

# Critical thinking doesn't mean just criticizing

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Sound thinking in every realm of life is more practical than poor thinking. When an individual is skilled in their thinking it pays off by saving time and energy. When an individual uses sound thinking they are able to control life circumstances whether good or bad. Halpern, D. (2003) states, " Critical Thinking is the use of those cognitive skills or strategies that increase the probability of a desirable outcome. " (p. 6). Critical thinking can be also considered as teleological in nature. As well critical thinking concerns the attainment of goals and the desired outcomes from achieving them.

Critical thinking is not meant just for criticizing. It is the ability to effectively evaluate evidence and use intellectual tools to avoid being gullible to highly questionable or absurd ideas. The development of critical thinking skills is vital because the skill enables people to operate in a capacity to participate effectively in society, make complex choices, commit to social justice, and reflect on beliefs and actions. Advances in technology have placed an abundance of information at the world's finger tips.

Without critical thinking a person will be unable to separate what is valuable from information that is useless. Critical thinking can be compared to strenuous movement because thinking is hard work. For example at the end of ones day if that person stayed open minded and grasped onto different ideas, that person must now evaluate the evidence supporting those ideas. The National Science Foundation surveyed public attitudes and knowledge about science, they found that 70% of American adults said they were interested in science, but fewer than 30% could give a passable definition of a scientific experiment or hypothesis.

Therefore even if a person has general knowledge of critical thinking it will not ensure they will be able to recognize the difference between true and false teaching if they do not have an understanding of what constitutes scientific evidence. With proper instruction a humans thought process can become broadly applied, spontaneously generated, precisely focused, intricately complex and more insightfully divergent. To develop these skills will take practice, concentration and coaching. Critical Thinking must include critical reflection on what passes for critical thinking.

However critical thinking can restrict a person to the use of criticism to approved topics and can cause one to wonder into unconventional fields of criticism. Critical thinking is not essentially a negative enterprise but should maintain the kind of criticism which is not aimed at rejection, but considers apparent knowledge on its merits, retaining whatever survives critical scrutiny. Being critical has its positive and negative sides. A writer can compose a review of an article that may or may not agree with the readings presented.

The writer's response to the material will depend on their attitude and what type of approach they are trying to bring out of the material. Therefore critical thinking is not to be taken as simple criticism. In order for a person to be an effective critical thinker they cannot accept information at face value in a non-critical or non-evaluating way. In order for critical thinking to have a positive impact in a person's life they must have the skills of logical analysis and understand how to apply these skills. According to Passmore (1967), being critical is not simply a habit, a skill, or mastery over the art of logic.

Passmore goes on to describe critical thinking as more of a character trait that causes one to ask questions about information received. A critical thinker knows how to consciously apply tactics to discover facts and understanding their meanings. The Stanley Milgram Obedience study successfully shows how a higher authority figure can use their position to encourage others under their authority to perform inhumane acts to cause harm to others. The Milgram study showed that 65% of his subjects which were residents of New Haven, were unknowingly willing to give false electric shocks of 450 volts to protesting victims.

These victims were faultless for the pain that was apparently inflicted upon them however because of the authority commanded to the subjects, the subjects whether against or for the experiment continued as commanded. When put in this type of position one must have a strong sense of critical thinking to uphold what is right. This experiment surprises me at how many people will engage in activities knowing they are going to cause someone else harm. It makes one wonder how people in authority who use their power to cause others harm gained such a position.

One would think that this person's superior would pick up on such an act and bring it to a stop. Not only that but why would the subordinates allow such activities to continue without reporting the situation to the proper authorities. One can only assume that fear for losing their job or level of respect would cause them to continue to adhere to authority figures whether the action being asked to perform is right or wrong. In the economy we live in today one can only assume that these actions are becoming more

prevalent and people are obeying the commands given to the just to keep their careers.

