

Part Three

Socratic Questioning in Classical Adlerian Depth Psychotherapy

Chapter 1: General Comments

Upon discovering the Socratic method in Plato's writings, Benjamin Franklin wrote, "I was charmed with it, adopted it, dropped my abrupt contradictions and positive argumentation, and put on the humble inquirer and doubter."

This section will describe the art of Socratic "style" questioning as used by Alfred Adler in the practice of Adlerian psychotherapy. Its purpose is to re-awaken a clinical interest in Adler's original, creative therapeutic approach. It will also briefly trace the roots of this style of discourse in philosophy and the general field of psychotherapy.

The dynamics of the Socratic spirit, attitude, goal, and method will be examined to highlight the character similarities of Socrates and Adler, and clarify the differences between the original Socratic method and Adler's use of questioning in psychotherapy. Therapeutic strategies and techniques that reflect the Socratic method will be described and related to the larger context of the twelve stages of CADP. Finally, a series of transcribed workshop demonstrations will illustrate some aspects of this approach.

Adler's Therapeutic Technique

Adler did not write about his therapeutic technique at length; he demonstrated it. The people who studied with him learned his style of treatment by observing him and absorbing it firsthand. He insisted that Adlerian psychotherapy had to be creative; it could not be made into a system or procedure. Ideally, in CADP, the Socratic method of questioning can be used diplomatically, warmly, and gently, reflecting the spirit of Adler's approach.

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Sophia de Vries. My mentor, Sophia de Vries, studied with Alfred Adler, Alexander Mueller, and Lydia Sicher. She also had an opportunity to observe the work of many Adlerians in Vienna and the United States. A faithful follower of Adler, she adopted Adler's original, gentle, creative therapeutic style. She considered most of the later deviations from Adler's original style, often systematic procedures grafted onto only some of his core ideas, to be mistakes that would mislead students and discourage clients. Her own contribution to Adlerian practice was a refinement of the Socratic method, emphasizing and amplifying Adler's basic, questioning style of treatment.

CADP Approach. The CADP approach has the flavor of a Socratic dialogue. We use leading questions not only to gain relevant information, but also to promote insight. Step-by-step, we lead a client to make his own conclusions about what he is doing and what he could be doing in life. The client is not a passive recipient of our interpretation, advice, or wisdom, but an active participant in the search for insight and alternatives.

Co-thinking. This co-thinking really captures the philosophy and spirit of a classical Adlerian dialogue. Bridging the domains of Adlerian theory, philosophy, and practice, it reflects Adler's original warm, diplomatic, cooperative approach. Through a series of leading questions, over time, we gently and respectfully help the client gain insight. Gradually, we uncover mistakes and their consequences, inviting him to move away from his life style, toward common sense and social enlightenment. This style of treatment cures with logic. (Anthony Bruck, an Adlerian educator and therapist who was also an inventive linguist, devised the terms "co-thinking" to describe the style of Adlerian treatment, and "co-thinker" to describe the roles of both the therapist and client.)

Creative Questioning Technique. In this approach, the therapist does not play the role of the expert or authority who "knows it all." Because each new question is based on the client's previous answer or statement, this process cannot unfold through any procedure or system. However, we must have an idea of what direction would yield the most useful information, clarification, or insight. If we frame an insight in the

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form of a statement, the client can easily feel provoked to overt or covert resistance. Presenting interpretation as a question provides him with an easier path of refusal, if he is not ready for the new idea. A sequence of narrowing questions can logically move from general and abstract ideas to specific and concrete applications. As he ultimately makes the conclusions, he is more apt to accept them, and the series of sequential questions has a better chance of leading him to take action. This therapeutic questioning technique is derived from the Socratic method.

Source of Information. I started studying with Sophia de Vries in 1961. Her first recommendation was to study all of Adler's available writing. Fortunately, she had copies of hard-to-find books. In 1973, I began audio-taping our consultations. I have recorded over 1,100 hours of discussion about theory, technique, and case analysis, which have been transcribed for the students in our training program. She practiced a creative, profound form of Adlerian psychotherapy which she learned directly from Adler and Mueller, passed on to me, and eventually encouraged me to teach others. While she made Socratic-style questioning and, in fact, the entire Adlerian therapeutic process look effortless, simple, and logical, penetrating this deceptive appearance and unveiling the hidden structure was not so easy.

Completeness of Adler's Teachings. My purpose in publishing the twelve volumes of *The Collected Clinical Works of Alfred Adler (The CCWAA)*, *A Clinician's Guide to The CCWAA*, and this book is to insure that the depth of Adler's original, creative approach to psychotherapy is not lost. Sophia found Adler's concepts absolutely complete and his technique of psychotherapy totally sufficient for treatment. In her opinion, his work needs no improvement, merely accurate demonstration and documentation.

Twelve Stages. Once I decided to begin teaching what Sophia had taught me, my first task was a comprehensive analysis of the complete process of CADP, leading to the definition of the twelve stages. Sophia's use of Socratic-style questioning fascinated me; I was determined to learn how to do it. Many years, discussions, cases, demonstrations, and analyzed transcriptions later, I have finally evolved a structure for describing this art.

Origin of the Socratic Method

A brief survey of the origin of Socratic questioning provides a baseline for examining the development of this method. General comparisons to CADP are noted.

Definitions. A search of philosophy, psychology, education and legal databases produces only a modest yield of references. *The Random House Dictionary* describes the Socratic method as "the use of questions, as employed by Socrates, to develop a latent idea, as in the mind of a pupil, or to elicit admissions, as from an opponent, tending to establish a proposition." Socratic irony is defined as "pretended ignorance in discussion."

In *The Philosophy of 'As If'*, Hans Vaihinger refers to the Socratic-Platonic methods of "seeking to obtain a definition ... and then bringing it closer to reality," and "granting an opponent the truth of a proposition ... then developing from it certain consequences to prove its falsity."

