

For financial advisers only

Good questions to ask your clients

Purpose	Question
To gather general information	<p>Could you tell me more about that?</p> <p>What else is there to say about that?</p>
To gather specific information	<p>You mentioned earlier X, can you tell me a little more about (what you liked/what you didn't like/why you felt that way...)</p> <p>Can you elaborate please – what was said/did happen?</p>
Understand someone's values	<p>What was it about X that you liked so much?</p> <p>What's important to you about (work/the wedding anniversary/the beach holiday/proximity to London)?</p> <p>What do you value in the relationship with X?</p> <p>What makes you angry?</p> <p>When was the last time you woke up feeling optimistic or excited about the day ahead?</p>
To understand their career and business	<p>What are you passionate about in your job?</p> <p>How much does the organisation need you?</p> <p>How much do you need the organisation?</p> <p>What was your original vision when you started your career? How has it changed?</p> <p>What aspects of your current job directly relate to your vision?</p> <p>What would you like to be doing in five years?</p> <p>How do you plan and prepare so that you can be in that role in five years?</p> <p>What would you say are your best strengths?</p> <p>How are you using them in your current role?</p> <p>How could you increase how much you are using your strengths?</p>
To understand someone's emotions around money	<p>What are you teaching your children about money?</p> <p>Alternatively, if no children – what were you taught about money?</p> <p>When did you last feel proud about your financial situation?</p> <p>And when did you last feel stressed around money?</p> <p>Would you say your financial situation makes you rather hopeful or hopeless?</p>
To understand someone's biases	<p>How did you last react when markets fell?</p> <p>What did you do with the surplus money when you received a bonus?</p> <p>How would you describe your portfolio management skills?</p> <p>How often do you check your investments' performance?</p>
To understand someone's life goals	<p>What's most important to you in life?</p> <p>What are you most proud of in life?</p> <p>Where would you be if all obstacles in your way ceased to exist?</p> <p>Where would you be if you had unlimited resources?</p> <p>Where do you fear ending up if nothing changes?</p>

Identifying joy and purpose

We recommend you complete this for every relevant family member – not just your client. They can also [complete their own table](#)

In the last five years, tell me of an event, experience or activity that made you happy (gave you joy, relaxation or gratification).

Listen and note down the values that transpire when this event is being described.

In the last five years, tell me what you were doing to feel useful or competent.

Listen to where this example stems from (work, family, community)?

Looking back at the last month, what did you spend a lot of time doing?

Circle score 1 (low) – 5 (high)

Activity	Joy score	Purpose score
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

Tuning in to future self

We recommend you complete this for every relevant family member – not just your client.

In the future, what experiences, activities or moments do you think will make you happy (give you joy, relaxation or gratification)?

In 1 year	In 2 years	In 5 years	In 10 years	In 20 years

In the future, what will make you feel useful / competent / worthwhile?

In 1 year	In 2 years	In 5 years	In 10 years	In 20 years

Think specifically about retirement

Where will you live? Who will you spend time with? What will you do day-in-day out?

At what point does future become fuzzy for your client?

Understanding your client's biases

Select the box(es) below when you see the bias in your client's behaviour – you can then adapt their financial plan accordingly.

-
- Present bias: Client values costs and benefits more in the present than in the future**
How it shows: Client is reluctant to save for retirement as much as you would advise.
Suggestion: Start with a lower savings rate with a view to increase once habit is formed.
-
- Confirmation bias: Client only looks for information that supports their original idea**
How it shows: Client dismisses or ignores information that contradicts their views.
Suggestion: Normalise the emotion (reluctance to accept the opposite).
-
- Recency bias: Client only pays attention to what's happened recently, rather than big picture**
How it shows: Frequent reference to what's discussed in the news.
Suggestion: Redirect attention to some basics about stock markets.
-
- Action bias: Client favours action over inaction even though result is unlikely to be positive**
How it shows: Client wants to buy/sell something now. Or client wants to urgently see you.
Suggestion: Agree if/when – then plans. For example, if I have an idea, I'll remain calm.
-
- Loss aversion: Client seeks to avoid the feeling of loss after a choice with a negative outcome**
How it shows: Client is reluctant to sell a losing investment.
Suggestion: Reframe the loss in terms of potential gains in other investment line.
-
- Probability-neglect bias: Client disregards risks associated with a decision**
How it shows: Client disregards the probability of market fluctuation or dismisses income protection.
Suggestion: Explain risk in absolute terms. For example, this happens to X in 1,000 people.
-
- Messenger effect: Client gives different weight to information depending on who conveys it**
How it shows: Client quotes the analysis of a respected industry commentator.
Suggestion: Quote your respected source to justify your plan.
-
- Snakebite effect: Client believes that investments have failed**
How it shows: Client wants to give up on an investment or you as their financial adviser.
Suggestion: Encourage checking investment performance less frequently.
-
- Overconfidence: Client attribute higher levels of knowledge or skill to themselves**
How it shows: Client refers to example on how they beat the stock market.
Suggestion: Remind them of basics of long-term investing – for example, diversification.
-
- Endowment effect: Client attributes more value to an investment currently owned**
How it shows: Investors may become overly optimistic about an investment's future returns.
Suggestion: Normalise the emotion that it's sometimes hard to let go of something.
-
- Sunk cost fallacy: Client wants to commit more capital to investments that have declined**
How it shows: Client says they still believe that the trend will be reversed.
Suggestion: Provide stories of role model that accepted sunk costs and moved on.

Follow up – sample emails

Use this template to send to your client the morning after your meeting. We suggest:

- Follow the rule of three and repeat as much as possible in their words.
 - Disclose your wellbeing credentials by indicating that you've listened to deeper human needs.
 - Outline top three to five things you'd do next.
 - Give indication of costs.
 - Leave the decision with your client.
-

Good morning <client name>

Thank you for your time yesterday. I wanted to recap briefly what we discussed and what the next steps are if you choose to move forward with us at <company name>.

Why we met

You approached us because you said...

- You needed help with your retirement plan.
- You don't feel confident to invest on your own.
- You have a complicated financial situation.

Your current goals

In our discussion we established that important goals cluster around:

- Retiring at around age 60.
- Your children's future – especially around university tuition.
- Your new family home.

What's important to you beyond money

You heard me say that financial goals relate to deeper motivations. In our meeting I learnt that it's important to you to:

- Have quality time with family.
- Enjoy proximity to the cultural life of London.
- Visit old family friends in Australia once a year.

The top three things we at <company name> would focus on in your plan:

1. Complete a total net-worth picture.
2. Run a flexible retirement projection.
3. Identify most appropriate ways to fund various goals.

My estimated planning fee is £X – I'm happy to disclose more details on request.

Next steps

It was lovely to meet you and I believe that I'm a good fit for your requirements. I'm waiting to hear back from you when / if you feel I'm a good fit for your requirements, too.