

What is critical thinking?

Critical thinking is a way of approaching an idea by taking it apart and carefully filtering through the material to find the most vital information (Agoose 2019). Often scepticism is used to open the idea that what is already known about an idea might not show the whole picture. This idea can be used to analyse the information and make a more informed decision as to what evidence is used going forward (Cottrell, 2017, pg.2).

Cohen (2015, pg. 12) explains that in order to think critically, 5 key elements need to be used. These elements include, being broad minded and enjoying hearing views that may be different and spark debate, seeking fully constructed opinions which can be accurately analysed, having the confidence to challenge an idea, being curious enough to seek out the relevant information and having the urge to seek out the truth even when it challenges a person's own beliefs.

Time management

Cottrell (2019, p.8-13) explains that in order to become an expert in a field, time must be dedicated into learning the subject. How that time is used is just as important. In order to work effectively a person needs to understand when they are their most productive self and then manage that time accordingly. Keeping a timetable not only noting due dates and lecture times but also dedicating time to organising notes and other related tasks can help keep track of time.

According to Cottrell (2019, pg. 128) There are several steps that can be taken to promote effective time management skills. An understanding of how time is currently being used can help create a method to use time more efficiently. Time can then be allocated to each specific matter, including down time and sleep and adapted based on an individual's working style. By using detailed planners along with self-motivation time can be prioritised and those tasks that are more urgent can be moved to the top of the list and be completed sooner. Over time these skills may need to be evaluated in order to understand what works well, what is causing distraction and how distractions can be minimised to ensure time is managed more effectively in future.

Critical Thinking

(Source: [brightconcept-consulting](#), 2022)

Mindfulness

Noone, Bunting and Hogan (2016) describe mindfulness as a Buddhist practice which promotes clear thinking. Despite at the time of publishing no studies having been being carried out to prove how mindfulness impacts critical thinking, Noone, Bunting and Hogan (2016) explain that research shows the effect of mindfulness in heightening a person's executive functioning and therefore in theory those who practice dispositional mindfulness would be more skilled at critical thinking due to their executive functioning abilities.

Solimanifar, Nikoubakht and Shaabani's (2022) more recent study into the link between mindfulness and critical thinking concludes that mindfulness does have a bearing on Critical thinking, albeit indirect. It was shown that mindfulness had a direct effect on personal awareness and that there is a positive association between personal awareness and critical thinking.

Cottrell (2018, pg.27) states that to achieve mindfulness a person must dedicate time to the practice and be willing to try new things in order to enhance their self-awareness and further develop kindness. There are many ways in which mindfulness can be practiced, Cottrell (2018, pg. 101) suggests that meditation can be used as a starting point for the day, study can then be timetabled around this fixed-point using mindfulness to enhance learning. Mindfulness can also help bring more awareness to when concentration is lost and help to regain attention once it is adrift.

Motivation

Cohen (2015, pg.171) suggests that more the 60% of students who struggle to complete their education cite lack of motivation as the cause. Motivation is not always simple but research indicates it is critical for success and that abilities such as motivation are more important than general intelligence to succeed.

Ockwell-Smith (2017, pg.224) explains that the more external motivation received, the less likely a person is to be intrinsically motivated, for example, When a child is rewarded for completing a task they are less likely to complete a task off their own back and therefore having a knock on effect on their self esteem.

According to Cottrell (2018, pg.122) intrinsic motivation can be encouraged by finding a purpose in a task which can provide freedom from seeking rewards (such as a specific grade) in future tasks and therefore, avoiding disappointment when that reward isn't received.

Riggs and Hellyer-Riggs's (2014, pg.7) research found that motivation is essential for critical thinking. The emotional effect created by understanding the damage of unsound reasoning is shown to motivate thinking more critically.

Conclusion

As Cohen (2015, pg. 12) explains, many different elements are required to think critically. Each of the skills discussed can work hand in hand with another skills. Cottrell (2019, pg. 128) mentions timetabling a point in the day to practice meditation, thus combining mindfulness and time management. Cottrell (2018, pg.122) describes that finding purpose can help build motivation and as explained by Ockwell-Smith (2017, pg.224) being intrinsically motivated can protect self-esteem. According to Cottrell (2019 pg.151) critical thinking is more effective when brain function is boosted by the same factors that promote wellbeing.



(Source: StudyPK, 2021)

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