Common Factor. Most writers comment on the strength of the method: forcing the individual to think for himself. "Know thyself" means "think for yourself." Exploring opinions and clarifying meanings, Socrates made people think more deeply about the implicit premises behind their statements. Through a series of questions, he frequently led someone into a contradiction of a previous answer.

He asked questions to which he did not know the answer, although his partner claimed to know. He may have anticipated the response, but he carefully uncovered the genuine opinion of his partner, making sure they both understood and agreed on its meaning, and then disputed it or showed its errors. He demonstrated his partner's mistaken thinking by contrasting his present answer with his previously admitted one held as true, then pointing out the contradiction between the two. A judgment of error was therefore not imposed or dictated by a superior partner, but mutually arrived at by admission and agreement.

Centripetal and Centrifugal Strategies. This method of instruction is both centripetal (moving inward: getting to the core) and centrifugal (moving outward: discovering new possibilities). Questions

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are asked and answers are given to elicit points of view, meanings, attitudes, opinions, and feelings that lead to a sense of an ideal or a general truth. Socratic questioning aims to uncover knowledge that individuals do not know they possess; whereas, other questioning strategies often aim to uncover what individuals do not know.

In CADP, we articulate a client's point of view about life after discovering the common denominator in his thinking, feeling, and action. We get to the core of his implicit premises, then we contrast this private logic with common sense. We sharpen his awareness of the consequences of behavior and the benefits he derives from the contributions of others, leading him to acknowledge that others are entitled to the same considerations from him.

Logical Sequence of Questions. Socrates did not ask isolated questions, but sequences of questions, all of which were logically connected with each other. His purpose was to bring out the logical implications of the answers to his earlier questions. He played the role of the humble inquirer (or "co-thinker"), rather than the prosecuting attorney. He even pretended to be stupid to seduce others into playing his game.

In CADP, we gradually unfold the client's private logic with a series of questions that clarify or even dramatize the social and psychological implications of his thinking, feeling, and actions. We help him see where his movements really lead in life. Do they lead to connection or alienation, to confidence or insecurity, to appreciation from others or their resentment? We then ask him if he really wants the logical consequences of his style of life. We do not make judgments on what he is doing, but instead lead him to his own conclusion that he may benefit from change.

Mutual Regard. Socrates believed in the importance of both participants sharing a positive, mutual regard, which might be described as friendliness. Both individuals are presumably searching for the truth. He called his art "intellectual midwifery": helping a person bring a new idea to birth.

We do not enjoy this friendly relationship at the beginning of therapy. Indeed, Adler repeatedly points out the client's tendency to depreciate the therapist, which is usually disguised as lateness,

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complaints about lack of progress, and lapses into bad habits. If we are successful, we eventually teach the client to cooperate. Although he usually wants to feel better without having to think or act differently, we must turn him into an active thinker about his difficulties. Our work could be called “psychological midwifery”: helping a client develop a new approach to living.

Roots and Consequences. The Socratic technique involves a critical, analytical discussion leading to self-examination of the meaning and implications of an individual's ideas; it strives to get at the root of belief by studying assumptions. The core presupposition of the Socratic method is that ideas have consequences.

The deeper meaning of a client's ideas is rooted in his actual movements, their social context, and impact. His movements are repetitive, and although he may not be conscious of the ideas behind them, he acts "as if" he held certain beliefs about himself, others, life, and difficulties. We can trace these ideas back to childhood experiences and explore the understandable choices made by a young child. We can also project his beliefs into the future, connect them to logical consequences, and find out if this is really where he wants to go. Is he willing to accept the probable psychological and social results of his direction?

Socratic Irony. Socratic irony involves stating our ignorance and asking another person to help us learn the truth. We then expose the emptiness of the other person's answers.

With a child, we can play stupid when he presents a schoolwork problem. We then entice him to explain what he has difficulty learning. Through our feigned ignorance, he becomes aware of how much he really knows.

Dialectical Method. This technique involves several factors: finding real definitions, elaborating a point with questions directed toward a logical conclusion, and leading someone to admit a series of points that leads to an inconsistency with a previously stated belief.

Playing off one argument against the other is the heart of the dialectical method. Argument and counter-argument produce a dialogue

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between contrasting ideas. Purely rational and intellectual, the dialectical method attempts to resolve different points of view.

Although it examines the implications and assumptions behind beliefs, it does not test these implications and assumptions by sensory observation or physical experimentation. This method is useful for clarifying ideas, finding the logical relationship between our beliefs, and ordering our disorganized, implicit knowledge.

In its strict Socratic sense, this method is conversational. An intellectual contest between competing points of view, it tests the validity of a position by exposing its weak point. Thus, it implies a critical attack on the original position.

In CADP, we explore alternative ideas to their limits by contrasting and enlarging them. We can journey into ideals and fantasies, and then return to reality. If a man is ambivalent about his wife, we may explore his feelings beyond his expressed liking or disliking. We could question him to find out the intensity of his positive or negative feelings. Does he still love her? How much? In what way? Does he ever hate her? How deep is the hatred? Could he imagine spending the rest of his life with her? Does he have fantasies of living alone?

Types of Logic. Psychotherapy deals with two kinds of logic: the private logic of the client, which he believes is true (but benefits only him); and the logic of common sense, based on mutual benefit. We try to help a client discover the mutually beneficial logic of common sense.

Contradiction. We elicit from the client a statement logically implied by some earlier statement, but inconsistent with that original statement. We then ask him questions seemingly unrelated to the argument, but with only one possible answer: a self-evident one. Because the second set of questions catches him in an inconsistency, he is led into a contradiction. People tend to avoid thinking deeply about contradictions that may well be more evident to others.

