

# Vital Questions Project

Positive ways for shaping one's life  
created for young people and adults

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# Introduction text to the Vital Questions Project

## 1 Significance and purpose

The Vital Questions Project wants you to encourage your self-exploration in a playful way. By answering the questionnaire you might gain new insights, reflections and knowledge.

Sometimes the easy things in life have the biggest effect, that's why the questions are quite simple verbalized. As a user you are the central figure, because you are the specialist about yourself. All the vital questions are resource-oriented with a focus towards your talents and options. The important thing is what works. But in the end this project should be funny and entertaining, to blow one's own trumpet, to be proud about one's own progress and great effort!

In the introduction of this project I would like to give several advices from a social-pedagogic and family therapeutic point of view, but only as an advice without requirement on completeness.

I'm always keen to improve and develop this project. That's why I'm looking forward to your feedback.

My homepage is in German:

**[www.Jan-Kropf.de](http://www.Jan-Kropf.de)**

Feedback can be sent to:

**[Mail@Jan-Kropf.de](mailto:Mail@Jan-Kropf.de)**

## 2 Instruction about how to use the Vital Questions Project

Have you already thought about how you could best use this project and how to find answers to the questions? I can give you some simple advice: Relax. Fill in the sheets only when you feel like it and only when it feels fun for you. Take your time, sometimes more, sometimes less. Sometimes you might work intensely at it, sometimes completely superficially, in a light and playful manner. It will surely be interesting to repeat this questionnaire after some time has passed.

Part of a vital question project like this requires thinking about your past without getting too emotionally caught up in it. The conscious reflection and the benefits of the past will lead us to a more peaceful and fulfilled future. **Self-enquiry** should lead you in a playful way to **more self-confidence** and thereby to **self-improvement**.

I would like to encourage you to sit down calmly and take a look at yourself from a humble and modest point of view. Maybe you will be able to see **new aspects and facets of your own personality**. Please feel completely free with your answers. In some cases a one word answer will be sufficient.

### 3 Basic attitude

Most people live an easy-going life without having to go through major changes. And that is good thing. Habits can be positive and actually make sense. However, when you try to change things too quickly, things can go wrong, and you can quickly become overwhelmed.

The conception that it might be useful to get to know yourself is not a contradiction. You might be able to develop **more self-confidence, skills and stamina**, and last but not least **more response, contentment, vitality and gracefulness**.

Most people feel balanced when they are neither too overextended nor under-challenged in their daily life. This is when you are going through the “**Flow-Effect**”, the moment of fluxion, when you feel completely content with yourself. Characteristic of this state is the feeling that time is flying. A similar description of “Flow-Effects” can be found in hypnotherapy. For example, it describes driving a car like an automatic working state of trance, where actions like operating the clutch or slowing down become an automatic action while simultaneously under the absolute control and consciousness of the driver. If one drove while thinking consciously of every single action, the mind would be completely over-strained.

One of the most important things in life is to live enough of this “Flow-Effect”, to create a good sense of **humor and self-irony**. You should depend less on these so called experts and listen to and trust more **in yourself**. It is not absolutely necessary to always achieve everything that’s expected of you and strive for the highest targets. It is also not necessary to “take stock” like economically oriented consultants might recommend.

In particular, my experience with disadvantaged people shows me that changes and objectives are easier to reach if you meet them randomly instead of running after them with artificially constructed target agreements. It should be more about life. We often have to gracefully endure unfavorable phases over a long period before we can start accepting them with **ease and poise**. A beautiful citation by **Mother Teresa** says: “**In this life we won’t be able to do big things but we can do small things with a lot of love.**”

For the past two decades progressive social-pedagogical institutions in the German speaking world have been oriented towards the attitude of “**empowerment**”. The roots of this concept came from the liberation movement by the repressed black population in the USA. It demonstrates the support to the attitude of **self-realization** of socially repressed people. My project has been developed based on this attitude to help people, repressed or not, to reach a high level of **self-effectiveness**.

