The New Socratic Method
A guide to developing mental immunity, combining ancient wisdom and modern psychology

**NSM contract:** I will (a) suspend judgement; (b) use mostly questions; (c) engage collaboratively; (d) seek shared understanding, not victory.

**1. CLARIFY**

Examine the methods by which the view came to be held; encourage self-redirection

- How confident are you?
- Would you say you know X, or just believe in it?
- How do you know? By what method or process?
- Do you believe X because it’s true, useful, or both?

**2. EXAMINE**

Gain a sympathetic understanding of both the view and the underlying motivations

- May I ask you a question?
- What are your views on X?
- Help me understand better.
- By X, do you mean __?

**3. CALIBRATE**

Raise awareness of gaps in understanding; help find alternatives to problematic ideas

- Is X a generally reliable method? Would you accept a contrary conclusion reached by this method?
- How do you reconcile...
- What is a good test for responsible belief?
- What standards should we share?
- What would change your mind?

**TIPS**

- Listen actively
- Don’t criticize
- Smile
- Maintain trust
- Exude a genuine desire to learn how the other person thinks
- Use questions to express gaps in your own understanding
- Suggest helpful rephrasing that reflect shared values
- Use a warm and natural tone
- Assume best intentions & interpret with generosity
- Validate admirable motivations

cognitiveimmunology.net
This guide is a work of CIRCE, the Cognitive Immunology Research Collaborative © 2021 CIRCE