Socratic Spirit. The spirit of this style is based on humility, irony, and fun. Socrates pretended ignorance; he did not play the expert. He could be a disturbing force, especially to the individual who had been happily sure of his knowledge. His goal was to waken the person from his dogmatic slumber.

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Our clients frequently believe that they are right and others are wrong or are to blame for their problems. Our goal in therapy is to dissolve the client's rigid, antithetical scheme of apperception.

Parallels and Contrasts in Philosophy

A brief definition of terms describing different thinking processes will help establish connections to the historical concepts, as well as to modern developments.

Analysis. Analysis is the mental separation of something into its component parts in order to study the parts, their interrelationships, and how they relate to the whole. (This is what we do when we examine factors composing a life style.) It also involves the uncovering of implicit meanings and presuppositions of a belief system or a statement.

Analogical Reasoning. Analogical Reasoning is a process of arguing by comparing the similarities between things. (We compare a client's early recollections to his current situation and problems.)

Deduction. (To lead down.) Deduction is reasoning from general truths to particular instances of that truth. Logical implications of statements are made explicit.

Induction. (To lead up.) Induction is reasoning from a part to a whole, from particular instances of something to a general statement about them, from specifics to universals. It also comprises non-deductive inference in which the conclusion goes beyond what the premise states. The conclusion does not follow with logical necessity.

Inference. Inference is a process of deriving a conclusion from premises accepted as true.

Abductive Reasoning. Abductive reasoning is a form of logical inference that goes from a description of something to a hypothesis that accounts for the information and seeks to explain relevant evidence. The term was first introduced by the American philosopher, Charles Sanders

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Peirce (1839–1914), as "guessing." Adler's active guessing about a client's movements became a hallmark of his case interpretation.

Dialectic. In a general sense, dialectic examines opinion through a dialogue. It consists of asking and answering questions to bring knowledge out into the open. The process also involves arriving at a definition of a concept by examining the common characteristics found in a number of examples of that concept. A Triadic Dialectic (Hegel) is a process of reaching a higher level of truth by the opposition of contradictions. The existing thought (thesis) is contrasted with an opposing thought (antithesis), resulting in a unifying thought (synthesis).

Inquiry Method. Inquiry Method is a process of identifying, exploring, and validating alternatives. It involves both deductive and inductive processes as they apply to questions of fact and value. It also comprises the verification of hypotheses through experimentation with reality. (We help a client search for alternative actions that lead away from his life style and toward expressions of social feeling.)

Socratic Method in Psychotherapy

In general, we use the Socratic method in psychotherapy to gain relevant information, as well as to provide insight and promote movement in new directions. A number of cognitive-oriented therapists use questioning in a semi-Socratic way.

George Kelly. Kelly challenges the client's insight about the cause of his problems. His typical questions are: "With what problems do you wish help? When did you first notice these problems? Under what conditions did these problems first appear? What corrective measures have you attempted? What changes have come with treatment or the passing of time? Under what conditions are the problems most noticeable? Under what conditions are the problems least noticeable?" His first two questions are similar to those frequently asked by Adler.

Harry Stack Sullivan. Sullivan makes careful use of questioning, followed by concise summaries, to both elicit and shape the client's self-perceptions.

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Albert Ellis. Ellis uses questioning about specific ideas behind people's actions to refute irrational ideas and support the rational ones. Rational Emotive Therapy maintains that all human beings think in a hypothetically deductive manner. They illogically deduce incorrect hypotheses and constructs about the world or themselves.

Aaron Beck. Beck uses inductive questioning procedures to relieve aspects of depression. To alter the perception of incompetence, he questions the client to elicit examples of successful past performance. He then points out how these examples contradict the individual's perception of incompetence. He also persuades clients to perform a task where they are assured of success, then analyzes the implications of this success.

Carl Rogers. Rogers stresses the client's need for responsible, personal choice. Rogerian therapy is a process of learning to question one's values, make conscious value choices, direct oneself, and become open to oneself and to others. Its goal is to create a responsible individual within an open society.

Abraham Maslow. Maslow believes that the individual must take responsibility for himself in the process of becoming himself. Toward that end, he asks challenging, philosophical and psychological questions to help the individual become his best self.

Victor Frankl. Frankl has a concern for man as part of a greater whole. He believes that we have the freedom to choose our attitude in any given set of circumstances, and that we are always challenged to give a meaning to our life. This meaning is best achieved through a dialogue that includes vigorous questioning.

Christine Padesky. Padesky's method of "Guided Discovery" in Cognitive Therapy encourages a client to greater self-awareness through systematic questioning.

Tullio Maranhao. In his book, *Therapeutic Discourse and Socratic Dialogue*, Maranhao explores the use of therapeutic discourse in

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Psychoanalysis and Family Therapy, raising the question, “What is it that cures?”.

Alfred Adler. Unlike any other approach, only CADP leads the client to an awareness of his mistaken main direction in life, after encouraging him to change it to a more socially beneficial direction.

Socrates and Adler: General Similarities

Character, Goals, and Style. Socrates and Adler share significant similarities in their character, goals, and interpersonal styles. Both men were courageously committed to searching for truth through reason. Using tact, wisdom, humility, eloquence, and patience, they helped others to understand their beliefs and consider values with universal meaning. They valued freedom, responsibility, courage, and integrity. They also had the ability to see humor and irony in situations.

Leveling Power. Socrates went after pompous authority figures who, intoxicated with power, assumed they knew the truth. He helped them see their ignorance. Adler followed a parallel line with his patients. He unveiled their striving for power over others and their exaggerated, fictional self-importance. He helped them see that their mistakes were rooted in deficient social interest.

Hiding Insight. Socrates and Adler hid their insight behind questions to make their subjects think for themselves and search for a deeper truth. Neither took the role of a superior authority who aggressively pointed out the mistakes of others, nor did they give advice or provide ready-made answers. They modeled cooperation in the role of a warm, gentle, humble co-thinker who stimulated others through skillful and sometimes playful questioning to do their own thinking and reach their own conclusions.