In the oldest and most ancient writings of humanity, the **Indian verses**, we can benefit from traditional knowledge, which is gaining in importance these days again. The ancient Indian language Sanskrit has such a beautiful sound that I prefer using the original names as well as the English translation: They are about the **basic values** of life: **Prema** or **Love**, **Sathya** or **Truthfulness**, **Dharma** or **Righteousness**, **Shanti** or **Peacefulness** and **Ahimsa** or **Non-violence**. Five questions in the first chapter are regarding these basic and valuable attitudes. It is worth examining your answers in this application also with these five basic attitudes above.

## 4 Encouragement to serenity

In nature, each healthy **tree** is a symbol of strength and power. The strength of the tree has its fundamental base in the **roots**. The same is true for us human beings. Easy changes are only possible, or to say it from a naturalistic point of view, if our inner stability and therefore our **roots in life** are well developed.

**“Bye, bye... Couch! How to avoid your therapists couch”** says the Dutch author and therapist **Jeffrey Wijnberg** already in the title of his book as a warning about the members of his profession. He questions common attitudes within the world of psychotherapy in a quite humorous way. Wijnberg wants to warn everybody just not to fall too quickly and easily into the hands of a therapist, as it is a fact that therapies are often not helpful. For example, I find his opinion about self-confidence quite astonishing. Wijnberg represents the opinion that quite often it might be more helpful to be more careful and restrained, in order to avoid wrong decisions. It is a brave move to hold a view like that, as it is against the common opinion of mainstream therapists, who rather claim that self-confidence is one of the most important aims in therapy.

But I want to go back to the imaginative picture of the tree which hasn't been chosen accidentally. One of the most important and basic exercises in **Phyllis Krystal's** method is the **“exercise of the tree”**, which I'll explain in a few words: You should sit down at a quiet place, close your eyes and think about a strong and sturdy tree. Then try to imagine, that you are inside the trunk of that tree in order to feel the entire treetop and roots. The roots are the symbol of the “cosmic” mother and therefore the “ideal” or perfect mother, which maybe didn't exist in your real childhood. Through concentrated breathing your imagination will be set free, to get everything by that “ideal” mother that you have been missing during your whole life. According to the roots, the “cosmic” or “ideal” father is symbolized by the treetop. Now you can also receive everything you have been missing from your natural father.

This method might take a little bit to get used to, but it works! Most of the time the only “problem” occurs because this exercise has never been performed although one might have found it useful. This exercise has been described in the book **“Cutting Ties That Bind - Workbook”**.

## 5 Therapeutical advices

In many difficult vital situations, when the inner pain is quite intense, you won't be able to avoid asking for therapeutical help. In this case it is crucial to choose a magnificent therapist. A person with an extraordinary model status should be adequate to consult. It is crucial for a successful therapy, that the **personality of the therapist** matches your own personality.

As I am quite familiar in the sector of **systemic family therapy**, I would like to give some advice and lead the user of this application to a journey into a new world.

But here as well, I'll have to ask for a certain amount of **serenity!** Self-exploration or the exploration of your own family traditions and patterns is very exciting, but takes some time. You also have to be strong in order to integrate items of the inner family which have long been hidden and treat these issues in a positive way.

There are probably a lot of people who are able to benefit from the systemic family therapy. On the other hand it is as it is with many things in life: a good matter or item is not always valuable or helpful to everyone. A creative form of therapy or even a classic therapy might be sometimes more effective for different reasons.

But now I would like to take you on a short trip into the systemic family therapy. To start with, I would like to indicate the following book written by Gunthard Weber (Editorial Carl Auer) "Understanding and Healing Injuries of the Soul" ([www.carl-auer.com](http://www.carl-auer.com))

**Dr. med. Gunthard Weber**, demonstrates vividly, how to find solutions in a warmly an human way for people in difficult situations in their life. Gunthard Weber worried a lot about the connection between the different systemic approaches. Every now an then, he is still leads work groups, especially those that work with the method of system constellations. Furthermore he founded a very successful and impressive development program in Africa. His managing successor is **Dr. phil. Dipl.-Psych. Diana Drexler**, who also works in an extraordinary professional and human way. To look from either of them can be highly recommended. The following webpages are in German:

[www.wieslocher-institut.com](http://www.wieslocher-institut.com)

[www.haeuser-der-hoffnung.org](http://www.haeuser-der-hoffnung.org)

Furthermore I'd like to point out the website and the books of **Prof. Dr. Franz Ruppert**, who is a psychological psychotherapist from Munich. Franz Ruppert has scientifically explained the systemic coherence between the disorder of an individual and the associated family structures and patterns, like no one else before. Furthermore he has been very successful with his **scientific and revealing systemic work** with people who suffer from a psychological disease, a mostly positive progress of this disorder.

