

# Socratic Questioning



## THE 6 TYPES OF SOCRATIC QUESTIONS

Socratic questions can be used in influencing, leading and coaching to stimulate critical thinking

- **CLARIFYING THINKING & UNDERSTANDING**
  - Can you give me an example?*
  - Could you explain further?*
  - Are you saying ... ?*
  - What is the problem you are trying to solve?*
- **CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS**
  - Is that always the case?*
  - Are you assuming ... ?*
  - How could you verify or disprove that?*
  - What would happen if ... ?*
- **EXAMINING EVIDENCE & RATIONALE**
  - Why do you say that?*
  - How do you know?*
  - Why?*
  - What evidence is there that supports ... ?*
- **CONSIDERING ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES**
  - Are there any alternatives?*
  - What is the other side of the argument?*
  - What makes your viewpoint better?*
  - Who would be affected and what would they think?*
- **CONSIDERING IMPLICATIONS & CONSEQUENCES**
  - What are the implications/consequences of ... ?*
  - How does that affect ... ?*
  - What if you are wrong?*
  - What does our experience tell us will happen?*
- **META QUESTIONS**
  - Why do you think I asked that question?*
  - What does ... mean?*
  - What is the point of the question?*
  - What else might I ask?*

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A Blog of Psychology and Mental Health by Aman Varma (CBT & NLP)

This is using a set routine for questioning maladaptive thoughts. It's named after the Greek Philosopher, Socrates. He argued that through systematic questioning we can understand and deconstruct ideas. In turn, this will either verify those ideas or dismiss them. With Socratic questioning, it is necessary to first identify the Cognitive Distortions. With logical questioning, it will either lend clarification to the your theory or challenge it.

Thoughts appear as dialogue in our minds, along with a few visual images. A trained therapist will encourage patients to share negative thoughts. Then, they will ask questions that might challenge such thoughts.

**Typical self-questions could be:**

- Are the thoughts you are having based on feelings or facts? What evidence do you have that verify your opinion?
- Is there an alternative explanation of how you are seeing a situation? If there is, how would that change the way you now feel?
- What are the consequences of the situations you perceive, and what is the best or worst case outcome? How will you cope with those outcomes?
- Will other people have the same answers to that thought as you do? If not, why would they come to different conclusions?
- Are you looking at only the black and white areas, and not seeking the grey parts?

There are no correct answers to such questions. It is a means of unravelling maladaptive thinking. This sort of session should help the you or the patient to analyse their negative thoughts. Helping to bring out the reasons why they think them. Then helping to defuse such thoughts.

This method also shows you how to question your own irrational fears. Socrates questioning does not necessarily need two people. Once the patient has been shown how to question themselves, they can use it on their own negative thoughts.



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