

Best of 2019

#WisdomCards

#WISDOMCARDCOLLECTION

by dr Anita Sands

How you ask a question
often frames the answer
you'll get. Are you
"asking the answer"?

Althan Shapira

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Asking the right questions is a rare and valuable skill but an essential one throughout your career. How you frame the question, however, has a significant effect on the way people interpret your question, the thought pattern you invoke, and ergo the answer you get.

For example, are you asking someone to "draw a vase" or the real question which is to "draw an interesting way to display flowers in your home"?

I try to "think about my own thinking" and critically evaluate whether I'm actually "asking the answer," leading the witness, or asking a genuinely open question.

*You can't beat
Something with Nothing.*

HERB SIMON

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One of the best bits of advice ever! You can't beat something with nothing. If you're going to criticize something or shoot somebody's idea down, then you should also have a better alternative or suggestion to give.

I keep this in the back of my mind in every meeting because I tend to be a highly critical thinker and can easily find fault in something. It's easy to criticize; it's far harder to come up with something better.

So I try to consider what a better idea might be. That way, I can frame my comment in such a way that it isn't demoralizing or comes across as wholly negative.

If a situation hasn't
played out fully, or hasn't
happened - why put your-
self through the trauma of
thinking / acting it out?

03

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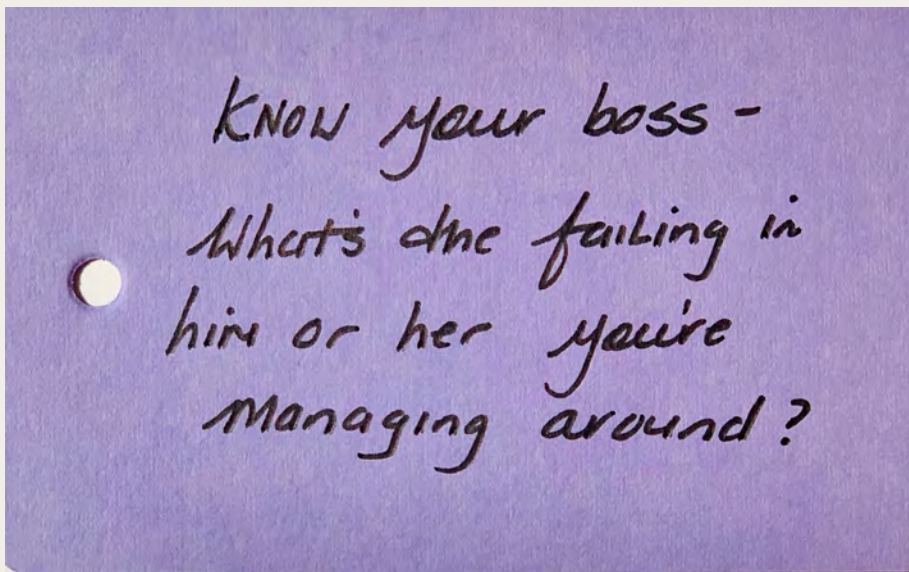
How much time and energy have you lost worrying about things that never ended up happening?

Or when you're going through a period of uncertainty, have you found yourself playing out the worst-case scenarios?

It's a habit I'm prone to but have come to realize that :

- (a) It doesn't serve me well, and moreover;
- (b) It actually does harm both in terms of the physical and mental tax of worrying, and in certain circumstances, can become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

I can't count the number of sleepless nights I've had worrying about something that never came to pass in the end. How often do you find yourself doing this?



04

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No-one is perfect - including your boss - but getting along with him or her is your job. It's essential to understand his or her shortcomings, so you can work around their flaws or tailor and optimize your interactions to get to a better outcome for everyone.

I've worked with people so insecure that you had to avoid triggering that in them. There were others who lacked communication skills, so I would try to help sharpen their messages.

None of us are perfect, and the best thing leaders can do is to have the humility to recognize that fact and to complement themselves with others in areas where they know they fall short.

*Knowledge and skills
are the equity upon
which tomorrow is built.*

05

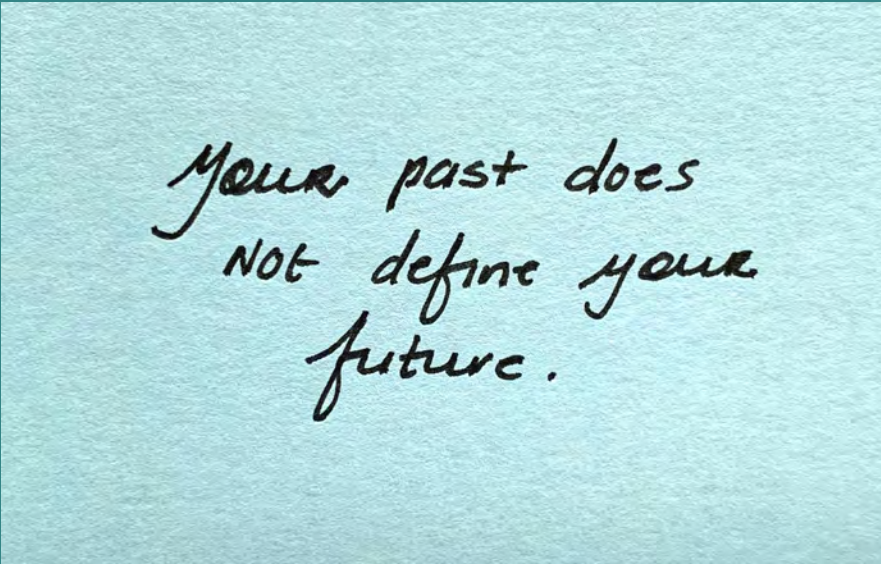
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How committed are you to life-long learning? Given the pace of change, the half-life of all of our skill sets is getting shorter.

