

# An indirect approach to promoting critical thinking

Instead of asking a person to defend their thinking—to examine their evidence, assumptions, and reasoning—or put it under the spotlight—how does the idea/practice look like from this angle, that angle...?—the following process shifts the focus to helping the person shape inquiry.

## Process

A focal person presents to a group something they are thinking (which may be a question, a claim about something, or a possible course of action).

The host asks everyone to ask real questions—honest, open, curious questions—that might help the focal person access their own intelligence. It is important for the helpers not to inject what they know or think they know—that is of little or no value in the (indirect) development of the focal person as a critical inquirer. (Conversely, it should, in principle, be possible for a focal person to get help even if the helpers lack specialized knowledge behind what the focal person is thinking.)

The basic model of questioning is [KAQE](#):

- What more do you need to Know? (aka Question)
- How could you Find this out? (Methods, Steps..)
- What alternative methods are possible for inquiring into this Question?
- What Knowledge do you hope to gain by addressing that Question?
- What Actions could people pursue on the basis of accepting this Knowledge?
- Which people or group?
- What Knowledge is the basis for this Action?
- What more do you need to Know in order to clarify what people could do (A)?
- What more do you need to Know in order to revise/refine/support the Knowledge?
- How do you Know that—What is the evidence?
- How do you Know that—What are your assumptions?
- How do you Know that—What is your reasoning?

Other curious questions are possible:

- When did you first ask that Question?
- What did you think before you asked that Question?
- Where—in what situations—might that Knowledge be true?
- and so on (to be invented in practice)

Questions may journey away from the original point, but at various intervals, the host can remind the group of this point by asking the focal person: “Where are you in relation to ...”

The Q&A session is recorded so the focal person does not need to take notes, but can listen well to others and to their own answers.

The pace should be relaxed and gentle. Silence is OK: new insights are emerging.

The host ends the session by checking with the focal person that it is OK to stop and then asking everyone to provide a Connection and Extension for the focal person: Name/One place where your thinking/inquiry connects with mine/One direction I would like to extend that inquiry.

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