Franz Ruppert 's working method by is characterized by a warm-hearted and human handling with people.

It is quite remarkable that he hasn't experienced any fear while treating the affected person, as he sees psychotic attitudes in a very native way, separating them from the individual and tracing them back to traumatic family incidents.

That itself brings noticeable relief to the affected person, leading thereby to a healing process. Franz Ruppert's point of view shows **a shift of the paradigms in the psychiatric world** which was clearly necessary. His books can be ordered via his homepage or you can download parts of them for free in several languages.

[www.franz-ruppert.de](http://www.franz-ruppert.de)

In my opinion, **Dr. med. Gunter Schmidt** personifies the aspects of **humour, serenity** and **simplicity** inside a therapy like no other person. He deals with complicated facts in a simple manner and is on a level with everyone else immediately. His seminars take place like monologues, which is encouraging and fascinating despite his self-focussed way of behaviour.

As a founder and manager of the **Milton Ericson Institute in Heidelberg** he points out a very believable and competent connection between **systemic therapy** and **hypnotherapy**. This combination has been quite helpful particularly in the sector of addiction. Gunter Schmidt and his

colleagues are the founders and leaders of two clinics for psychosomatic and addiction in the region around Heidelberg.

One of the most renowned representatives of the hypnotherapy in America is Jay Haley. He wrote a book which introduces this method: "The Psychiatric Techniques of Milton H. Erickson, M.D.

I would also like to highly recommend **Dr. med. Dietrich Klinghardt**. He is the founder of **psycho-kinesiology**, a developed combination of several naturopathic and therapeutic methods, commonly used by non-medical practitioner healers. Dietrich Klinghardt emigrated to the United States years ago, to provide his repertoire of methods unimpeded by the German hostility towards innovation and has established them very successfully, even in hospitals.

[www.klinghardtacademy.com](http://www.klinghardtacademy.com)

## 6 Philosophy of life and stylistically advices

Many people don't have a lot of inner values and therefore they seem to be quite removed from realistic moral codes of life and society. Unfortunately some of these people even start to write books which are in bad taste and have a populist touch. In the summer of 2010 a high-ranking, old and embittered man with foreign roots was arrogant enough to write a pamphlet against immigrants. During the past years several other power-obsessed men have appeared on the book scene, whose only apparent target seems to be providing highly overemphasized advice about disciplinary actions towards children and teenagers to earn a bunch of money. Now it is the right moment for all of us to reflect on the real values in life, not only to free ourselves, but also in the aspect of "**liberation of opinion**" regarding these miss directed opinions.

The priority task of people should be particularly to serve the society, considering the true values and the serious attempt to always aim for the best. The **Dalai Lama** personifies a shining example and an idol. In this context I would like to recommend a book written by **Daniel Goleman** with the title "**Primal Leadership: Learning to Lead with Emotional Intelligence**". It was originally written for managers and executives, but it contains a lot of interesting advice for all of us to help develop our emotional skills. Daniel Goleman takes part at the "**Mind and Life**" congress every year with other **western scientists** to compare eastern and western sights of view and to learn from each other. The primary objective of these congresses is **to explore the mind** in order to **minimize human suffering and pain** and **to support the well being** of the individual.

[www.mindandlife.org](http://www.mindandlife.org)

[www.danielgoleman.info](http://www.danielgoleman.info)

For many people the Vietnamese monk **Thich Nhat Hanh**- who exiled to France, is a similar shining light like the Dalai Lama. He wrote several books about the same issue like Daniel Goleman. One of his books has the title "**The Art of Power**". As someone who lived in the cruelty of the Vietnam war, Thich Nhat Hanh strives to instruct as many people as possible to reach their inner serenity and therefore **freedom**, even though the circumstances may be adverse. Another book written by him is "**Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life**".

