

Start where the client is

Get some context. Decide what to observe and consider.

This includes and awareness of what's happening in the context of the situation, including values, cultural issues, and environmental influences. Sample questions include:

- What is going on in this situation?
- What else do I need to know? What information is missing?
- How do I go about getting the information I need?
- What about this situation have I seen before? What is different /dissimilar?
- What's important and what's not important in this situation?

Surface assumptions

This involves analyzing assumptions about the situation as well as examining the beliefs that underlie choices. Sample questions include:

- What has been taken for granted in this situation?
- Which beliefs/values shaped any assumptions?
- What assumptions contributed to situation?

Explore and imagine alternatives

This involves thinking about and imagining other ways of looking at the situation, not just the first thing that comes to your mind. It involves exploring as many alternatives as you can think of for the given situation. Sample questions include:

- What is one possible explanation for (insert what is happening)?
- What are other explanations for what is happening?
- What is one thing I could do in this situation?
- What are two more possibilities/other alternatives?
- Are there others who might be able to help me develop more alternatives?
- Of the possible actions which are most reasonable? Why are the others not as reasonable?
- Are there other resources that need to be mobilized?

Reflect with skepticism. Decide what to do

This involves questioning, analyzing, and reflecting on the rational for decisions. Sample questions include:

- Am I sure of my interpretation in this situation?
- What rationale do I have for my decisions?
- What aspects of this situation require the most careful attention?
- Why is it important to intervene?
- What got me started taking some action?
- In priority order, identify what I would do in this situation and why.
- What priorities were missed?
- Having decided what was wrong/happening, what is the best response?
- What might I delegate in this situation?
- What was done? Why was it done?
- What would I do differently in the future, after reflecting on this situation?
- What else might work in this situation?

Adapted from Stephen Brookfield, Four Critical Thinking Processes,