Latent Knowledge. Socrates' questioning gradually revealed unrealized knowledge that the other did not know he possessed. Adler unveiled the private, fictional ideal of a client and compared it to the social ideal of common sense. Adler helped a client discover that the social interest, cooperation, and contribution from others benefited him

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and that he was responsible for reciprocating. Although a client has some awareness of the need for cooperation in life, he does not feel obligated to reciprocate, if it conflicts with his unconscious, fictional goal.

Low Profile. Socrates played the role of the humble inquirer, rather than the prosecuting attorney. He even pretended to be ignorant to seduce others into playing his game. Adler felt and expressed a genuine equality with his clients. He had no need to win a contest or prove his superiority. He also had a keen sensitivity to his impact on an insecure, discouraged person. His manner has been described as being like a kindly, old grandmother.

Roots and Consequences. Socrates and his partner discussed the meaning and implications of ideas, and the grounds for beliefs. He examined the person's assumptions to get at their source. The root presupposition of the Socratic method is that ideas have consequences. Adler explored the personal and social consequences of a client's actions, tracing his style of life back to the childhood prototype. He also projected a tendency into the future to consider the long-term results of actions.

Socrates and Adler: General Differences

Mutual Regard. Socrates believed that the participants needed to share a friendly regard for each other. Inquiry had to be mutual. He called his art "intellectual midwifery," helping a person bring an idea to birth. Adler did not enjoy this friendly relationship with a client at the beginning of treatment. He gradually had to teach the client to cooperate and usually had to deal with the client's tendency to depreciate a therapist. He considered any progress in therapy to be the result of the increased cooperation between him and the client. He provided the encouragement and challenge; the client did most of the work.

Argument. Socrates argued until he secured a logical admission of ignorance. Adler frequently let a person go in a wrong direction until he "hit his head against the wall." Then he questioned the client about how he got there.

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Dialectical Method. The classical technique, as practiced by Socrates, involves several factors: elaborating a point with questions directed to a logical conclusion or generalization, finding real definitions of things, and making someone admit a series of points so that his acceptances lead to an inconsistency with his previously stated beliefs.

The method of playing off one argument against the other is the heart of the dialectical method. Argument and counterargument produce a dialogue between competing arguments. Dialectic is purely rational and intellectual, testing the adequacy of a position by exposing its weak point. It implies a critical attack on the original position.

Adler's approach was not to argue with a client, but to help him see the conflict between his private logic and common sense. He recognized, however, that friendliness, warmth, and empathy must first win the client over emotionally, before he will accept an examination of his beliefs. A purely logical argument or the unveiling of mistakes does not, in itself, elicit core psychological change. Adler used encouragement and gentle questioning rather than argument. He first built a client up and helped him take steps in a new direction before discussing his faults.

Goals. Socrates' style was based on humility, irony, and fun. However, he could be a disturbing force, especially to the individual who had been so absolutely sure of his knowledge. His goal was to wake the person from his dogmatic slumber, so that he would face his ignorance and search for truth.

Adler approached his clients with humility, irony, and occasional playfulness. He could also be disturbing to people who were authoritarian and arrogant. His goal was primarily to change the client's way of functioning, not just his thinking. Mere awareness of mistakes or admitting ignorance was not enough. At times, he considered a change in attitude and behavior sufficient, even if the person had minimal insight.

Cooperation. Socrates required the friendly cooperation of his co-thinker. Adler had to teach his client to cooperate. Clients don't cooperate at first; learning how to cooperate is part of the therapy.

Truth. Socrates' goal was to reveal ignorance and search for truth. Adler's goal was to promote a correction of mistakes and a change in attitude, feeling, and behavior. Socrates joined the co-thinker in a search

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for truth. Adler guided the client toward the core truth of Individual Psychology: the iron logic of social interest. He led the client to a recognition of this truth.

The Socratic Method in Classical Adlerian Depth Psychotherapy

In the context of CADP, questioning may be used to: elicit relevant information; clarify vague thinking; correct mistaken ideas, feelings, and behavior; offer gradual interpretation; promote choice and change; and evaluate results and responses from others. It must always be part of a dual strategy. While encouragement and building up the client's feeling of self is always primary, well-timed strategic questioning promotes change. The client may reach an insight into what he has been doing, but he also needs the encouragement that his situation can be improved and that he can do something about it. He must leave each meeting with the idea and feeling that "I can do something different!"

Appropriateness. Socratic questioning in CADP must be approached in a creative way that fits the immediate need of the client. No by-the-numbers, systematic procedure can do this. Because Socratic dialogue requires a certain level of intelligence and capacity for logic, some clients can handle it better than others. In some phases of therapy, the questioning approach is not appropriate. At times, especially when a child's welfare is at risk, we may need to be direct, outspoken, and even prescriptive. When questioning can be used, however, it establishes an optimal therapeutic climate for teaching cooperation.

The Therapist's Role. In-depth questioning requires a good working relationship. The therapist's role is one of a helpful guide, not a mentally superior authority who identifies the mistakes of the client. The therapist does not provide ready-made answers. He is a humble co-thinker, not a dogmatic "expert."

Co-thinking. Co-thinking is a model of cooperation. The client provides information. The therapist provides questions, clues, and encouragement; he does not establish a climate for arguments or power struggles. Because the client reaches his own conclusions, there is no one to fight with. The client may even think or go in a wrong direction.

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Instead of trying to stop him, we generally wait until he "hits his head." Then we can explore with him how he got there.

Information. From a broad perspective, there are two kinds of therapeutic questions: ones that get information and ones that guide the client into insight. Getting information is most artfully done in an unstructured way, permitting a client to unfold "his story" gradually. We can make good use of whatever information comes up by questioning, clarifying, elaborating, and connecting impressions. Playful, innocent-sounding questions permit a person to talk without feeling that he is revealing himself.

