



PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND  
2026 PROJECT MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIUM

# The Power of Positive Leadership

**Laura Berman Fortgang**

Master Credentialed Coach (MCC)

[PMSYMPOSIUM.UMD.EDU](https://PMSYMPOSIUM.UMD.EDU)





This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).



C<sub>3</sub>

O<sub>1</sub>

A<sub>1</sub>

C<sub>3</sub>

H<sub>4</sub>

I<sub>1</sub>



PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

**today is  
about  
causing  
*shifts***

**/ Mindset Shifts**

**/ Listening Shifts**

**/ Body/Emotion Shifts**

**/ Question Shifts**

**/ Dialogue Shifts**

**RESULTS!**



**mindset**  
*shifts*

**expert** to *partner*

**symptoms** to *sources*

**giving answers** to  
*growing answers*



**PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE**

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department



# mindset shifts

"NEURO-SENSE"

## **expert** to *partner*

Levels the playing field, less perceived threat to status which lowers Cortisol/stress response

## **symptoms** to *sources*

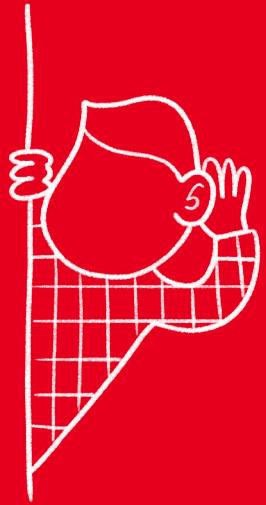
## **giving answers** to *growing answers*

Levels allows for creativity and points to wholeness of the person (not broken)



PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department



# listening *shifts*



**stop coaching  
the situation**



**start coaching  
the person**



**PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE**

AL CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department



# what are you listening for?

**Why?**

**How?**

**Does this make sense?**

**Do I Agree/Disagree?**

**Do I Like/Dislike this?**

**Is this Right/Wrong?**

**Is this Good/Bad?**

**Can I connect this to what I know?**

**I can solve this**

**I can answer this**

*Values*

*Strengths*

*Behavior clues*

*Language clues*

*What's missing*

*Coachability*

*Motivation*

*Therapy issues*

*Personal development*

*Needs*



PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

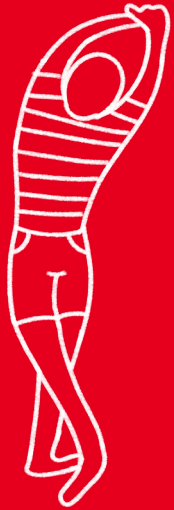
A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

**Get out of**

**the**

**situation**

**room**



**body**  
*shifts*



**instead of from**  
*your head*



**coaching from**  
*your gut*



**PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE**

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

Your *state of inquiry* is the foundation for the conditions under which wisdom can appear.

When I enter a *state of inquiry* I:

*(Record how you feel, where you look, what you focus on, what your intention is etc.)*





# question *shifts*



**from using**  
**information questions**



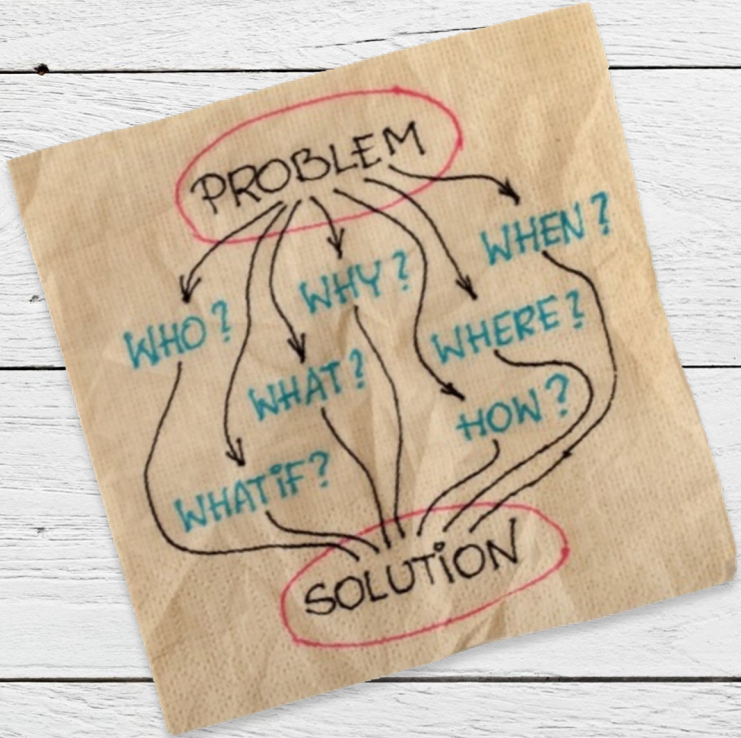
**to using**  
**wisdom-access questions**

# WHY?



PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

A. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department



A person is practicing calligraphy in a notebook. The notebook is open to a page with several lines of cursive text. The words "Let's go", "Adventure", "Anniversary", and "Moving forward" are visible. The person's hands are visible, one holding a pencil and the other resting on the page. The notebook is placed on a light-colored wooden surface.



