The New Socratic Method

A guide to developing mental immunity, combining ancient wisdom and modern psychology

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

1. Clarify → 2. Examine → 3. Calibrate



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 ___?



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

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



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?

ZIPS

SAY

Listen attentively Don't criticize Smile

Use a warm and natural tone

Assume best intentions & interpret with generosity

Exude a genuine desire to learn how the other person thinks
Use questions to express gaps in your own understanding
Suggest helpful rephrasings that reflect shared values
Validate admirable motivations

Maintain trust