

Socratic Questioning

Through socratic dialogue, a coach examines people's lives, challenges, thoughts that lead nowhere or are harmful to growth, analyzes stuck points, and develops critical thinking. The main goal is to help people discover the truth themselves through a collaborative process of asking questions.

Advantages:

- helps recognize the areas of cognitive difficulties
- brings up the relationship between thoughts, emotions and behavior and helps reveal the patterns
- creates new perspectives, adds alternatives, inspires to try new ideas in reality

Difficulties:

- inability of the person to see alternatives and other perspectives
- inability to have a broad, general view; focus is only on subjective perspective

The following categories can be identified:

Clarification Questions

Clarification Questions help clients examine beliefs or assumptions at a deeper level by requesting more information. Examples:

What do you mean when you say...?

How do you understand this?

Why do you say that?

What exactly does this mean?

What do we already know about this?

Can you give me an example?

Are you saying...or...?

Can you say that another way?

Probing Assumptions

Questions that challenge the client's presuppositions and unquestioned beliefs upon which his or her argument is based. Examples:

How did you come to this conclusion?

What else could we assume?

Is this thought based on certain assumptions?

How did you choose those assumptions?

How did you come up with these assumptions that...?

How can you verify or disprove that assumption?

What would happen if...?

Do you agree or disagree with...?

If this happened to a friend/sibling, would you have the same thoughts about them?

Probing Reasons and Evidence

Questions that help the clients examine the actual evidence supporting their beliefs, which is usually not very strong. Examples:

How do you know this?

Show me...?

Can you give me an example of that?

What do you think causes...?

Are these the only explanations?

Are these reasons good enough?

How might it be refuted in court?

Would these reasons stand up in a reputable newspaper?

Why is ...happening?

Why?

What evidence is there to support what you are saying?

Has anyone in your life expressed a different opinion?

Questioning Viewpoints and Perspectives

These questions encourage clients to come up with alternative viewpoints or perspective than the ones they have adopted. Examples:

- What alternative ways of looking at this are there?
- What does it do for you to continue to think this way?
- Who benefits from this?
- What is the difference between... and....?
- What is it better than...?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of...?
- How are...and...similar?
- What would...say about it?
- What if you compared ...and ...?
- How could you look at this another way?

Analyzing Implications and Consequences

These questions help clients examine the unpleasant outcomes that logically flow from holding particular maladaptive beliefs. Examples:

- Then what would happen?
- What are the consequences of that assumption?
- How could ...be used to...?
- What are the implications of ...?
- How does....affect...?
- How does ...fit with what we learned in session before?
- Why is...important?
- What can we assume will happen?
- What would it mean if you gave up that belief?

Questions about Questions

These questions are designed to place the focus back on the client when they ask challenging or potentially inappropriate questions of the therapist. Examples:

- What is the point of asking that question?
- Why do you think you asked this question?
- What does that mean?
- What would getting an answer either way mean to you?
- Are you concerned that I don't understand? Please tell me what you think I am missing. I would like to understand what the experience was like for you.