WHAT?

An illustration on a red background showing the word "WHAT?" in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. Below the letters, several stylized hands are shown holding them up. The hands are drawn with simple black outlines and are positioned as if they are supporting the word from underneath. The hand holding the question mark is pointing upwards with its index finger.

**waq**  
*wisdom-*  
*access*  
*questions*

**Why is this happening to me?**

**Why do they have all the luck?**

**Why did I do that?**

**Why am I so stupid?**

**Why her?**

**What can I learn from this?**

**What can I learn from them?**

**What can I change moving forward?**

**What do I still need to learn?**

**Who do I need to ask for?**



**PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE**

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

**waq**  
*wisdom-*  
*access*  
*questions*

**What's stopping you?**

**What are your options?**

**What is this costing you?**

**What are you not saying?**

**What's motivating you?**

**What information do you need?**

**What's causing this reaction?**

**What do you want to see happen?**

**What do you make this mean?**

**What's the ideal?**

**What scares you about this?**

**What's missing?**

**What's the first step?**

**What will it take to finish it?**

**What do you really want?**

**What support do you need?**

**What would make the biggest difference?**

**What do you really want to say?**

**What matters now?**

**What's the solution?**

**What training do you need?**

**What are you afraid of?**

**What do you have available to you?**

**What if you did know?**

**What is the truth for you?**

**What are you avoiding?**

**What did you assume?**

**What does your gut say?**

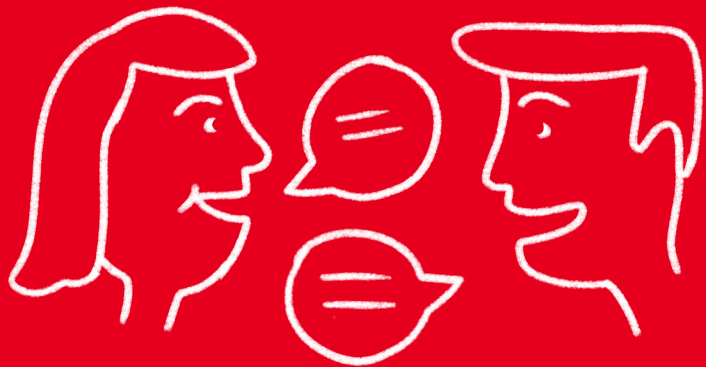


**causing an a-ha!**

**NEUROPLASTICITY**

A new opening, a new synapse,  
a new understanding!

**"NEURO-SENSE"**



**dialogue**  
*shifts*



**to**  
**conscious**  
**messaging**  
(I, you, it)

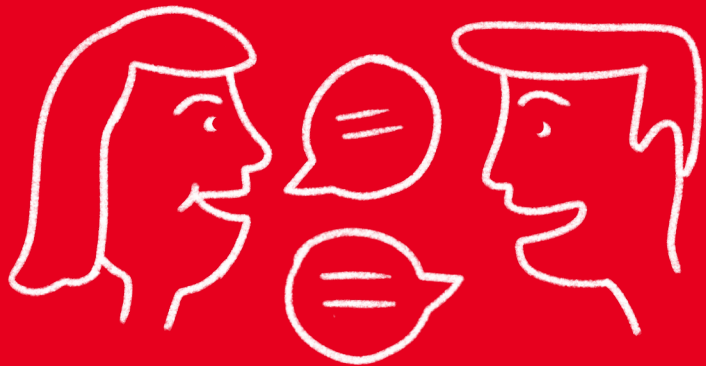


**from**  
**unconscious**  
**messaging**



**PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE**

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department



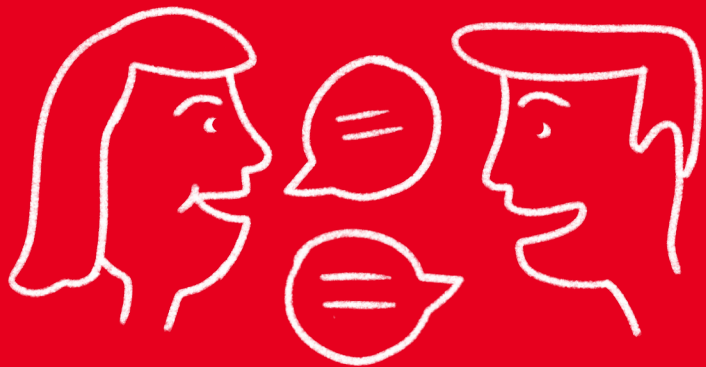
# dialogue shifts



## **Goal**

**An open communication  
with a longer runway of  
discussion resulting  
in change**

*(I, you, and it statements)*



# dialogue shifts

## ***I statements***

I feel \_\_\_ when \_\_\_ happens

When \_\_\_ happens, I was to \_\_\_

It makes me \_\_\_\_.

