

# Critical Thinking Skills—Applied

## Putting Theory into Practice

### Characteristics of Critical Thinkers

The goal of critical thinking isn't to be right, but to gather and assess the right information.

#### Curiosity

- Ask lots of questions.
- Project inquisitiveness and excitement.
- Adopt a “naïve observer” perspective.

#### Awareness

- Discover your blind spots.
- Look at an issue from a variety of perspectives.

#### Flexibility

- Remain open to new information.
- Adapt to changing circumstances.
- Experiment with others' ideas.

#### Common Sense

- Verify facts and figures.
- Consider the source of your information.
- Identify obviously illogical thought processes.

### Critical Thinking Process

Use this three-step process to establish a consistent habit of logical thinking.

#### Examine

- Identify the issue or problem.
- Collect information.

#### Explore

- Uncover assumptions and biases.
- Interpret information.
- Brainstorm alternative explanations or solutions.

#### Evaluate

- Assess explanations or solutions.
- Reach a conclusion.

### Critical Thinking Mistakes

**Rationalization:** Starting with a conclusion you want and looking for evidence to support it.

To avoid:

- Determine your true motivation for wanting a particular solution.
- Listen carefully to others' explanations to detect valid or invalid reasoning.

**Emotional thinking:** Reacting to feelings rather than focusing on facts.

To avoid:

- Separate facts from feelings.
- Focus on developing flexibility to minimize emotional attachment to a solution.
- Carefully follow the critical thinking process.

**Bias:** Having a preference toward a certain point of view.

To avoid:

- Carefully reflect on your reactions.
- Trust, but verify.

**Tunnel vision:** Behaving in a set way without realizing you have other options.

To avoid:

- Actively consider other perspectives.
- Seek out someone with a different perspective and ask for his or her input.

### Types of Bias

- **Confirmation bias:** The tendency to seek information that proves, rather than disproves, our beliefs.
- **Hindsight bias:** The tendency to see previous results as different or more probable than originally thought.
- **Recency effect:** The tendency to give more credence to the most recent data you receive.
- **Overconfidence:** The tendency to overestimate your abilities.