No one can afford to lose their job and expect to live comfortable. Instead of using critical thinking to overcome the inhumane request the subordinate just goes along with the order being given to remain in good standing with the authority figure. Had I been the participant in the Milgram study and was ordered to continue with the experiment knowing that the person I was shocking was in total disagreement and begging to stop, I would have stopped. My nature and kind heartedness would not have allowed me to continue with such an act.

Not only would I have stopped with the experiment, I would have had to make the experimenter aware that what he was doing is wrong and unjust regardless of the excuse that the experiment was important. The first three questions in the think Tank self-evaluation asks you whether you believe there are right and wrong answers and authorities are those who have the right answers, there are no right answers and everyone has the right to their own opinion, and last even though the world is uncertain, we need to make decisions on what's right or wrong. These three questions represent the three stages of cognitive development.

I found myself to agree strongly with the third statement. I am at the stage in my life where I am well aware that the world is full of uncertainty but we as a society must come together and decide on what is right and what is wrong. This is the main reason we have laws, to keep control of the world. The laws give use a uniformed understanding of how our world is supposed

to operate. Without laws we can expect that the world would be in chaos. Even though laws are set in place to be obeyed there are still people who set out to challenge these laws and there are others who don't care what the law states and do whatever they will to do.

However even though the laws are set in place they are not black and white. One must use their critical thinking skills to effectively apply the law in their life. This can be a shortcoming because many laws leave a lot to be interpreted as to the true meaning behind them. With this in mind if critical thinking skills are not applied one may assume they are in the right of the law and really not be because of a lack of understanding. What strengthens me at being in this position in this stage of my life is the fact that I don't jump to rash decisions.

I have learned how to take my time and evaluate each situation, weighing the facts and going with the best option available. Taking the time to do this helps to eliminate a lot of heart ache, struggle and regret. All of us have found ourselves in the position where we wished we could go back in time and change some of the decisions we have made. We all know hindsight is 20/20 and the only thing we can do is live and learn. Learn how to use critical thinking and apply to every aspect of our lives. Working at Hardee's years ago I was placed in a position to make a decision to cook rotten chicken and serve it to the public.

The manager ordered me to cook chicken that both she and I knew could be a danger to the public. Refusing in a very disrespectful manner I lost my job and was sent home with a broken heart because my intentions were good

but the situation was handled in the wrong manner. I had to regroup and approach the situation from a different manner; therefore because of my beliefs I knew I could not let the situation go. Instead of remaining mad I used critical thinking to come to the conclusion that people could not suffer from eating rotten chicken and action had to be taken.

At this point I called the health department and the district manager of Hardee's and reported the situation and my concerns. By the end of day I had a call from my manager and was asked to come in for a meeting. During this meeting I was informed by the manager who fired me that if I had handled the situation in a more respectable manner she would have understood my point of view and respected it. If I had taken the time to use critical thinking and explained my standpoint for why I refused to disobey I would have never had to go to such lengths to get my point heard.

Because I immediately got angry and viewed my manager as an inhumane person I criticized her and got fired. Although my initial reaction was handled in an inappropriate manner, I was able to bounce back and regain control through critical thinking and informing the appropriate authorities of the facts of the situation and regained my employment. From this I learned that critical thinking and criticism have a domino effect. One bad decision not only causes one side effect, it causes multiply until the chain is broken.

In my situation the chain was broken when a thinking critical approach was taken and proper authorities were involved. I could have been critical of what my manager had done and tried to ruin her name around the small town, but that would have only created more problems. Involving the proper

authorities help to bring the situation under control, the chicken was thrown out and no one was placed in harms ways by consuming the product. I regained my employment because I stood up for what was right and changed my attitude towards the situation to gain a positive outcome.

Society is often faced with the need to rapidly assess situations and make decisions under dynamic conditions and often with limited information. Sometimes the outcomes are good and sometimes they are bad. As long as humans are involved there will be injury to others in some cases which is unacceptable. Criticism can be constructive or destructive and each individual needs to evaluate themselves on which type they are using along with their critical thinking skills to gain the most positive outcomes for their experiences.