

SYSTEMIC QUESTIONING

Clarifying, solution-oriented technique · Opening spaces · Fostering differentiation

WHERE IT FITS

Systemic questions are especially good at opening spaces. Behind this lies a wish for full, precise differentiation.

By spaces we mean the existing possibilities and perspectives that let you analyze a problem and open up options for action.

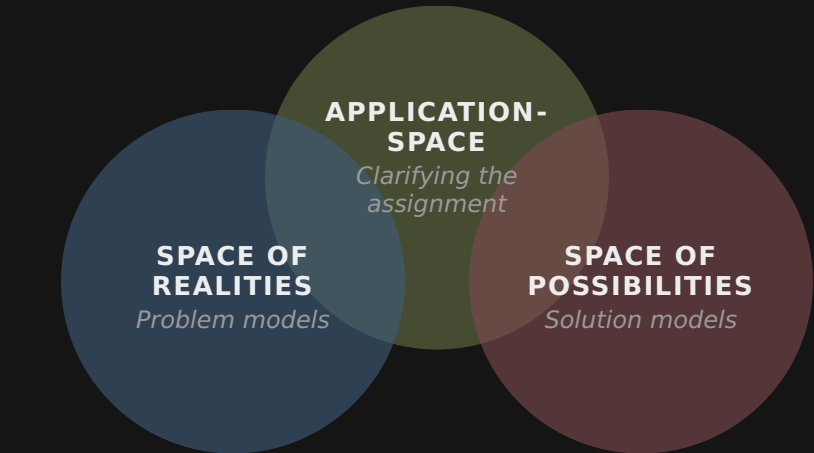
WHAT THEY ARE

- A tool for exploring realities and encouraging reflection
- A tool for building shared foundations that coordinate action
- A tool for analyzing and steering situations in leadership and decision-making

WHAT THEY ARE NOT

- Not a tool for manipulating people, situations, or decisions
- Not a recipe to be applied the same way every time

OPENING SPACES



- Overview
- Question types

6 CATEGORIES OF SYSTEMIC QUESTIONS



FRAMEWORK OF THE QUESTIONING TECHNIQUE

Focus	form a picture	secure understanding	work out options	act integratively	shape processes	steer results
systemic	circularity	multipartiality	autopoiesis	context	hypotheses	meanings
orientation	problem-concretizing	solution-focused	resource-oriented	competence-oriented	action-oriented	goal-oriented
basic forms	opening and leading			sharpening and closing		
subject	business, facts & figures, the matter		method, technology		people, interaction, relationship	

»Increase the number of options and support a careful choice!«

»What matters is to understand the intention of the question types and to ensure fit: for yourself, those involved, the context, the goal, and the surrounding conditions.«

THE QUESTION TYPES EXPLAINED

QUESTION TYPE	PURPOSE	EFFECT	FOCUS AND EXAMPLES	WHEN NOT TO USE
focusing <i>form a picture, secure understanding</i>	Define the context, take up perspectives, gather information, clarify goals, activate resources	Opens the view, gathers relevant facts and viewpoints, creates orientation	Perspective questions, information questions, solution questions, resource questions What exactly is this about? What information do we have? Who benefits from there being no solution? Which of your abilities are especially valuable?	The situation is already clear; further questions feel repetitive, off-context, or like an interrogation
deepening <i>ask for reasons, make concrete</i>	Ask for reasons, explore exceptions, make concrete, show empathy	Creates depth, clarifies details, builds trust, forms a precise picture of the situation	Reasoning question, exception question, concretizing question, empathic question How did you arrive at this assumption? What exactly do you mean by ...? In which situations does this show up precisely? What needs to happen for this to be a good conversation?	Under heavy emotional strain; first give space, then deepen
assessing <i>scale, judge, compare</i>	Scale, judge, classify, compare	Makes priorities and differences visible, creates a basis for decisions	Scaling questions, judgment questions, classification questions, comparison questions How strong is this on a scale from 0 to 10? What do you measure success by? Compared with what is this more fitting? What are the three strongest arguments?	When the goal is open exploration; assessing questions close things too early
distancing <i>shift perspective, think hypothetically</i>	Create a shift in perspective, think hypothetically, enable objectification	Creates distance from the problem, opens new viewpoints, fosters creative thinking	Miracle questions, hypothesis questions, objectification questions, experience questions Suppose time and money played no part, how would you decide? How would a neutral person judge this? What experiences have you had with similar situations?	In crisis intervention, or when distance comes across as avoidance
confirming <i>secure feedback, foster transfer</i>	Secure feedback, build in checks, paraphrase, foster transfer	Rules out misunderstandings, secures understanding, strengthens commitment	Feedback questions, checking questions, paraphrases, transfer questions Am I summarizing your idea precisely if I assume that ...? What do you need to carry out the plan even against resistance?	Used too often it feels controlling; apply sparingly
disrupting <i>break patterns, provoke</i>	Break patterns, cross boundaries, provoke, leave the comfort zone	Disturbs in a healing way, breaks entrenched patterns, creates moments of surprise	Provocation questions, paradoxical questions, worsening questions, reversal questions How can I help you get rid of me as quickly as possible? How could you make the problem fail completely? What would be good about keeping the problem?	Without a stable relationship or under very high vulnerability; beware of destructiveness