Insight. Insight is hidden behind questions. We do not let the person feel we can see through him. Unstructured, even playful questions avoid the feeling of an interrogation. Guiding the client into insight requires that the therapist has an accurate impression of the client's mistaken direction. Instead of facing the client with statements that he can affirm or reject, we ask questions that invite a response. Through the use of subtle clues and a logical progression of challenging questions, we can bring the client to make his own conclusion. We can then affirm the conclusion, (praising his achievement), or question him to reveal its limits. The focus is on the accomplishment of the client and the process of cooperation, rather than on the wisdom of the therapist.

Ultimately, we want to get to the core of the real problem. The client must see where he is going and what he is doing wrong. A series of leading questions permits him to participate actively in the thinking process that gradually unveils what he avoids and how he damages other people. Then another series of leading questions stimulates him to consider alternatives and their consequences.

Promoting Active Thinking. We must not do the client's thinking for him. He has to learn to become an active thinker and co-thinker. He needs to participate in the discovery, instead of being an audience to the therapist's performance. In order to get the client to help himself, we keep asking what he can do differently.

Purpose of Questioning. Ideally, we have the opportunity to lead a client toward enlightenment and wisdom. Practically, we lead him to

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discover a better way of functioning as a human being. As Adlerians, we promote his awareness of a greater social reality, by stimulating his active thinking in a positive direction.

Questions provide an incentive for a response. Instead of making statements, we lead the client to make responses. The thrust of our questions should lead him away from his life style, away from himself. We aim to stimulate him to think, feel, and act in a different direction.

Our questions lead him to logical responses. We reveal the real consequences of his movements: where they actually lead compared to where he believes they will lead.

Cooperation. We must gain the client's cooperation as rapidly as possible by opening the door to cooperation and closing every other door. Most people who come to us are uncomfortable and want our help. In essence they say, "I am helpless, I don't know what to do. I will pay you to tell me what to do. Then I will see if I accept it and can do it." That attitude and expectation has to be uncovered and overcome. They must learn to do most of the work in therapy. This will be a big surprise for most clients.

Not Giving Advice. Advice can be sabotaged. Options, decisions, and results must be put back in the client's lap. We can stimulate his thinking in a new direction with questions, but we should generally avoid telling him what to do. There are some exceptions to this guideline, especially in dangerous or abusive circumstances. In all other situations, we can certainly help him consider the pros and cons of his solutions to problems, but giving advice transfers responsibility for the outcome. If we make a decision for him, the client can always blame us if it doesn't work out. When he makes his own plans and decisions, he has to take responsibility for the outcome. We can put the advice we want to give in the form of a question. This way the client is offered a choice. Getting a person to think in a different direction is a subtle art. By asking a series of questions that leads in the right direction, we provide a gentle, appealing form of guidance. At the end of the series, we bring him to the edge of his own conclusion; he must make the final step. This dynamic is central to the Socratic process: "Who makes the conclusion?"

Sometimes, a client needs more of a direct suggestion, which can best be offered in a neutral way. We can present information so that it

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does not imply a specific recommendation; we merely hold out some bait and see if he bites. To someone who has an interest in singing and wants to meet people, we could say, "Some people who like to sing might be interested in joining a choir. What kind of people would join a choir or singing group?"

Wrong Directions. We may have to let the person think and move in a wrong direction until he "hits his head" on reality. In a way, we have to let him fall into a trap. Until he feels this pinch, he may be too comfortable and closed to insight.

Contradictions. We can also lead a client into a contradiction and then face him with it. What does he want to do about it? Someone may feel that he is helping another person with his actions. When we confront him, through questioning, with the reality that his actions actually harm the other person, we face him with a contradiction that he must resolve.

Style of Questioning. When appropriate, our questioning should be playful. The client must be able to talk without the feeling that he is revealing himself. Ask innocent-sounding questions to confront a person with reality, as a "representative of common sense." Be non-judgmental. The approach is creative; there is no system; there are no rules. It is based on what the client says. We pick up on what the person says and take him literally. Listening for clarity or vagueness, responsibility or evasion, and wishing or willing is especially important. See the demonstrations of the Socratic method in the next chapter of this section for an illustration of *how* Classical Adlerian therapists' questions depend on what a client has just said, and an explanation of *why* they ask a particular question. The process is spontaneous and immediate, but built on a thorough knowledge of Adler's complete theory.

Balance of Encouragement and Challenge. For the discouraged client, (and most clients are discouraged in some way), building up a feeling of self is the necessary foundation and prerequisite for being able to accept the challenge of penetrating insight. Well-timed, strategic questions pave the road. The unsettling mirror of insight promotes change, but only if the client feels strong enough to risk putting his knowledge into action. We must make a person's movements clear to

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him. He must see the meaning and impact of what he is doing or omitting. But he also needs the encouragement that something different can be done about his problem. He may walk in feeling hopeless, but he has to leave a session with the idea: "Something can be different." He should have the feeling: "Yes, it is possible. I can do it." He must eventually accept the logic that he has to be the one to take action and do something differently.

Motivation for Change. Questioning the degree of a client's discomfort can help us evaluate his readiness for change. Exploring his desire to change and his expectations about changing illuminates his real motivation. When he first comes into therapy, a client usually wants to feel better, but rarely wants to change himself. He usually wants life or others to change. Asking leading questions about the consequences of not changing can stimulate a sufficient degree of creative discomfort.

Use of Life Style Insight. A person who has already begun to move in a new direction is more prepared to face a full awareness of his life style. He can digest this insight much better if he is already taking steps away from it; he can begin to look back. He has some distance from his mistakes. Sensitive to the importance of timing, we deliver this knowledge gradually, according to the openness, readiness, and immediate capacity of the person to accept it. We must not overwhelm or overload him; we give him only what he can digest at the moment. If he participates in the discovery of an insight, he will be more apt to accept it. Asking leading questions that he provides answers to puts him in the position of having reached his own conclusion, which we can agree with. Supporting him in his own conclusion is more effective than offering him our conclusion which he can deny or reject.

