

The Socratic Questioning Method

The Socratic Questioning Method is a questioning model which focuses on giving supervisees questions, not answers. It leads supervisees to self-understanding of content and encourages higher level thinking skills. By following all answers with further questions, and by selecting questions which advance the discussion, the Socratic questioner forces supervisees to think in a disciplined, intellectually responsible manner.

The **focus** of a Socratic questioner is to delve further into these elements, each of which represents a dimension of understanding:

- (1) We can question goals and purposes.
- (2) We can probe into the nature of the question, problem, or issue at hand.
- (3) We can inquire whether or not we have relevant data.
- (4) We can consider alternative interpretations of the data and information.
- (5) We can analyze key concepts and ideas.
- (6) We can question assumptions being made,
- (7) We can ask supervisees to trace implications and consequences of what they are saying.
- (8) We can consider alternative points of view.

A Socratic questioner should:

- (1) keep the discussion focused
- (2) keep the discussion intellectually responsible
- (3) stimulate the discussion with probing questions
- (4) periodically summarize what has been and what has not been dealt with and/or resolved
- (5) draw as many students as possible into the discussion.

Socratic questions fall into **six major categories**:

I. Probing Questions—A series of questions which require supervisees to go beyond the first response; subsequent questions are formed on the basis of the supervisees' response.

A. Clarifying

- What do you mean by ___ ?
- What do you think is the main issue here?
- Could you give me an example?
- Can you tell me more about ___ ?
- How does this relate to ___ ?

B. Increasing Critical Awareness

- What are you assuming?
- What could we assume instead?
- What are your reasons for thinking that?
- Is that always the case?

C. Refocusing/Probe Reasons and Evidence

What would be an example?
What made the change?
How did that happen?
What led you to that belief?
Can you relate this to?
What difference does that make?
What other information do you need?
What would change your mind?
What was the core issue of this argument?

D. Questions about Viewpoints or Perspectives

What are you implying by that?
What effects would that have?
What is an alternative?
If ___ and ___ are the case, then what might also be true?
What might happen if ___ ?

E. Affective Questions— Questions which elicit expressions of attitude, values, or feelings of supervisees.

How do you feel about that?
What is your opinion?
How does that affect your ___ ?
Would you like to.....?

F. Questions about the Question

Why do you think I asked you this question?
How does that question bring different results?
What do you think of your question?

G. Questions that Probe Implications and Consequences

What does this (question) assume?
Would ___ ask this question differently?
How could someone settle this question?
Can we break this question down at all?