

CRITICAL THINKING



ACADEMIC SKILLS FOR THE
DIGITAL ERA
2026



Learning Outcomes



Be able to define
critical thinking



Highlight characteristics
of critical thinkers



Apply critical thinking
skills to assignments and
decision-making

What Is Critical Thinking?



What Is Critical Thinking?

Critical thinking is setting out actively to understand what is really going on by using reasoning, evaluating evidence and thinking carefully about the process of thinking itself (Chatfield, 2019)

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Critical thinking is the ability to analyse information objectively and make a judgment or decision.

It is purposeful, logical, balanced, and considers all parts of the problem.

Through critical thinking we achieve an in-depth understanding of the world by being engaged and curious when learning.



What is important in Critical Thinking?



Scepticism: not automatically accepting something you hear, read or see as true

Objectivity: trying to understand something from a more neutral perspective, rather than relying on a single opinion or the first piece of information that comes to hand



Importance of Critical Thinking

- Increases confidence in our ability to analyse and evaluate information
- Helps us make informed decisions, problem solve, and cope with challenges
- Empowers us to trust the choices and decisions we make
- Aids us in adapting to changes more effectively and positively
- Challenges our own assumptions and the assumptions of those around us



Question

What is uncritical thinking?



Question

What is uncritical thinking?



Uncritical thinking is automatically believing what you read or are told without pausing to ask whether it is accurate, true or reasonable

Critical Thinking Terminology

Assertion: a statement of fact or belief, provided without support of justification

Argument: an attempt to persuade someone through reasoning that they should agree with a particular conclusion

Conclusion: the final point that someone making an argument is trying to convince you of

Searching for a conclusion: when you're trying to work out whether someone is making an argument, begin by seeing if there is a particular conclusion they want to convince you of



Smart Studying



Scepticism entails refusing to take things at face value. You can start practising it in life, work and study by asking four simple questions whenever you need to think twice:



Why should I trust this claim?

Why does the person making this claim believe it – or want me to believe it?

What else has been said, written or reported about this?

Do I know enough to answer all of the above questions confidently?

If the answer to this final question is 'no', you need to face the fact that you don't know enough to make an informed decision, and you must go in search of more information.



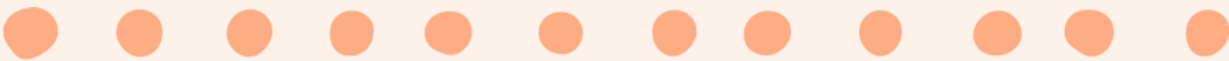
Skill Development



Critical thinking is a skill that we can continually develop by:

- Asking questions
- Examining the information we consume
- Actively listening
- Researching
- Developing media literacy skills
- Seeking diverse ideas

The Battle AGAINST BIAS



Bias: approaching something in a one-sided way that creates a distorted account of the way things actually are

Conscious bias: when someone deliberately presents a one-sided view of something, or explicitly holds a one-sided opinion about something

Unconscious bias: when someone's opinions or decisions are distorted by factors that they are not even aware of

Seeking Diverse Ideas

We tend to pursue and trust the opinions and ideas that most align with our own.

This is often referred to as confirmation bias or living in an echo chamber. To have a balanced understanding of a topic, it is important to look at various perspectives and remain objective.



A horizontal row of 25 orange dots of varying sizes, with the 15th dot from the left being the largest.



Examples of UNCONSCIOUS BIAS



- A manager unconsciously favours employees with similar interests or backgrounds when assigning promotions.
- A team assumes that older colleagues are less tech-savvy and don't give them opportunities to work with new software.

Examples of UNCONSCIOUS BIAS



- Someone assumes a woman is less competent at DIY tasks than a man.
- A person automatically trusts news stories that align with their political beliefs but questions those that challenge them.
- An individual assumes that an extroverted person is naturally a good leader, even though leadership requires other skills.

Researching

Read, discuss, and observe information related to your topic.

The more you research, the more knowledge you will possess to support your ideas and arguments. Engaging with what we learn will also help us comprehend and retain that information.



Examining the information we consume

We need to be aware that we are constantly subjected to media.

The information presented can influence our decisions and choices. It is important to be critical when engaging with media. We should examine information by seeking multiple sources that can verify its accuracy.





Asking Questions

Questions help us clarify what we are trying to understand.

They can also increase our curiosity and desire to learn. It is important to be clear about the information we consume and understand its purpose and significance.



