Socratic questioning is a simple yet strong method for exploring ideas or statements in depth and breadth. In its simplest form, it involves:

* Selection of a question or issue of interest
* Clarification of the question or issue
* Listing and critical examination of Support, Reasons, Evidence, and Assumptions related to the central statement
* Exploration of the Origin or Source of the statement
* Developing and critically examining the Implications and Consequences of the statement
* Seeking and fairly examining Conflicting Views (alternative points of view).

Paul divides the questioning up into six types. I find understanding these different types of questioning really useful as it helps me to keep in my head where we are up to in the Socratic process. It is much more useful in my view to view Socratic questioning as a process with a set of steps than to see as a tool to get to some place. In my experience going through the process of one type of question after the other always yields something useful. As Padesky would put it, when you do it this way the client ends up owning the discovery or insight with no pressure to accept the therapist’s point of view on anything. This fits well with one of my little sayings in therapy along the lines of that it is the client’s job to do the work i.e. they have responsibility for the outcome. Usually in supervision it gets framed in the reverse when I say to a supervisee “if you are working then the client is not working”.

Paul's six questions include:

**Clarifying questions**

* What do you mean by \_\_\_\_\_\_?
* What is your main point?
* How does \_\_\_\_ relate to \_\_\_\_?
* Could you put that another way?
* Let me see if I understand you; do you mean \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_?
* Could you give me an example?
* Could you explain that further?
* Could you expand upon that?

**Assumption questions**

* What are you assuming?
* What could we assume instead?
* You seem to be assuming \_\_\_\_.
* Do I understand you correctly? You seem to be assuming \_\_\_\_.
* How would you justify taking this for granted?
* Is it always the case?
* Why do you think the assumption holds here?
* Why would someone make this assumption?

**Reason and evidence questions**

* How do you know?
* Why do you think that is true?
* Do you have any evidence for that? What difference does that make?
* What are your reasons for saying that?
* Can you explain how you logically got from \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_?
* Do you see any difficulties with your reasoning here?
* What would change your mind?
* What would you say to someone who said \_\_\_\_?
* Can someone else give evidence to support that response?
* By what reasoning did you come to that conclusion?
* How could we find out whether that is true?

**Origin and sources questions**

* Where did you get learn this?
* Do your friends or family feel the same way?
* Have you always felt this way?
* What caused you to feel this way?
* Did you originate this idea or get it from someone else?

**Implication and consequences questions**

* What are you implying by that?
* When you say \_\_\_\_, are you implying \_\_\_\_?
* But if that happened, what else would happen as a result? Why?
* What effect would that have?
* Would that necessarily happen or only probably happen?
* What is the probability of this result?
* What is an alternative?
* If this and this are the case, then what else must also be true?

**Viewpoint and perspective questions**

* You seem to be approaching this issue from \_\_\_\_ perspective.
* Why have you chosen this rather than that perspective?
* How would other groups/types of people respond? Why?
* What would influence them?
* How could you answer the objection that \_\_\_\_ would make?
* What might someone who believed \_\_\_\_ think?
* Can/did anyone see this another way?
* What would someone who disagrees say?
* What is an alternative?

What I like about this way of framing the questions is that the client is first led to explore and then by the very nature of quite simple questions forced to look at themselves from different perspectives. As long as you cover each of the six areas in relative order then this is a natural process. You don’t even have to try or think hard although at times it does help.