It causes \_\_\_\_.

## ***You statements***

You are doing all the right things.

You know what you're doing.

You have so many ideas.

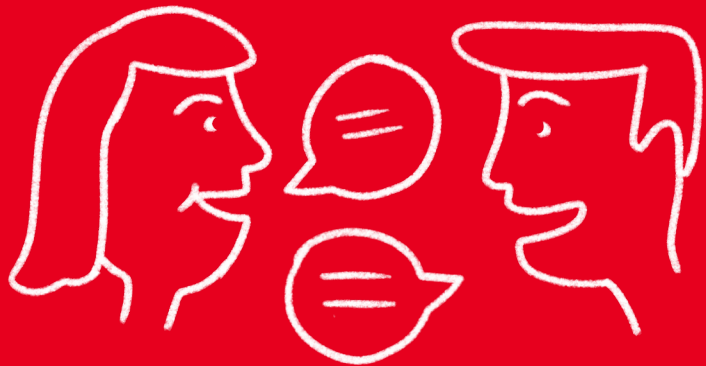
## ***It statements***

It stinks.

It doesn't seem fair.

It rocks!

It's funny isn't it?



# dialogue shifts

**"NEURO-SENSE"**

***Choice of language***  
**will help reduce perceived  
threats to identity, status,  
wholeness**

*If the brain perceives threat, it goes  
into fight or flight or shuts down  
resulting in less creativity and less  
ability to access creative solutions*

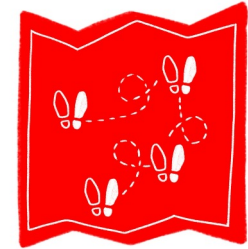


**PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE**

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department



**outcome**  
*shifts*



**from what**



**to who**



**PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE**

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

Make **BIG** requests by  
shifting the “**Who**”

---

**Action: What**  
Double your sales

**Shift: Who**  
Be bold! / Practice being bold



**new**  
**outcomes**

**today is  
about  
causing  
*shifts***

**/ Mindset Shifts**

**/ Listening Shifts**

**/ Body/Emotion Shifts**

**/ Question Shifts**

**/ Dialogue Shifts**



PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Department

# Questions & Evaluation

Evaluate Session:



Contact Information:

Laura Berman Fortgang  
[lb@laurabermanfortgang.com](mailto:lb@laurabermanfortgang.com)

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



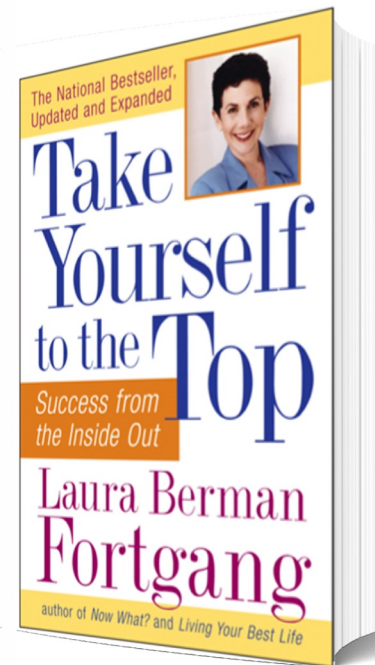
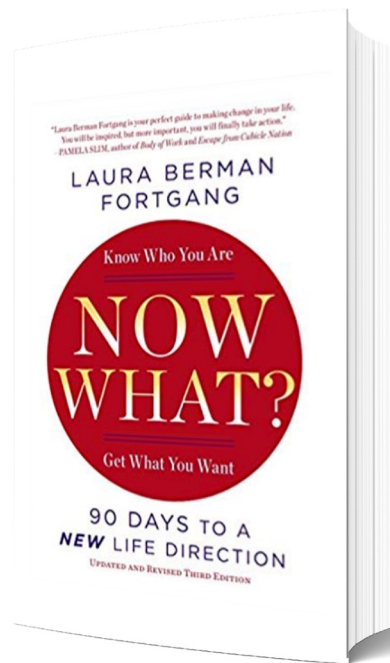


# PROJECT MANAGEMENT CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

A.J. CLARK SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING  
Civil & Environmental Engineering Departm



# additional resources



[laurabermanfortgang.com/waq/](http://laurabermanfortgang.com/waq/)