

# Critical Thinking

Presenter:  
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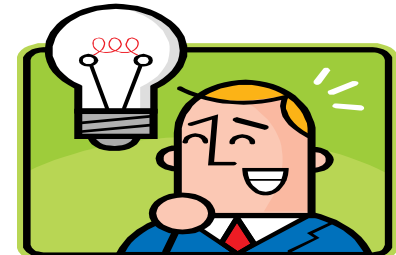
# What Is Critical Thinking?

- It is thinking that is purposeful, reasoned, and goal directed.
- It is searching, plotting, making associations, explaining, analyzing, probing for multiple angles, justifying, scrutinizing, making decisions, solving problems, and investigating.
- It is literally thinking about something from many angles.
- Examples of people who use critical thinking in their daily lives: lawyer who found loophole to free his client, computer repair technician who found the one tiny circuit problem in your computer, homemaker who discovered a way to reduce the household debt each month, the student who discovered that reading the material before class made listening easier.
- Critical thinking is about making informed, enlightened, educated, open-minded decisions in college, in relationships, in finances, and in life in general.



# The Importance of Critical Thinking

- As a student, critical thinking can help you focus on issues; gather relevant, accurate information; remember facts; organize thoughts logically; analyze questions and problems; and manage your priorities.
- It can assist in your problem-solving skills and help you control your emotions so that you can make rational judgments.
- It can help you determine the accuracy of printed and spoken words.
- It can help you detect bias and determine the point of arguments and persuasion.



# Making It Work For You

Critical thinking skill development involves:

- Restraining emotions
- Looking at things differently
- Analyzing (breaking down) information
- Asking questions
- Solving problems
- Distinguishing fact from opinion





# Restraining Emotions

- It is crucial that you know when your emotions are clouding an issue. **Example: Should drugs and prostitution be legalized? Should terminally ill patients have the right to state assisted and/or privately assisted suicide?**
- If we allow our emotions to run rampant and fail to use research, logic, and evidence (expansive thinking), we cannot examine the issues critically and have a logical discussion regarding the statements.



# Restraining Emotions

If you feel that your emotions caused you to be less than objective, you might consider the following tips you are faced with an emotional decision:

- Listen to all sides of an argument or statement before you make a decision or form an opinion.
- Make a conscious effort to identify which emotions are causing you to lose objectivity.
- Do not let your emotions withdraw you or turn you off from the situation.
- Don't let yourself become engaged in "I'm right, you're wrong" situations.
- Work to understand why others feel their side is valid.
- Physiological reactions to emotions, such as increased heart rate and blood pressure and an increase in adrenaline flow, should be recognized as an emotional checklist. If you begin to experience these reactions, relax, take a deep breath, and concentrate on being open-minded.
- Control your negative self-talk or inner voice toward the other person(s) or situation.
- Determine whether your emotions are irrational.



# Look At Things Differently

- Thinking on a higher level involves looking at something that you may have never seen before or something that you may have seen many times, and trying to think about it more critically than before.



Penny  
Exercise



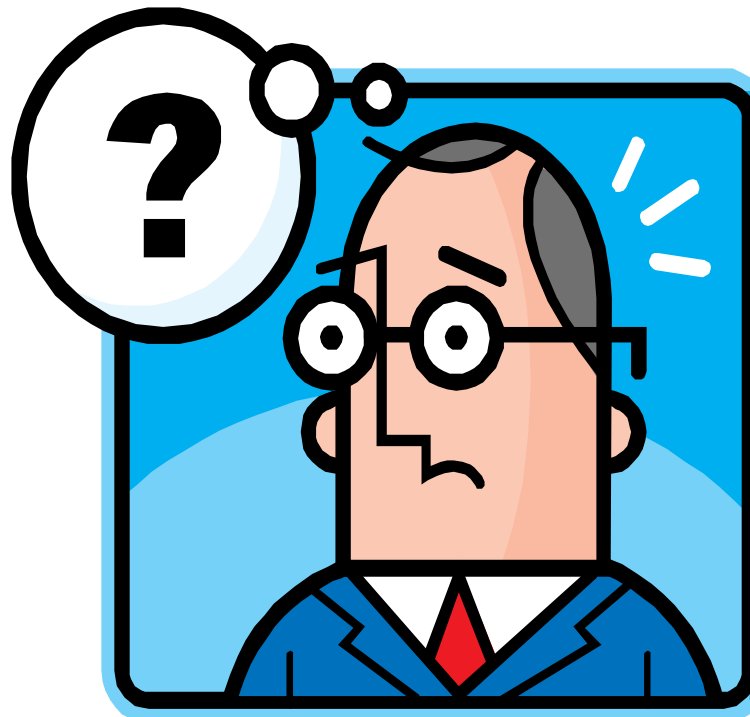
# Analyzing Information

- To analyze, you break a topic, statement, or problem into parts to understand it more clearly.
- An easy way to analyze is to create a chart of information using right and left hand columns. Example: Why should death penalty be abolished?

Column A (Answer)	Column B (Explanation)
It is expensive.	It costs over \$3 million to put a person to death, while it costs slightly more than \$500,000 to imprison him for 40 years.

# Asking Questions

- Use questioning for exploring, developing, and acquiring new knowledge.



# Solving Problems

- It is important to remember that every problem does have a solution, but the solution may not be what we wanted.
- 1. **Identify and narrow the problem.** Put your problem in writing. Jot down all aspects the problem, such as why it is a problem, whom it affects, and what type of problem it is.
- 2. **Research and develop alternatives.** Brainstorm by gathering a group of people and asking them to let ideas flow.
- 3. **Evaluate the alternatives.** Create column A (idea) vs. column B (comments). You can start eliminating some of suggestions that are not workable.
- 4. **Solve the problem.** After you have researched each suitable idea, you will be able to make a decision based on solid information and facts.



# Distinguishing Fact From Opinion

- One of the most important aspects of critical thinking is the ability to distinguish fact from opinion.
- Many times an opinion can sound true, but without evidence and proof, it is just an **opinion**.
- A **fact** is something that can be proven, something that can be objectively verified.
- Statements that cannot be proved should be always treated as **opinion**.
- Statements that offer valid proof and verification from credible, reliable sources can be treated as **factual**.
- If you are unsure about the credibility of the source or information, treat that statement as **opinion**.

# Fact vs. Opinion Exercise

- Is each statement below fact or opinion:

1. *Gone with the Wind* is a movie.
2. *Gone with the Wind* is the best movie ever made.
3. Tom Hanks is an actor.
4. Lincoln was the best president to ever head the United States.



# Resource

- Sherfield, R. M., Montgomery, R. J., and Moody, P. G., (2006), *Cornerstone: Building for Career Success*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.