What is Critical Thinking?   [Source](#)

No one always acts purely objectively and rationally. We connive for selfish interests. We gossip, boast, exaggerate, and equivocate. It is "only human" to wish to validate our prior knowledge, to vindicate our prior decisions, or to sustain our earlier beliefs. In the process of satisfying our ego, however, we can often deny ourselves intellectual growth and opportunity. We may not always want to apply critical thinking skills, but we should have those skills available to be employed when needed.

Critical thinking includes a complex combination of skills. Among the main characteristics are the following:

Rationality

We are thinking critically when we

- rely on reason rather than emotion,
- require evidence, never ignore known evidence, and follow evidence where it leads, and
- are concerned more with finding the best explanation than being right; analyzing apparent confusion and asking questions.

Self-awareness

We are thinking critically when we

- weigh the influences of motives and bias, and
- recognize our own assumptions, prejudices, biases, or point of view.

Honesty

We are thinking critically when we recognize emotional impulses, selfish motives, nefarious purposes, or other modes of self-deception.

Open-mindedness

We are thinking critically when we

- evaluate all reasonable inferences
- consider a variety of possible viewpoints or perspectives,
- remain open to alternative interpretations
- accept a new explanation, model, or paradigm because it explains the evidence better, is simpler, or has fewer inconsistencies or covers more data
- accept new priorities in response to a reevaluation of the evidence or reassessment of our real interests, and
- do not reject unpopular views out of hand.

Discipline

We are thinking critically when we

- are precise, meticulous, comprehensive, and exhaustive

- resist manipulation and irrational appeals, and
- avoid snap judgments.

Judgment

We are thinking critically when we

- recognize the relevance and/or merit of alternative assumptions and perspectives
- recognize the extent and weight of evidence

In sum,

- Critical thinkers are by nature **skeptical**. They approach texts with the same skepticism and suspicion as they approach spoken remarks.
- Critical thinkers are **active**, not passive. They ask questions and analyze. They consciously apply tactics and strategies to uncover meaning or assure their understanding.
- Critical thinkers do not take an egotistical view of the world. They are **open** to new ideas and perspectives. They are willing to challenge their beliefs and investigate competing evidence.
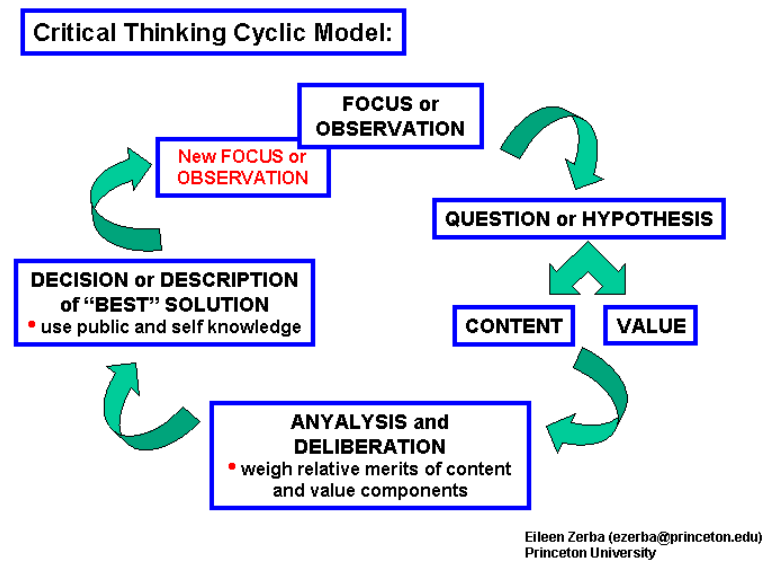
Critical thinking enables us to recognize a wide range of subjective analyses of otherwise objective data, and to evaluate how well each analysis might meet our needs. Facts may be facts, but how we interpret them may vary.

By contrast, passive, non-critical thinkers take a simplistic view of the world.

- They see things in black and white, as either-or, rather than recognizing a variety of possible understanding.
- They see questions as yes or no with no subtleties.
- They fail to see linkages and complexities.
- They fail to recognize related elements.

Non-critical thinkers take an egotistical view of the world

- They take *their* facts as the only relevant ones.
- They take *their own* perspective as the only sensible one.
- They take *their goal* as the only valid one.