LET'S PLAY

FACT, OPINION,
OR ANALYSIS?



Categories

- **Fact:** Objective, verifiable data (e.g., financial figures, market share, documented events).
- **Opinion:** A subjective belief or perspective, often shaped by individual biases or values (e.g., "This company has the best management team").
- **Analysis:** An interpretation based on data or reasoning, often combining facts and informed viewpoints (e.g., "Rising e-commerce trends may reduce retail store revenue").

Fact, Opinion, or Analysis?

🗣️ Witness 1: Dr Avery Cho (Colleague)

"Dr. Hart was last seen leaving the robotics lab at 9:30 PM on Sunday 5th January, according to the security footage."

"I always thought Dr. Hart was too obsessed with AI ethics. She worried about things that aren't even real issues yet."

"Given her recent conflicts with corporate sponsors, it's likely she was under a lot of stress about funding her research."

Be ready to justify your answers



Fact, Opinion, or Analysis?

🗣️ Witness 1: Dr Avery Cho (Colleague)

"Dr. Hart was last seen leaving the robotics lab at 9:30 PM on Sunday 5th, according to the security footage."

◆ Fact – Verifiable information based on evidence.

"I always thought Dr. Hart was too obsessed with AI ethics. She worried about things that aren't even real issues yet."

◆ Opinion – A personal judgment about Dr. Hart's concerns.

"Given her recent conflicts with corporate sponsors, it's likely she was under a lot of stress about funding her research."

◆ Analysis – A reasoned interpretation, but not directly provable.



Fact, Opinion, or Analysis?

🗣️ Witness 2: Jamie Patel (Student & Research Assistant)

"Dr. Hart believed that AI should never make life-or-death decisions without human oversight."

"I feel like someone wanted to silence her. Maybe a big tech company?"

"Her last paper showed that bias in AI medical diagnosis systems can disproportionately affect marginalized communities."



Fact, Opinion, or Analysis?

🗣️ Witness 2: Jamie Patel (Student & Research Assistant)

"Dr. Hart believed that AI should never make life-or-death decisions without human oversight."

◆ Fact – This is an objective claim about Dr. Hart's known stance.

"I feel like someone wanted to silence her. Maybe a big tech company?"

◆ Opinion – Speculative and based on emotion rather than evidence.

"Her last paper showed that bias in AI medical diagnosis systems can disproportionately affect marginalized communities."

◆ Fact – If verifiable through published research, this is factual.



Fact, Opinion, or Analysis?

🗣️ Witness 3: Felix Morgan (CEO of NovaTech)

"Dr. Hart's work was valuable, but she was being alarmist about the dangers of AI in medicine."

"Her claim that 'AI could replace human doctors within 10 years' is misleading—there's no evidence to support that timeframe."

"Dr. Hart emailed me at 8:30 PM on the day of her disappearance saying she wanted to discuss something urgent."



Fact, Opinion, or Analysis?

🗣️ Witness 3: Felix Morgan (CEO of NovaTech)

"Dr. Hart's work was valuable, but she was being alarmist about the dangers of AI in medicine."

◆ Opinion – A subjective judgment about Dr. Hart's views.

"Her claim that 'AI could replace human doctors within 10 years' is misleading—there's no evidence to support that timeframe."