[www.interbeing.org.uk](http://www.interbeing.org.uk)

**Eckhart Tolle** is taking us into another inner journey. His books “**The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment**” and “**A new Earth: Awakening to Your Life’s Purpose**” give instructions on how to **work with the function of our consciousness** and to explore it further. Eckhart Tolle is talking about a “painbody” which we create if we think negative thoughts. There are also given instructions by the author on how to live with more freedom referring to this aspect.

[www.eckarttolle.com](http://www.eckarttolle.com)

A really beautiful and vital philosophic book has been written by the psychologist couple **Lency Spezzano** and **Dr. Chuck Spezzano**. It is called “**If It Hurts, It Isn’t Love: And 365 Principles to Heal and Transform Your Relationship**” and advises us on how to carefully treat the issues mentioned.

[www.psychologyofvision.com](http://www.psychologyofvision.com)

**Byron Katie** has been working with her method “**The Work**” for decades, which has been helpful to a lot of people. This method tells us about how to examine **our own thoughts** and **their content of verity** systematically. Often we follow thoughts which cause stress and pain even though they don’t correspond with reality. Byron Katie’s method is worth understanding and learning.

[www.thework.com](http://www.thework.com)

By closing this chapter I’d like to present one of the greatest teachers to offers us advice in how to obtain or get back the **health of our body and soul**. I am talking about **Louise Hay**. This American is one of the most important representatives of “**positive thinking**”, which sometimes seems to be a bit naive and is often presented in a quite simple way. Nevertheless we can say that positive thinking has proven to be effective und deserves its range within therapeutically oriented literature. You can check her website:

[www.louisehay.com](http://www.louisehay.com)

## 7 Encouragement for inner freedom

At the end of this introduction I’d like to recommend the **method of Phyllis Krystal**. The inner work which is developed in according with this method shows an **easy and sustainable option to break free from the influences you went through in your childhood**. These early impressions are mostly completely unconscious, that’s why they still have a huge effect in our life, even after decades.

**Phyllis Krystal** was born in 1914 (!) and 2013 still holds seminars and treatment sessions and teaches how to implement this simple method, to break free from everything which prevents us from **living a happy life**. The trick is to connect with the **superior part in yourself**, you also can call this part the **inner voice**, the **higher consciousness** or the “**higher self**”.

Phyllis Krystal offers guidance in her books: “**Cutting the Ties That Bind: Growing Up and Moving On**”, “**Let Go!- The manual**”) and the exercise book belonging to “**Cutting Ties That Bind Workbook**”.

The only difficulty with this method is that we have to use it regularly to obtain a long-lasting positive effect.

[www.pylliskristal.com](http://www.pylliskristal.com)

## Questionnaire 1: Asking myself

### EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS:

Question 1)

My most positive attributes:

Question 2)

This is what I've already achieved in my life:

Question 3)

My life is worthwhile and beautiful, because:

## Questionnaire 2: Questions about growing up and the family of origin

### EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS:

Question 1)

What persons and circumstances had the most positive influence on me in my childhood, without whom I wouldn't have been able to be who and where I am?

Question 2)

What noises, subjects and smells in my parent's and grandparent's house had a positive influence on me and determined my development?

Question 3)

What issues of my parents and my grandparents were important to me in my childhood, which issues had a special influence? Are there existing specific traditions and values which are crucial for the whole family? What stories and tales were told the most?

## **Questionnaire 3:**

### **Questions about the ability to love and partnership**

#### **EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS:**

Question 1)

What does friendship mean to me? How should a friend be?

Question 2)

What are the values and attitudes a friend must necessarily have? Which attitudes are pleasant but not absolutely essential?

Question 3)

What are the attitudes of my oldest friends? What do I respect most about the most important people in my life?

## **Questionnaire 4:**

### **Questions about profession and vocation**

#### **EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS:**

Question 1)

I have already completed the following apprenticeships and reached the following qualifications:

Question 2)

I have mastered the following difficult working situations successfully:

Question 3)

Thanks to my work, I am valuable and helpful for the following people and groups of individuals: