



Figures of thinking

'Figures of thinking' start like a Socratic dialogue (see practical guide 10). The main difference is the following. In the Socratic dialogue all participants shift into the role of the person giving the example. In 'Figures of thinking' all participants choose a different role. Each takes on someone or something which played a role in the example: the colleague who forgot the appointment, the unhappy client, the girl who wants to tell about her new love, the car still full of holiday junk, the time which has passed, the atmosphere that has changed, the window with a view, the debt which has to be paid, and so on. Before each participant joins the dialogue in a role he/she should think of a 'figure' from whose point of view he/she/it looks at the question or the example.

The fascination of the 'Figures of thinking' dialogue is that in a very short space of time numerous perspectives are available - many more than that of the person giving the example.

Approach

- 1 Establish the main question, collect concrete examples and choose one. Or first choose an instance and then the question that is underlying this instance.
- 2 Allow the example to be narrated and let the participants ask clarifying questions so they get a good picture of the instance, the question and the crux of it.
- 3 Make a concise resume of the view of the person providing the example, the so-called core statement. (see practical guide 10, Socratic dialogue, step 5)
- 4 Make a list together of the different roles or things in the example, equal to the number of participants.
- 5 After that every participant takes on a role (whether of a person or of a thing) from the list. Everyone chooses something. The person who gave the example is usually him/herself. Be sure to really enter into your role while remaining yourself.
- 6 Every participant writes down:
 - a. how I experienced the incident from the point of view of my role;
 - b. what my view is of the main statement of the person who gave the example.
- 7 Writing is important so each person gets a chance to put down his/her role. The description should be in the 'I' form, so when the 'atmosphere in the room' speaks it is 'I', the atmosphere in the room. For example, 'I relax and slowly become sunny'.
- 8 The participants read their descriptions out aloud; give everyone a chance.
- 9 The person providing the example tells which of these descriptions touch him; the others explain what has become clear to them from being in another role.





- 10 Return to the initial question – how would you answer it now? Or go further with the inquiry in the form of a Socratic dialogue – during this part of the dialogue the participants are obviously no longer playing their roles which they did before, but putting themselves in the position of the presenter of the example.

