



Solving Problems: Helping Resourceful Kids Find Solutions Using Socratic Questions.

After you have demonstrated listening skills, you may be faced with helping your child solve a problem. Adults often offer solutions or help children brainstorm solutions. Another approach is to use Socratic questions. These questions assume that the child has the ability to think through a problem and arrive at a suitable solution.

There are six types of questions that Socrates used with his students. Examples given below are appropriate for children who understand concrete information and some limited abstract concepts.

- 1. Conceptual Clarification Questions.** These questions ask the speaker to think more about what they are saying. They are basically "Tell me more" questions such as:
 - What does that mean?
 - What else do you know about...?
 - Can you give me an example?
 - Are you saying _____ or _____?
 - How else can you say that?
- 2. Probing the Speaker's Assumptions.** These questions ask speakers to understand the lens through which they are viewing the situation (i.e., their beliefs and assumptions).
 - You seem to be assuming _____, is that right?
 - Is it safe to assume that _____?
 - Do you think that is true?
 - Is there another possible explanation?
 - What would happen if _____?
 - Do you agree or disagree with _____?
- 3. Probing Rationale, Reasons and Evidence.** Don't assume that the rationale children give for their arguments are strong. Examine their reasoning because they often have weakly understood supports for their arguments.
 - Why is that happening?
 - How do you know this?
 - Show me _____.
 - Can you give me an example of that?
 - What do you think causes _____?
 - Are these good enough reasons for _____?
 - What proof do you have that _____?

4. **Questioning Viewpoints and Perspectives.** Gently explore other possible perspectives by asking appropriate questions that will help expand the child's point of view.

- Another way of looking at this is _____. Does that seem reasonable?
- How could you look at this another way?
- Why is _____ necessary?
- Who benefits from this?
- Why is it better than _____?
- If you were (name a person), what would you think about _____?
- If you were (name a person) how would you feel about _____?
- If you were (name a person) what would you want to have happen?

5. **Probe Implications and Consequences.** Children may suggest initial solutions or offer new ones. Encourage them to explore the future consequences of each solution that is suggested.

- If _____, what would happen then?
- How will _____ affect _____?
- Why is _____ important?
- What is the best _____? Why?
- What does that remind you of?

6. **Questions About The Question.** Encourage children to understand their own motivation in identifying something as a problem and why they either have a question or a problem in the first place.

- What is the point of this question?
- Why do you think I asked this question?
- What does _____ mean?
- How does _____ apply to everyday life?
- What do you hope to achieve by _____?