Direct and Indirect Statements and Questions. General questions give a client more opportunities to express relevant priorities, degrees of emphasis, and significant omissions. We gradually narrow the scope of our questions in a comfortable, natural way, as each series of questions grows out of the answers previously given. A standardized list of questions does not offer the client and therapist an opportunity to engage in a creative, spontaneous exchange. Structured questions may provide

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summaries of information, but they can miss subtle nuances, associations, and relevant explanations.

Permit a spontaneous unfolding of information about the childhood relationship with the parents. Make conclusions from that. We then get an impression of what is colored, what is exaggerated, and what could have been different. We never get the actual situation. We always get a colored evaluation (a subjective impression) of what has taken place and how the person saw the parents.

For example, instead of asking, "What is your earliest memory?", we could start with, "How far does your memory go back?". If he gives an age, then we could say, "Tell me about your memory." If he excludes both parents, we could comment, "It seems to me that there is nothing in your memory about your mother or father." He might explain by saying that he and the father were not close, and that the father punished him. The next question could be: "Did he also punish your brother?" If he says, "Not as much as he punished me," we could ask, "How come?" This dynamic exchange yields more relevant information than the question: "What kind of man was your father?" We make good use of whatever information comes up by probing for examples, reasons, parallels, comparisons, contrasts, feelings, and missing influences.

Client's Readiness. The client must be ready for penetrating and challenging questions. He may need extended periods of support, empathy, and building up before he can face unpleasant insight and feared responsibilities. Feel how far a person can go. Does he hesitate or protest? Wait until he is ready. If the person is feeling too threatened by questioning, support and encourage him. Build him back up before exploring sensitive areas again. Therapists who follow a pre-set procedure run the risk of steamrolling over a client's feelings just to complete their plan or gain the information they want at the moment. Questions and strategies should fit the client's immediate needs, sensitivities, and capacities, in order to build the rapport and trust necessary for an effective therapeutic relationship.

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Use of Questioning at Stages of Psychotherapy

A brief review of the stages of psychotherapy will clarify the appropriateness of questioning during each stage.

Building a Relationship Stage. At the beginning of this first stage, the most important factors are the establishment of a good working relationship, the feeling of contact and empathy, and the generation of hope. The client needs acceptance, warmth, free expression, and reassurance.

Information Stage. We can now gather relevant information with strategic questioning. Following the client's lead, we may take brief excursions into deeper waters or adjacent issues. We try to clarify the who, what, when, where, how, and why of the client's present, past, and future. We illuminate private meanings and explore an implicit scheme of apperception.

Clarification Stage. This stage provides the best launching pad for the Socratic method. We help clarify vague thinking, evaluate consequences, correct mistaken ideas, verify intentions, and explore feelings.

Encouragement Stage. We now help the client generate alternatives to his present thinking and behavior. We reason with him, moving from generalizations to specifics, and from the abstract to the concrete. Our emphasis is on new ideas and making steps in a new direction.

Interpretation-Recognition Stage. Offering gradual insight and interpretation, we fully examine the client's inferiority feelings, compensatory goal, and life style. We may integrate his early recollections, birth order, parental imprints, and dreams. Through leading questions, we guide him into seeing the connections between his past, present, and anticipated future; and the thematic consistency of his thinking, feeling, and action.

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Knowing Stage. Supporting and refining the client's expressed awareness of his life style, we add details to the big picture he already sees.

Providing the Missing Experience Stage. This stage may be facilitated in a group setting. Once the role-playing or guided imagery has achieved an experiential impact, a thorough debriefing is necessary to capture a full awareness of the depth, use, and meaning of the experience. A client may achieve a profound integration of insight, experience, and feeling.

Doing Differently Stage. The client now becomes more aware of choices and the opportunity to change his fundamental attitude toward life.

Reinforcement Stage. We help him evaluate his new experiences, his results, and the responses of others.

Social Interest Stage. Stimulating the client's growing awareness of the welfare of others, we awaken his perception of social embeddedness. He can now feel what this means because the world is safer. He is connecting with others, improving situations, and finding his strength to function in the world. He has a better feeling about himself and us, which now has to be transferred to others.

Goal-Redirection Stage. Comparing the client's new and old ways of functioning, we help him recognize and evaluate his progress. When he is ready, we challenge him to contemplate a new, generalized direction in life rather than striving to achieve the restrictive, limited "it" of his compensatory goal.

Support and Launching Stage. After therapy is completed, the client needs to sustain the liberation of full functioning and creative living. The homestretch of this stage is geared to promoting accurate self-evaluation. We need only to add nuances to a client's conclusions.

Cognitive and Affective Strategies

A combination of cognitive and affective strategies is usually needed to promote behavioral and attitudinal change. We want to help the client: think differently and more actively; correct misconceptions about himself, others, and life; contemplate new ways of functioning; evaluate the cost of his mistakes to himself and others; recognize and compare his old movements to his new movements; evaluate the benefits of his new movements; choose a new main direction in life; and evaluate the impact and implications of his new direction. We also want him to develop a more positive core of feelings that ignites productive action.

Cognitive strategies consist of three general types of reasoning: inductive, deductive, and analogical reasoning.

Inductive Reasoning moves from the particular to the general. The client collects details, impressions, memories, and "facts" to reinforce a belief. He accumulates experiences to prove a conclusion. We use inductive reasoning diagnostically, to demonstrate the connection of individual movements and expressions to the goal; we use it therapeutically, to draw a new conclusion from a new series of actions.

Deductive Reasoning moves from the general to the particular. The client reasons his justification for an act, then creates a series of experiences to illustrate or prove his opinion. We use deductive reasoning diagnostically, showing how the goal explains all the symptoms; we use it therapeutically, offering new generalizations about attitude and behavior, then narrowing down the steps to be taken.

Analogical Reasoning involves associating present people and situations with similar past images and events. The client finds guidance from his past to give meaning to and create feelings for the present. We use analogical reasoning diagnostically, to connect a current situation to a childhood situation; we use it therapeutically, to compare the client's new movements to his old patterns.

Affective & Experiential Strategies. Insight achieved through the Socratic method may need to be augmented by affective and experiential strategies that provide an emotional integration. A missing experience

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may need to be provided in individual or group therapy. Diagnostically, we must get a sense of the psychological age, the significant figure, and particular experience that would promote healing and integration. The client may or may not be willing to accept and digest a substitute therapeutic experience. At the right moment, we must offer this experience in a palatable form. Role-playing or guided imagery may provide the level of contact or distance the client feels capable of at the time. We need to recognize the limitations of a purely cognitive approach, and sense the opportunity for emotional and experiential integration.

Connecting Present, Past, and Future

We can understand the meaning of a client's movements only within the framework of an imaginary continuum. Initially, we hear about his present difficulties. Our next exploration stretches back into his childhood. We draw one imaginary guiding line between the problems of the present and past preparation. We also explore the client's anticipated future and draw another line connecting all three points. This offers us a dynamic, moving picture of a life plan.

Questioning the Present. Questions that clarify the client's present situation yield the meaning, reasons, feelings, and objectives of behavior. Detailed examples of actions are more revealing than generalizations. Private logic can be uncovered diplomatically. We can provoke a response by saying, "You must have had a very good reason for doing that." We explore his feelings about himself, others, and circumstances. We help him evaluate the results of an action in relation to the benefits or damage to himself and others. Immediate objectives can be highlighted by asking, "Is this what you really want to do?" We compare his behavior with his intentions by asking, "Does it seem to you that there is a contradiction?" When what he does about a problem is clear, we could ask, "What else can you do about this problem?" After he has taken a step, we challenge him with, "What is your next step?"

The Past. We explore relevant history with questions that reveal circumstances, feelings, and actions in the past containing some parallel to the present. Old choices can be guessed and verified. Old methods for

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dealing with difficulties may be assessed for their effectiveness in the current situation. With leading questions, we might suggest what was not done about past difficulties. We could survey the client's early childhood relationship with his parents and siblings for positive and negative influences. Early recollections are especially fertile sources for concrete representations of important, symbolic people, circumstances, and actions.

The Future. We can bring the imagined future into perspective by asking the client where he wants to go in life. To promote the completeness of his thinking, we could ask, "Are you prepared to begin doing this? How soon do you want to get there? Do you know how to get there? Are you willing to do the work necessary to get there?" We may highlight the implications for the future by asking, "Do you recognize the consequences of this direction? Are you willing to accept these consequences? What holds you back from doing what you want? What would you do if nothing stood in your way? What would you consider an ideal life?" Comprehensive, logical questioning can clarify the differences between wishes, expectations, and actual plans.

Types of Questions

Many different types of questions are possible. Some are listed below, with representative samples.

Focus. Focus questions have a funnel tendency. We begin with a general question, move to more specific ones, and finally shape a very personal question. We could ask a client with relationship difficulties, "What does your spouse need most from you? Which expressions of affection does she like? What could you do this week that would express your affection for her?"

We could ask a punitive parent, "Do you think it really helps to punish children? Do you know how most children feel when they are punished? How did you feel when you were punished as a child?"

Option. Option questions suggest a scale of responses. Open questions elicit as much as the respondent wishes to provide, such as "How do you feel about being a parent?" Closed questions invite a yes or

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no answer: "Do you like to do housework?" Choice questions offer a selection to consider: "Would you rather work outside the home or stay home with the children?"

Range. Range questions may cover the present, past, or future. The presenting problem or felt difficulty may establish the initial range of discussion. Eventually, an overview of the current situation gives a picture of overall functioning. Reaching back into the past may begin with a relevant history of problems and later connect with the early childhood situation. "When you were unhappy as a child, did anyone comfort you? How did that person comfort you? Did it help?" Future plans, daydreams, wishes, and expectations could also be compared to the imagined, fictional final goal: "Today, who responds to your unhappiness? What do they do? Is it enough? What would be an ideal solution?"

Associative. Associative questions generally reveal past parallels to current dynamics. The factors being connected may be qualities in people, feelings and emotions, events and circumstances, and results: either success or failure. "What was the atmosphere in your family as a child? Did it bother you? Is your atmosphere at home today similar or different? In what way?"

Private Logic. Private logic questions probe the reasons for actions or feelings, as well as conclusions about circumstances and events: "When your daughter hurt your feelings, did you want to hurt her back? Did you know why she was so aggressive? Did you check out your assumption? Would you like to find out what she really thought? Do you think that hurting her back will stop her from doing it again? What else might help to improve the situation?"

Thinking about Alternatives. To stimulate logical, complete thinking about a problem, we could ask: "Have you thought about it? What have you considered? What have you done about it? What else could you have done? What else can you do about it?"

Thinking about Reasons. We can suggest that a person reconsider his actions by saying, "You must have had a good reason for doing that."

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Why do you want to do this?" We want to know his justification for an action.

Thinking about Coherence. To help a client consider the coherence and organization of his actions, we might ask, "How does this behavior fit into your plan?"

Thinking about Results. We can question him about results: "Where does this action get you?" Or, we could focus on the benefit to him: "What does this action do for you?" We can question his self-development: "What do you do for yourself? What do you do to build yourself up?" We could explore his investment of self in activities: "How does it feel to do this? Having done this, what is your opinion of yourself?" In a child or adult, this new activity may promote a new feeling of "Now, I can do this."

Thinking about the Future. We can question his direction: "Where do you want to go?" We might explore his plan: "What is your next step?" We could examine the consequences of his movement: "What will continuing to do this get you?" We can confront him with a choice: "Do you want to continue doing this for the rest of your life?" We might leave him with a final question about action: "What are you going to do about it?"

Thinking about Solutions. We can help him think about options for solving difficulties: "Is there another way to solve this problem?" Only hint at solutions. Let him struggle with it; he must find an answer for himself.

Symptoms and Complaints. We should clarify the felt intensity of his symptoms. How much does his problem or symptom bother him? Who is affected most by his symptoms: himself or others? We can re-frame his complaints as opportunities for corrective personal action: "What can you do about your complaints? If you sit there and just complain, nothing happens, does it?"

Not Taking Action. To someone who waits for others to take action or for his wishes to fall from heaven: "Do you wait for something

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to happen or do you make it happen? Are your eyes open to see what you can make happen out of what is around you?"

Hesitation. To someone who hesitates: "What is your reason for not taking action? Why do you want to be uncomfortable, rather than do something?" To someone who just talks but does not take action: "Are you playing with an idea instead of acting on it?"

Procrastination. When examining the dynamics of procrastination: "Are you waiting until someone pushes you?" The client needs to see that he is waiting for someone else to do the job, or for the other person to get angry, or for some other evasion of responsibility. To someone who is doing little about looking for work: "What do you want to do? What have you done about it? Does this kind of job just land on your doorstep?"

Future Plans and Preparation. To someone who is not following up with a plan, who is getting off the track: "In what direction do you want to go now? Where do you want to go? Do you have a plan to do this? Are you searching in yourself to find out what you want to do? Are you considering in which direction to go? What are you really interested in? How are you going to do this?" Never approve or disapprove of what a person is planning to do. We can offer neutral encouragement by saying, "Why don't you give it a try. How are you going to carry it out?" He may leave out difficult consequences; make him aware of what those might be.

Impact on Other People. Does he know what kind of impact his problem or symptom has on others? "How does this affect other people? How can you do this without affecting other people negatively?" Is a person egocentric or does he consider others? How do others feel about his problem?

To someone who constantly tries to show how competent he is by perhaps depriving a spouse of success: "Is your wife pretty bright? Why would you want to take away her success in handling this herself?"

How does he know about the impact of his behavior on others? Have others told him about it? Is he guessing? How does he react to others' feelings about his problem or symptom? Does he want them to

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feel this way? To a teenager who is flirting with danger, we might ask, "Do you want to worry your parents?" Question the interpersonal result of his actions: "Did you notice how the other person felt?" He may have merely assumed he knew the other person's feelings; he needs to observe how the other person actually feels. He probably felt the satisfaction of doing what he wanted, but wasn't aware of the other person's upset or pain caused by his action.

Cooperation with Others. The client may be unaware of the contribution of other people. He takes what is available or offered for granted and does not see the necessity for reciprocal action. We can first ask a child, "What do you think others do to help you grow up?" After making a substantial list of the many supportive actions from parents and teachers, we could then ask, "What do you do to help others?"

Appraising Motivation for Change. Measure a person's strength of motivation for change. Is he ready for change or is he waiting for it to just happen? To someone who is not changing: "Your life is still about the same. There is no change. There must be a reason why you have not taken action yet." As long as a person is comfortable, he will not make efforts to change. If his comfort is not shared by those around him, he needs to be shown this contrast. We may have to contribute creatively to his discomfort by questioning the fairness of his situation.

Once the client is motivated to change, he must then figure out how to achieve this in his own way. We cannot tell someone how to change himself. He must make his own decisions, try them out, see how they feel, and discover what results they bring. If the results are not sufficient or satisfying, he must be willing to try something else. We must persist with the challenging question, "What else can you try?" His original learning situation as a child was characterized by repeated trial and error. He must re-create that spirit of courageous experimentation.

Awareness of Embeddedness. We must help the client reach his own conclusion that other people are just as important for his existence as he is. He needs to recognize our social interdependency and accept the necessity for belonging, since this embeddedness provides the foundation for solving his difficulties. These concepts, as well as the need to share with and promote the development of others, should be

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presented in the form of questions rather than direct statements. A simple, concrete way to illustrate social connectedness is to question a client about the contributions of all the people who help provide him with a slice of toast at breakfast. Does he realize and appreciate the efforts of the farmer, truck driver, miller, baker, distributor, and retailer that regularly contribute to his well-being? Are they just as important as he is for the running of a community? If he does not see this, we might ask him about the effects of any strike on a city. When we do not have a product or service that we ordinarily take for granted, we may recognize more clearly the importance of each worker's contribution.

Evaluating New Experiences. After a client makes a new experience, we can explore it with questions: "What happened? How did it feel? Did you like that? Did it give you any satisfaction? What did you get out of the experience? What did it do for you? How did the other person respond? Did you like that? What will you do next?"

Assessing Progress. After he has made significant progress in a new direction away from his life style, the client needs to look back at his old behavior, compare it to his new way of functioning, and then clarify his progress: "Are you the same person who did this before? Are you a different person now? In what way are you functioning differently? How do you feel about your progress? How far do you want to go in your development? Are you planning to be a new person? Are you preparing for a new relationship?"

Old tendencies must be clarified and conquered so that they do not reoccur. A person must know clearly what he did as a child and later as an adult. As long as he is not clear about the root of his behavior, he will come back to the old habit. He needs to identify the root and pull it out: "Do you really want to conquer this old habit completely? Do you want to do it now? Where do you want to begin? What is your plan? What steps could you take? What steps will you take? When?" If he retains the old habit, in a way, he remains a limited child. If he overcomes the old habit, he grows toward full adulthood.