



Critical thinking is self-discipline put into action. You don't choose sides or make any assumptions. It is about interpreting and analyzing facts and information without an opinion. It allows you to get past an emotional investment in a situation and evaluate it logically.

This allows for the full spectrum of possibilities to be entertained. We too often let our emotions guide our thinking. This sometimes happens unconsciously. Trauma, previous experiences, expectations, and other factors push our thoughts in a particular direction.

Critical thinking never enters a situation with expectations. You make decisions based on available information and the most probable future circumstances. Here are a few steps to train your critical thinking skills to make better choices.

Clearly Define the Problem or Situation

Refrain from using your opinion when defining the issue. Use facts and figures, logic, and reason only. Clearly and succinctly state the problem to be solved or the situation you are appraising. Remember, leave your emotions and opinions out of the process.

Question Your Beliefs

Why do you hold a certain belief? Maybe you never entertained the possibility that another belief would lead to a better outcome. High achievers understand that questioning their beliefs can open their eyes to more productive and successful possibilities.

Assemble Information and Evaluate the Source

Take your time with a decision. Assemble all necessary information, resources, tools, and influential factors. Then, ask yourself where the information comes from. This can help you make an intelligent choice based on the information's relevance and origins.

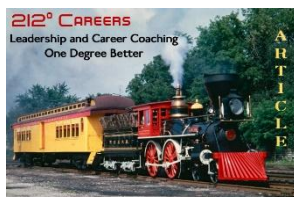
Be Open-Minded

Critical thinkers understand they don't know everything. Their knowledge base is only part of the process. Open yourself up to the idea that you don't have all the answers.

Analyze Your Decision

After you have reached an objective decision, put it under a microscope. Is it the best possible decision? Given your information, is there a smarter course of action? Critical thinking allows you to scrap a potential conclusion if it isn't the best option, even if you or someone else is inclined to go with that conclusion.

Critical thinking requires objectivity first and foremost. Gather all the relevant information and perspectives. State what problem you are trying to solve or the question you are answering. Analyze the situation and make a decision. Use your outcome to intelligently influence relevant critical thinking situations in the future.



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