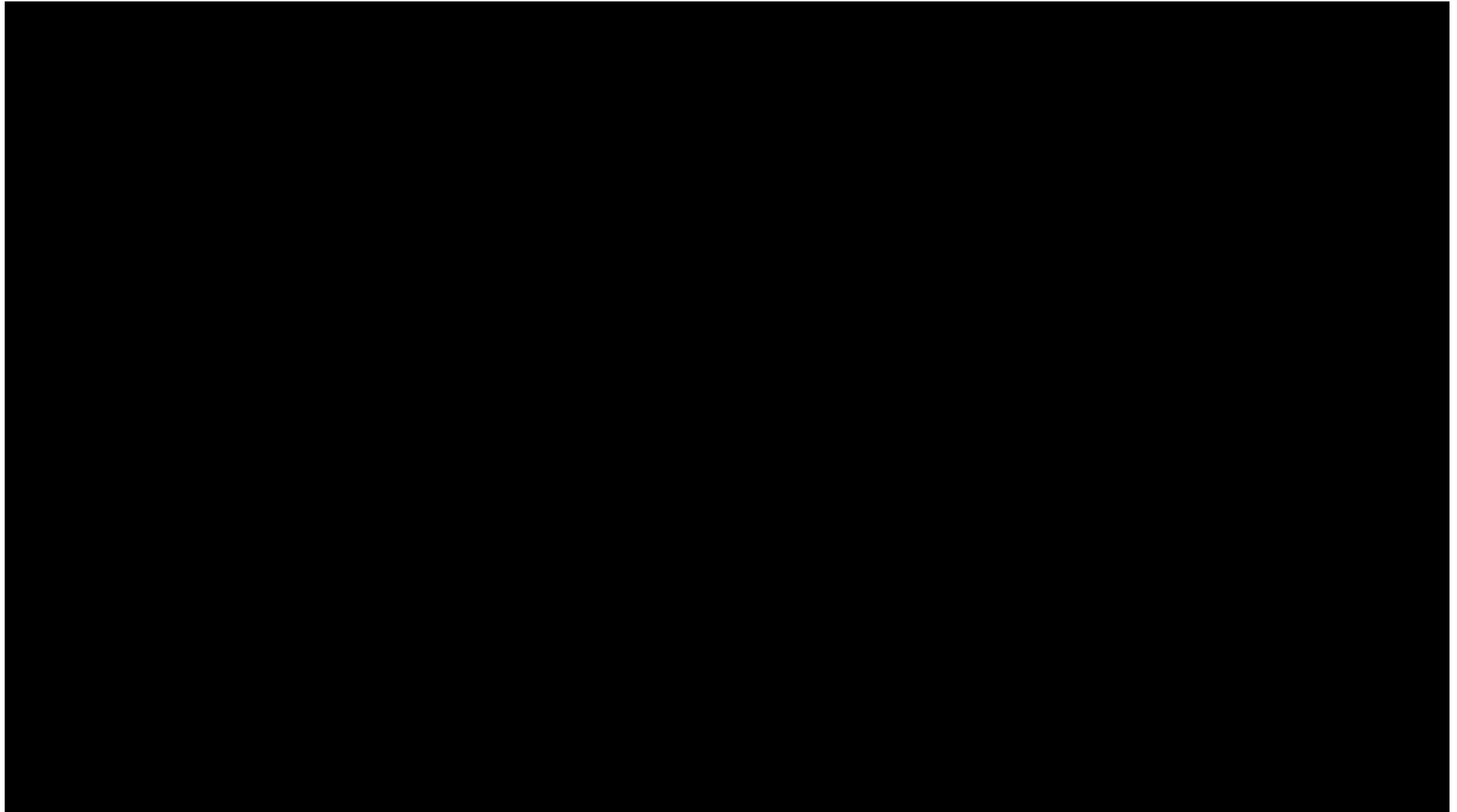
◆ Analysis – An argument evaluating the validity of Dr. Hart's statement.

"Dr. Hart emailed me at 8:30 PM on the day of her disappearance saying she wanted to discuss something urgent."

◆ Fact – Can be verified through email records.



ANALYSIS VS DESCRIPTION VIDEO



BEING CRITICAL OVERVIEW

- Analysis – not description
- Evidence of thought and reflection
- Arguments supported by evidence
- Discussion of issues and ideas – not just a reporting of facts
- An understanding of why the topic is significant and interesting
- An attempt to relate the topic to broader issues – to see the bigger picture



CRITICAL ANALYSIS

- **Back up** criticisms and evaluation with evidence (using in-text citations, for example)
- **Make** any biases, assumptions or stances by others clear:

‘X states that...
Y, however, argues against that idea....’
‘X appears to assume that...
Y, on the other hand, puts forward another point of view....’
- **Be concise** – avoid long-winded explanations
- **Be relevant** – **ensure** criticisms and evaluations are relevant to your purpose



