is staying in the inquiry.





Open your mind, your will and your heart.





Have fun!



Powerful Questions for Dialogues

Question	Background
THINKING ABOUT YOURSELF	
<p>1. What is the possibility in your life that you will never give up on achieving?</p> 	<p>We sometimes live our lives unconsciously. Every day, we go through the same routine. Maybe sometimes we rise above the routine to plan a holiday, but usually we do what's laid out in front of us by our obligations, habits and patterns.</p> <p>We don't talk with ourselves, let alone anyone else, about what we truly cherish, what we really want to do, what's calling you. Why don't you open a space for that dialogue? There's no correct answer here! Many different possibilities will become visible by asking this question.</p>
<p>2. What would improve your family's quality of life? What might make you all happier?</p> 	<p>Often we know what needs to shift in our lives. But we are almost afraid to speak it aloud. We hide from our knowledge.</p> <p>Sometimes we just need a place to start. It is easy to have a big, seemingly unreachable dream - <i>I'm going to quit my job and move to the country.</i> But a more interesting question is. "<i>What is my elegant, minimum next step?</i>" In other words, how can you begin?</p>
<p>3. What does uncertainty mean to you?</p> 	<p>One of the main themes in this book is that we live in uncertain times. We're in a time when old structures and patterns are disappearing and new ones are being born.</p> <p>This is not something happening "out there," it is something happening in each of our lives. Things that we depended on are disappearing and new things that we don't know what to make of are coming into our view!</p> <p>What do we do?</p>

Question	Background
THINKING ABOUT YOURSELF	
<p>4. What are your indicators for success? How do you know if things are getting better?</p> 	<p>Bob remembers listening to the president of a small fish processing plant in Ishinomaki after the disasters. He said that before the disasters, he thought that if his kids were going to the right schools and he had nice kitchen appliances and a new car, then life was good. Those were some of his indicators of success, of what it meant to live a good life. He went on to say that since the Triple Disasters those were no longer his indicators - and that he was discovering new ones.</p> <p>In times of change, we need new indicators to guide us. To help us know if we are going where we want to go. What are your current indicators? What could be a new indicator? It might be something like: <i>I am spending more time with my family.</i> Or <i>I am cutting down on my living expenses so I can find a job I really love, even if it pays me less money.</i></p>
<p>5. What must stop in your own life, now? What is it you are willing to let go of that no longer serves you?</p> 	<p>Often, in order for something new to be born, we have to let go of things that no longer serve us. This may be a particular way of thinking that no longer serves you, or it may be something like a current job or a personal relationship. What are you hanging on to which no longer really helps you?</p>

Question	Background
THINKING IN LOCAL CONTEXTS	
<i>Business</i>	
<p>1. What would make your business more resilient and more sustainable?</p> 	<p>Most of us have ideas about what would improve the businesses we work for or own. Sometimes we don't have confidence in our ideas, or don't even fully understand them. When we start to share those ideas with others and talk about them, new possibilities begin to emerge. What are your wildest ideas?</p>
<p>2. What are the social issues that your business might be able to address?</p> 	<p>Businesses are a part of community. Around the world, businesses are realizing that having a social purpose is essential for their health and well-being. Companies are reinventing themselves by entering into dialogue with people from different parts of their communities and discovering what they can create together. Where might you begin?</p>
<i>Community</i>	
<p>1. What is possible now, in your community that was not possible before?</p> 	<p>We live in a time of constant change. Often we only see the "bad things" - things that are changing in ways we do not like. What happens when you turn your attention to new openings and new possibilities? What is waiting to be born? What is your vision, your inspiration?</p>
<p>2. When you imagine yourself helping to make your community better, what does "better" actually look like? What are your indicators of success?</p> 	<p>Sometimes we are discontent with the present and want change, but we are uncertain about the change we want to see. One way to begin finding our way forward is to dialogue with each other to define key indicators of success. Indicators can be very broad: <i>more of our elderly will be smiling</i>, or very specific: <i>we will reduce childhood obesity by 10%</i>. What indicators of a better community would you like to help build?</p>

Question	Background
THINKING IN LOCAL CONTEXTS	
<i>Community</i>	
<p>3. Where would you start if you really wanted to improve life in your community? What is your elegant, minimum next step?</p> 	<p>Perhaps you recall that one of the stepping stones out of disaster was: <i>Start anywhere. Start now.</i> We make a new future by trying things. We talk with each other, share ideas, and gather information and we find a place to start. We take a step and we pause and reflect on what we've done and then we take another step. Where would you begin your next step in your community?</p>
THINKING ABOUT OUR SOCIETY	
<p>1. Can you share a story of how you are noticing others increasing their happiness?</p> 	<p>Most of us know someone who has taken a new step in their lives. They have broken from an old pattern and taken their first steps towards creating a new one. Often these people are looking for ways to make their lives more resilient, flowing more easily with the many ways in which their lives are changing.</p> <p>What stories do you know? (These stories can be any context you choose – personal, business, or community resilience.)</p>
<p>2. What is the place you love the most in your country? What are its qualities?</p> 	<p>Many of our memories, as well as our hopes are “stored” in places we love. When we remember those places and talk about them with others, we often experience a release. We experience a sense of returning to ourselves. What is the most special place for you in your country?</p>
<p>3. What would it look like for our culture to be more and more creative as we face new challenges and changes?</p> 	<p>We all live in amazing countries and cultures. We are at a time in the world when it is important to “play big,” to ask bold questions and to dream big dreams. What might happen if we allowed ourselves to become even more creative?</p>

Question	Background
THINKING ABOUT OUR SOCIETY	
<p>4. Think about new social indicators for success. Set aside the old indicators - what is the new story you want to create?</p> 	<p>Can you imagine a future that's very different than our present reality? That's hard to do alone, but we can do it with each other. Imagine you fell asleep and woke up in 25 years. Looking around, you discovered the society you had dreamed of is here and real. Describe it!</p>
<p>5. What vision do you hold for your country's future? What would make you most proud of your country in this 21st Century?</p> 	<p>We have a chance to create a new way of living and building society. It is a big chance for people everywhere around the whole world.</p> <p>How can you imagine Standing Up while Standing Together? What are new Indicators for Success? What are transformative scenarios for the future?</p>



Explore the book *AfterNow: When We Cannot See the Future, Where Do We Begin?* at www.AfterNow.Today