

Critical thinking



Critical thinking involves three main components. The first one is making sure you are asking the right questions. You need to try and get to the heart of the matter of what the author is trying to convey. The second one is to try to begin to answer those questions by reasoning each one of them out, one at a time. You need to really think about how you are answering the questions and not just what you automatically would assume the answer would be. Lastly, the third and final component is believing the conclusion of your reasoning. Do you feel in your whole being that you have dissected the article and torn it apart to believe that you are correct in your conclusions. Critical thinking has gotten a bad wrap these days.

People tend to think of critical thinking as only negative people or people without emotions critically think things through. That really should be the farthest from the truth. Any person who feels passionately about a subject should learn how to critically think things through. You must analyze and dissect each area of the subject. You might be surprised to find your conclusions are what you thought they would be or a completely different conclusion.

Emotions play a huge role when you are trying to critically think through a subject. You must have an open mind at all times. You cannot let past feelings or emotions cloud your judgments on the subject at hand. Negativity and anger can do damaging things to a person's mind. If you are upset about what you are dealing with, take some time to redirect and focus on the subject when you have cleared your mind and are more level headed. Your mind will tend to be more open to new and different ideas if you wipe out all the negativity from it. On the other side of the coin, when you are passionate

about the subject, you will be more apt to research it more in depth and be more inclined to many different ideas and opinions in order to reach the best possible solution to the matter at hand.

Impediments can be damaging when it comes to critical thinking. We have been raised to believe certain beliefs, whether they are right or wrong, we have already been programmed by several different sources to believe these things. One of the sources is the media. The media portrays what they want you to see and what will bring in good ratings. If all the news ever showed was flowers and smiles and cupcakes, many people would be inclined not to watch as frequently as if there were a variety of subjects available to view. Movies, TV and Magazines also tend to paint a very different picture than that of real life. When watching movies or TV for example, there is a high percentage that the majority of the population does not live the lives portrayed on the screen. Our heads are filled with fantasy images and ideals that make the industry money.

How boring would a sitcom be if it was based on a struggling middle class family that lived from paycheck to paycheck and did not have a whole lot of extracurricular activities. Another impediment is the all or nothing scenario. We need to learn that not everything is black and white. There is HUGE gray area in between and most times than not, that is where we will find the answers to some of the questions at hand. Fear is an impediment that debilitates people from rationalizing right from wrong. Fear can take control and keep people from trying new and different things. People do not want to be made fun of and fear will hold them back and prevent them from going outside of their comfort zone.

The last impediment involves education. All of our lives, as students we have been taught to listen to the teachers. They know what is correct, after all, they are the ones with the education, right Wrong! People need to question their teachers and make the teachers question themselves. Teachers are not perfect and sometimes they actually are challenged when a student makes them think outside the box and the norm that they have become so comfortable in. There are two alternative thinking styles when it comes to critical thinking.

The first one is the Sponge approach to thinking. This approach is just as it sounds, you tend to absorb a lot of information and it does not require a lot of work on your part. However, while all of this absorption can be detrimental to the goal you are trying to achieve. You will then need to learn how to cipher and choose which information you need to take with you and what is important enough for you to retain. The other alternative approach to thinking is called Panning for Gold.

This approach is more interactive and requires the reader to actually decide what to intake and what to let go of. The reader must ask himself questions as he is going along in order to know what needs to be stored for future use and what is not important and lets go of that information. Weak -sense and Strong-sense in critical thinking are two similar yet different approaches to critical thinking.

Weak-sense is when you use your own opinions and thoughts when it comes to critical thinking and are a little bit more closed minded to other avenues in order to get to the conclusion. Strong-sense is more of an unbiased form of

thinking. The person is willing to think and analyze all opinions and come to a conclusion based on the outcome of the findings of the readings and research that had been done. There are several concepts when it comes to critical thinking.

These concepts have been summarized and grouped into smaller categories. These are now called the elements of reasoning. These elements are meant to be used in critical thinking and go hand in hand with one another. The eight elements are conclusions, point of view, purpose, the question at issue, assumptions, implications, information and concepts. When picking these apart, one will definitely lead to another and then to another until you have come full circle. For example, you cannot come to an accurate conclusion without first getting several points of view on the topic.

You cannot know the purpose of the article without first understanding the concepts and purpose the author was trying to get across. You cannot draw an assumption without first knowing the implications of the decision made. All of these elements are used consistently with one another to achieve the goal of critical thinking. There are seven standards when it comes to critical thinking. Clearness, accuracy, relevance, sufficiency, depth, breadth, and precision. When critically thinking you must go through all of the standards before coming to any conclusion. You need to make sure you are thinking clearly.

Clear your mind from all that you have been comfortable with and led to believe is true. Is the information you are absorbing accurate? Are the sources reliable and accurate? How important will this information be when I am trying

to reach a conclusion Do I have sufficient data and information to back up my conclusions Is there any depth to the way I am thinking Does it have a solid leg to stand on Is there enough breadth to the facts that I am relying on to reach my conclusion Enough evidence to back my way of thinking and to support my findings How precise is the outcome of my questions Have I exhausted every question that can be asked when it comes to this topic These are the things that when applied correctly, you are experiencing how to critically think. The three most common fallacies when it comes to critical thinking are: Providing reasoning that requires incorrect assumptions, distracting us by making information seem relevant, and providing support for the conclusion that depends on a conclusion that is already being made true. Within these three are several reasoning fallacies that you can be aware of by simply breaking down and asking the right questions. For example, Ad Hominem, is a form of reasoning that attacks the writer of the article or passage. In doing so, the reader turns the tables away from the subject at hand and focuses on the writer and the character of the writer. It is more of a personal attack on the person than the subject. Slippery Slope is another way the reader would like for you to believe that if you do certain things, you will achieve the desired results.

It is very misleading and people tend to fall into this one easily. Appeal to Popularity is where an attempt to justify a claim by bringing in large groups of people into the same beliefs as yourself. This would also be a good example of how the media and TV uses the public to sway their views on particular subjects. The Straw Person is where the opponents view has been distorted and broken down.

It is easy for the reader to then attack the character of that person and thus swaying the people to believe his character is faulty and therefore his views must be as well. The last fallacy is the Either - Or. This is basically your black-or-white theory. It is either this way or that way. No in between. No gray area.

There are many more reasoning fallacies out there. These are just a few to make you think a little more broadly. c