*Socratic workshop method*

Socratic questioning as described below can be applied to pursue thoughts in many directions, to get to the truth of things and to rejuvenate their retrospectives. If used to open up issues and problems, to explore complex ideas, to uncover assumptions, to analyse concepts, to distinguish what is known from what is not known, etc., Socratic questioning may very well help teams to realise their full potential.

A Socratic questioning workshop is characterized by a disciplined, systematic approach:

**Step 1: Starting point**

A member of the group contributes a problem and puts forward the situation at work that raises questions, doubts or uneasiness. The contributor formulates a statement that touches the heart of the matter, and is researchable in a Socratic manner. A good question has the format: “How should we deal with …?” Questions such as: “why do I have to deal with this kind of problem all the time?” are rather psychological, and not suitable for intervision.

**Step 2: The story behind the case**

The contributor presents the video, which is a practical case, and afterwards will tell a concise story featuring his/her own involvement with the problematic situation. The case always starts with the phrase: ‘My problem is …..‘. It is important that the case emphasizes what actually happened (facts), what the contributor has done (actions), the impact the case has on the contributor (feelings, personal experience), etc. Participants are listening, if needed they may raise a few clarifying questions.

**Step 3: Consultation and clarification**

After the contributor has presented the case to the group, the problem will be discussed in small subgroups. But first everybody takes a few minutes to get his/her mind around the essence of the problem, from the contributors point of view. Provisional opinions, expert recommendations or solution approaches must be omitted at this moment. The contributor will clarify the case if needed, without starting discussions!

**Step 4: Three open questions**

Each subgroup will think up three open questions which will help the contributor in exploring and describing the problem more deeply. The intention is to ask genuine open questions, not suggestive, normative or closed questions, or an advice cloaked as an open question (such as “have you ever thought of dealing with the problem using <explicit solution>?”).

**Step 5: Asking the questions**

In a plenary session the questions are presented to the contributor, who will not answer the questions yet, but only provides an assessment: cold-neutral-warm. The ‘cold questions’ are relevant, but have already been asked by the contributor him/herself. The ‘neutral questions’ could be new questions, but do not provide immediate insight. The ‘warm questions’ are eye-openers: they shed a new light on the case.

The contributor answers all questions (cold-neutral-warm), and all the participants will do nothing except listening. All questions are written down on a whiteboard, including the qualification.

**Step 6: Second round (optional)**

Optionally, the group may decide to have a second round of Socratic questions (back to step 3). When new insights with respect to the case have emerged as a result of the questioning, the contributor may want to sharpen the initial statement first.

**Step 7: Empathise**

This step is based on the Socratic principle that a participant of a dialogue must try to understand the case first, by looking at the problem through the eyes of the contributer. Only after that, participants will be able to imagine how they would deal with the situation themselves.

The listeners rephrase the problem in a single sentence as if it was their own issue: “My problem is ….” Important considerations are: what would it mean to you (feelings), what would you do in that situation(actions), on what grounds would you answer the question (vision), etc. Again the protagonist will react to the considerations of the participants with the qualification: cold-neutral-warm.

**Step 8: Reformulation**

Based on the input of the listeners, and growing insight in the group, the contributor will reformulate the initial case.

**Step 9: Discussion**

Now the group may start a discussion. Which conditions and strengths in the person, department or organisation are playing a decisive role in the case? What is needed to solve the problem? Alternative solutions may be considered. At first, the contributor will keep a low profile, and will not participate in the debate. Only when all participants have explained their views, the protagonist will give a response.

**Step 10: Reorientation**

The contributor tells the group whether the questioning has provided new insights how to handle the problem. If there are any remaining doubts, the contributor may ask the group for suggestions how to deal with these. In that case it is contributors turn to listen wholeheartedly to the advice given by the group!