I wish more universities would take graduates back for a “tune-up” the same way car dealerships take your car back after three years or 10,000 miles.

I’ve seen a stark difference in the success of leaders who have an open, learning mindset, whereas those who think they know it all invariably end up curtailing their career.

Filling out a few #WisdomCards every day is one of the ways I remain open to learning from everyone and everything I encounter. What’s worked for you?



*Your past does
not define your
future.*

06

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As somehow who has made a lot of "pivots", I think there's a certain comfort in knowing that change is a true constant in life. It will always be there, yet most people continue to fear and resist change.

We can choose to be defined and constrained by our circumstances, or we can be motivated and inspired by our potential and possibilities. We can choose whether our past will be a determinant of our future. I choose not!

Sometimes making a change in your life involves a leap of faith, throwing yourself off the cliff, knowing that you'll figure out how to deploy your parachute before you hit the ground. All it takes is an explicit belief in just one thing - yourself.

Manage your time like
your life depends on it.
You have 168 Hours in each
week. Each hour has a
high opportunity cost.

07

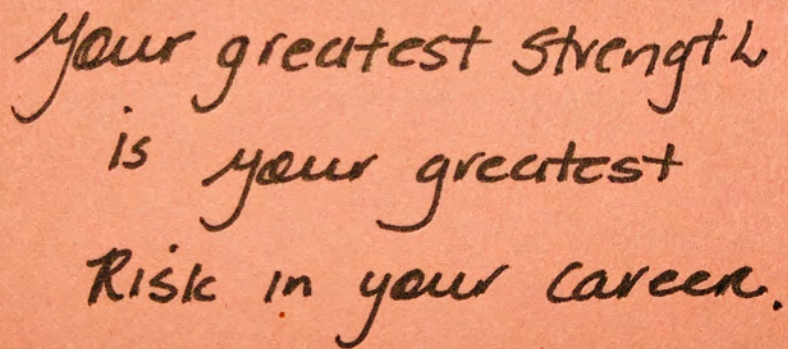
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How often do you stop to objectively and rigorously reflect on how you're spending your time?

The very first piece of career advice I was given in the corporate world was from a senior executive in Toronto. I wasn't "overwhelmed," but I was feeling "whelmed" and asked her how she handled it. She said, "manage your time, and the rest will take care of itself."

With the benefit of hindsight, I'm now far more thoughtful about my time. It's the one thing we all have in common - 168 hours in each week.

Each one of those hours has an extremely high opportunity cost - but how many of us factor that in before mindlessly saying "yes" to too many things?



Your greatest strength
is your greatest
Risk in your career.

08

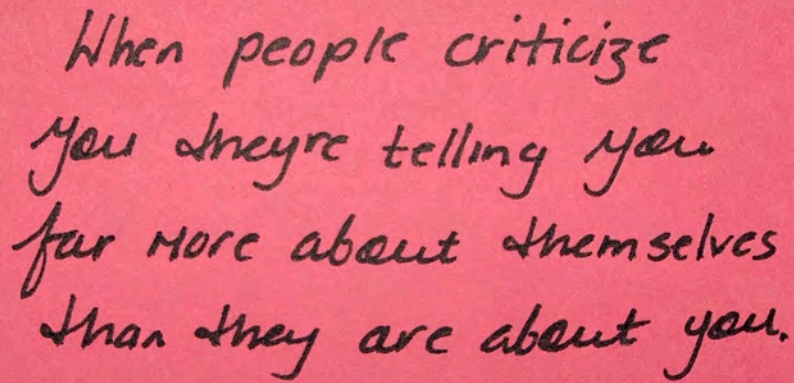
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Never forget, in your career, you won't derail because of a weakness, but rather because of a strength that you take to an extreme.

Every strength has a dark side - learn where the line is and be sure to stay on the side of the light. If not, your greatest strength may become your biggest risk.

How many of us are self-aware enough to know what our strengths are and then what the dark side of them might be? In my case, one was being a strong communicator - a great strength to have - but the dark side is I'm not always the best listener.

I've seen others let confidence become arrogance; directness become rudeness, etc. What strengths, if left unchecked, might derail you?



*When people criticize
you they're telling you
far more about themselves
than they are about you.*

09

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Have you ever gotten negative feedback? I have, and, on one occasion, I was utterly blindsided. After telling one of my mentors about it, she relayed the following advice - People who criticize you are saying as much about themselves as they are about you.

While the feedback was undoubtedly helpful and identified areas for me to improve upon, it also gave me great insight into this person's assumptions, biases, and, quite frankly, their character.

Afterwards, I started to identify patterns in how this person treated other colleagues and team members, which informed how I then managed him. The process made me a better and far more astute leader.

*Any one who says
they don't have time
doesn't have priorities.*

Tim Ferris

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This was my birthday #WisdomCard for 2019 – a great day to reflect upon what's essential and to ask myself an important question - What do I know now that I want to double down on for the second half of my life?

As I head into the locker room at half time in the game of life, one thing I'm sure about is that time is the greatest, most precious, and the most unpredictable gift of all.

Being aware and intentional about how you spend your time, what you devote your time to, and how that lines up with your actual priorities in life is something I'm going to improve upon this year.



About the #WISDOMCARDS

Created in 2019 by Dr Anita Sands, the #WisdomCards share the distilled wisdom she has garnered over two decades of observing and working with some of the most successful organizations and leaders in the world. The topics cover career and personal development, leadership, business, technology, and a host of other areas. You can find them online @dranitasands:



About ANITA SANDS

Dr Anita Sands is an independent board director, advisor, and international speaker. She writes and speaks regularly on issues relating to the impact of technology on business and society, leadership, gender equality and belonging. A wife, mother and step-mom, she resides in New York and Dublin.

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