Critical Thinking Cyclic Model:

FOCUS or OBSERVATION

New FOCUS or OBSERVATION

QUESTION or HYPOTHESIS

CONTENT VALUE

DECISION or DESCRIPTION of "BEST" SOLUTION
• use public and self knowledge

ANYALYSIS and DELIBERATION
• weigh relative merits of content and value components

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Procedure

Critical thinking calls for the ability to:

- Recognize problems, to find workable means for meeting those problems
- Understand the importance of prioritization and order of precedence in problem solving
- Gather and marshal pertinent (relevant) information
- Recognize unstated assumptions and values
- Comprehend and use language with accuracy, clarity, and discernment
- Interpret data, to appraise evidence and evaluate arguments
- Recognize the existence (or non-existence) of logical relationships between propositions
- Draw warranted conclusions and generalizations
- Put to test the conclusions and generalizations at which one arrives
- Reconstruct one's patterns of beliefs on the basis of wider experience
- Render accurate judgments about specific things and qualities in everyday life

In sum:

"A persistent effort to examine any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the evidence that supports it and the further conclusions to which it tends."[11]

Source: http://www.criticalreading.com/critical_thinking.htm

Homeless to Aliens

By   Jim Costa

Recently I attended a workshop regarding lack of affordable housing for persons with disabilities and the homeless. As I sat there I noticed that half of the participants were professionals employed as social workers, attorneys specializing in discrimination litigation, etc. and the rest were referred to as their "consumers". I listened as they all agreed that there just were not any affordable homes available, period. Just this week the city of Pensacola, by its actions, implied that affordable housing was new homes in the $175,000 - $200,000 range. It appeared that nothing at all was accomplished by the workshop except for a little venting and a few consumers learned to fight harder for one of the remaining affordable houses.

 During the workshop Albert Einstein's statement "The enormous problems we face today cannot be solved from the same frame of mind that created them" kept going through my head. Maybe we are looking at the problem too closely. I wondered how an alien, unfamiliar with our culture and economics, would have assessed the workshop and address the housing problem?   I think possibly the following:

- This is a long term problem that has been occurring for many, many years. If the goal is to make the problem permanently disappear, it is futile to solve the long-term problem with a short-term solution.

- Based on ten thousand years of history it is obvious that governments have no intent of permanently resolving this problem. Therefore it might be concluded that in the scheme of our social economic system the "problem" is beneficial in some way and is not a problem to the whole. Or perhaps it is just a small flaw of our system that we tolerate.

- The problem may have been sliced and analyzed too thinly. Litigators view it from a litigation viewpoint only. They are paid to do that so they must close their eyes to other viewpoints. Social workers do the same.   Landlords do the same. These persons are not paid to resolve the problem from the whole.

- If the problem could be permanently resolved in one day would the above mentioned persons elect to do so? Probably not - they themselves would be without a job and subject to homelessness. This is the culture we live in.

- A short-term solution is to put an economic underachiever in a home and then leave them. In our suburbia culture, lacking transportation, medical assistance, community support and livable wage jobs, most of these placed persons will rejoin the homeless.

- It is falsely assumed that because most of these persons cannot locate a 40 hour a week job in the want ads that they are unemployable and thus will always be non-productive to community.

- There are two money problems in our culture: the lack of money and too much money. The problem with too much money is that we use it for security and if you lose your money there goes your security. Oddly, the more money you have the more insecure you become!

- Earlier in our history it appears that we systematically destroyed tribal communities. Perhaps this was done so that we could control them with money. Until our arrival the tribe was a member's security so he had no need for money.

- It appears that the current culture dictates that any activity undertaken must be taxed by supplying a living to others around it. This need not be so.

Possible Solution:

Perhaps it is time that we establish cooperative villages to house both moneyless and the wealthy, providing security for all. Only affordable housing costing around $30,000 each would be constructed. The community would not be dependent on transportation as most jobs would be provided to all who wish to work there. This would be a place that would be internally sustainable forever. This would be a place where the professionals who would work themselves out of a job would rather be at anyway. From start to finish, no one would make a profit on the venture.

 Fighting over the few remaining affordable houses is not the long-term solution. Building a surplus of affordable houses is.