COGNITIVE AND INTELLECTUAL RUBRIC CRITICAL EVALUATION AND ANALYSIS

- *See Level 4 Rubric Cognitive and Intellectual

APPLICATION OF CRITICAL THINKING IN BMGM 4001: ACTIVITY

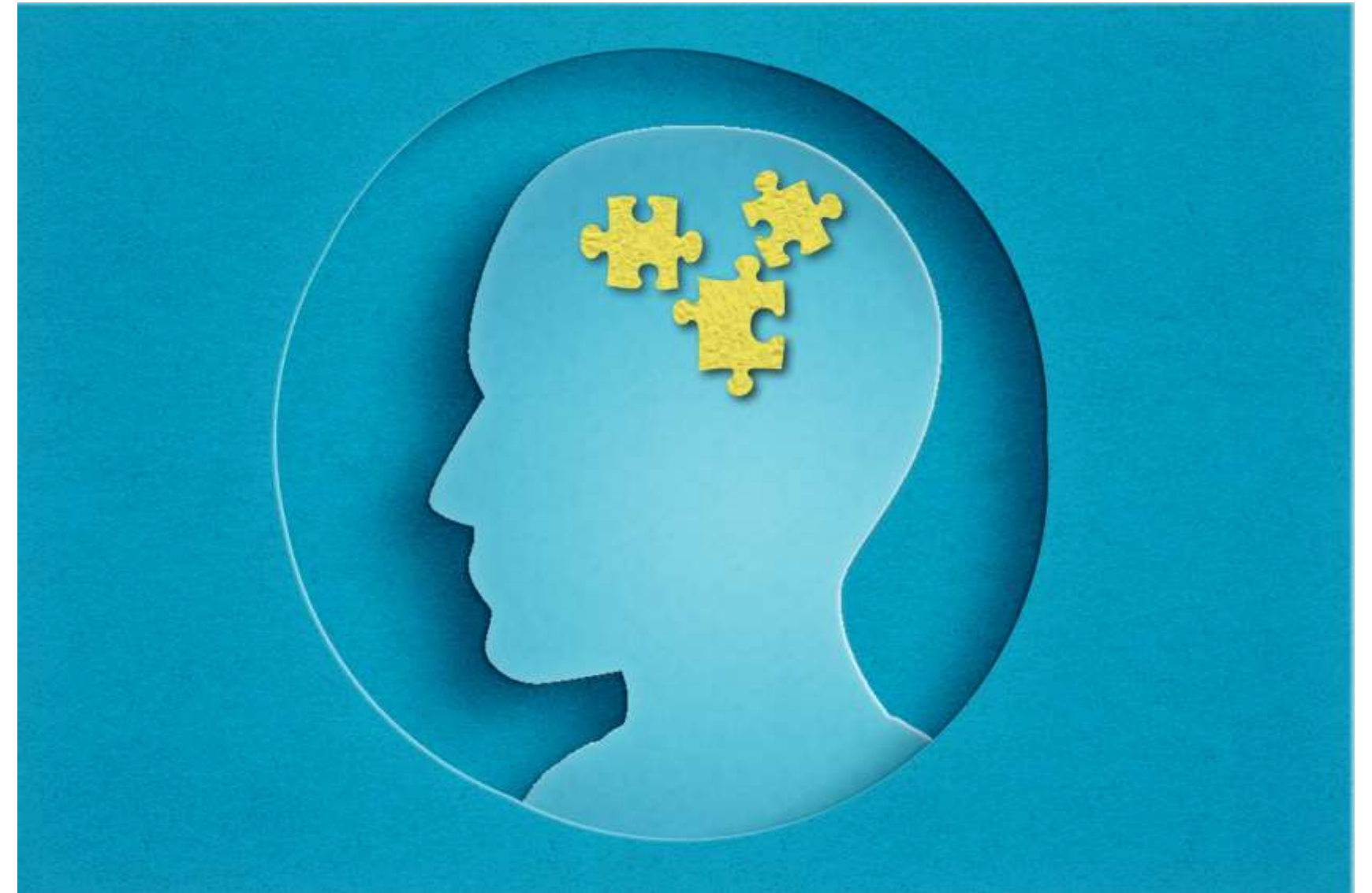
- An independent restaurant in the UK situated by the coast with a beautiful beach nearby, has experienced a 20% decline in sales and profits year over year.
- It is well established, having been operating for over 10 years.
- The customers seem to enjoy their experiences and come back regularly.
- The employees seem to be happy working at the restaurant.
- **What would you do as an Owner?**
- **Please take 10 – 15 minutes to research (using a number of sources) and consider.**



REVIEW OF TODAY

REVIEW OF TODAY'S CRITICAL THINKING SESSION:

1. What is critical thinking?
2. Why is it important and relevant?
3. Application of critical thinking in academia (and life)



FEEDBACK/SURVEY

- Did you find discussing Critical Thinking helpful?
- What did you find particularly useful?
- Would you consider yourself to be open minded?

Final Thoughts



Critical thinking can be beneficial to you in all aspects and at all stages of life.

Our assumptions, wishful thinking, and self-interests can be barriers to finding and understanding the information we consume. Remember, the goal is to broaden our knowledge and find meaning in what we learn.



QUESTIONS ?



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