

## Socratic Dialogue Example

Prologue: Mother and teenage daughter in a car, heading home, get into a discussion regarding friendship.

M: What are your plans for tonight?

D: I'm not sure. I think I'm going to hang out with Meghan.

M: What are the two of you planning to do for the evening?

D: I don't know. Why are you asking?

M: Don't you think it's important for me to know your plans and where you will be?

D: All right, all right! I know you need to know, but you always ask me a million questions when I go out with Meghan.

M: In what ways have I restricted your friendship with Meghan?

D: You haven't.

M: So...do you think I'm intruding on your privacy?

D: Kinda...I don't know. But I don't think you like Meghan.

M: Why do you think I don't like her?

D: Because you always seem to get an attitude every time I mention her name. I can just tell that you don't like her.

M: Why is it important to you that I like Meghan?

D: It's just important. She's around our house a lot. It just makes things more comfortable if you like my friends.

M: Okay, but can you give me a specific reason of why you believe I don't care for your friend?

D: Well, I think it goes back to when me and Meghan had that big fight.

M: Remind me about the fight. What was it about?

D: I'd just rather forget about it.

M: Why is it still painful to recall the argument?

D: She really hurt my feelings, but that was last year. We're friends again.

M: In what way do you think my feelings for Meghan might relate to the way you were hurt by her?

D: I'm not sure. I guess it's because she really turned everyone against me and I know that made you mad.

M: What had you done to make Meghan turn against you?

D: Nothing. She was just kind of jealous because I was spending more time with Joe.

M: Why was she upset by that?

D: Umm...I don't know. She said she didn't care that I was dating him. I think she just thought I was ditching her.

M: How did you know those were her feelings?

D: Just by the way she acted. She just seemed to get really mad and then I heard she was telling people stories about me.

M: How long had you and Meghan been friends before the fight?

D: We've been best friends since we were little.

M: How did you feel when you discovered that Meghan was telling lies about you and causing problems for you with other girls?

D: I already said. That was last year and I'm over it. Anyways, she apologized.

M: Why do you consider Meghan to still be your best friend?

D: Well, like Meghan is somebody that I always have fun with.

M: Okay, so to be a best friend, you just need to be someone who is fun?

D: No, there's more to it, I guess.

M: Like what?

D: Well, a best friend is someone you can trust.

M: Trust them with what?

D: You know, just stuff...

M: How important is honesty in a friendship?

D: It's really important. You just need to know you can depend on your friend.

M: Since Meghan first apologized, has she remained honest with you?

D: Boy, you never let anything go.

M: What do you mean?

D: Well, you know that she started rumors about me this year, too. But she told me she was really sorry for that. I believe her.

M: Why did you choose to believe her this time?

D: 'Cause. I mean, we've been friends forever.

M: In what ways are you more loyal to Meghan than she is to you?

D: *(Daughter shrugs...no response)*

M: You tell me that it's important for a best friend to be trustworthy and dependable. In the past year or so, how has Meghan showed you that she is a best friend to you?

D: I don't know. I guess she hasn't, but I still like her. We have fun together.

M: What do you think Meghan might have learned about you after the fights and her apologies?

D: I don't know what you mean.

M: What do you think she learned or discovered about you?

D: I don't know...umm...maybe that I will forgive her.

M: Forgive her for what?

D: For hurting me.

M: How do you think a mother feels when one of her children is hurting?

D: I guess sad.

M: How do you think a mother feels about a person who hurts her child, especially more than once?

D: Angry, I guess.

M: Why do you think a mother feels this way?

D: Because she loves her kid and wants to protect them.

M: Why do you think I don't act friendly around Meghan anymore?

D: Because she hurt me.

M: I asked you this before, but I'll ask it again. Why do you think I don't like Meghan?

D: Because she hasn't been a true friend to me.

M: And do you know why I think you deserve better?

D: Because I have been a true friend to her.

M: Enough said.

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True critical thinking is a natural outgrowth of questioning. The benefit of discovering an answer or solution through intelligent questioning (the Socratic Method) is that the individual being questioned goes through a natural conversation which eventually leads this person to some realization, assertion, or truth. The difference is that rather than being **TOLD** an answer, the individual **DISCOVERS** the process for reaching a solution on their own. This is a far more powerful way to learn than simply memorizing material and regurgitating it back.

The critical thinking which takes place in a Socratic dialogue ultimately leads to more long-term and meaningful learning experiences which foster even more questions, which leads to more learning, and so on and so on...

Read the elements of a Socratic dialogue below and evaluate the mother/daughter transcript to determine how many of these elements are incorporated throughout their conversation. Be prepared to give an example from the dialogue for each element that occurs in their conversation. Then answer the following two questions:

1. Which **essential question** does the mother ultimately hope her child will be able to answer?
2. What realization might the mother hope her daughter will experience through this line of questioning?

### **The questioner in a Socratic dialogue should:**

- Respond to all answers with a further question (that calls upon the respondent to develop his/her thinking in a fuller and deeper way)

**Example:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Seek to understand—where possible—the ultimate beliefs for what is said and follow the implications of those beliefs through further questions.

**Example:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Treat all assertions/comments as a connecting point to further thoughts

**Example:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Treat all thoughts as needing to be developed further

**Example:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Recognize that any thought can only exist fully when connected to other thoughts. Stimulate the conversation — through a series of questions — to pursue those connections

**Example:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- Recognize that all questions as based on prior questions and all thinking is based on prior thinking.

**Example:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(Source: <http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/the-role-of-socratic-questioning-in-thinking-teaching-learning/522>)