

How to encourage critical thinking

To encourage critical thinking, one must be offered opportunities to pursue topics of genuine interest. Critical thinking skills can be learned; therefore, one must be given time to develop these skills. Over time, subjects who are offered suitable opportunities, will develop skills within writing, conversing and debating, transferring these skills into whatever the subject matter may be. Those who are exposed to critical thinking skills development go on to make informed choices, these will be within every aspect of their daily lives, e.g., voting in a democracy requires critical thinking as irrational thinkers according to Diane Halpern, can be considered a threat to society.

Introduction

During one's time in higher education, one must develop skills to support a platform of successful learning; researching and referencing will be required throughout. These skills will allow one to identify, check, consider alternative perspectives and take actions which are informed. One must be prepared to consider the journey and how to successfully navigate the tasks placed upon them, showing considerable knowledge and understanding. Critical thinking proves one has understood the task and can confidently navigate the question 'why'.

Critical Thinking

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How to plan and prepare

Stella Cottrell suggests one should plan in readiness for any critical thinking task. A diary, or planner etc will be required for one to suitably prepare, along with a self-evaluation tool. A self-evaluating approach to learning will enhance a deeper understanding of the topic. Her Study Skills Handbook prepares students for what to expect during their time studying. It also offers advice and strategies on how to develop successful approaches to studying with a positive attitude. With support and strategies identifying skills already embedded. Confidence is also encouraged by supporting one to investigate, ask, read and double check. To share one's own learning with others, one must be confident in the information one has found. It is considered that one will be curious and willing to research.

What is Critical Thinking?

Critical Thinking is, according to Diane Halpern, an essential everyday skill. Critical thinking ensures clear, goal directed discussions, avoiding common biases and she suggests muddy thinking will never lead to good communication.

To achieve positive outcomes in many situations, Critical Thinking must be applied. With everyday situations, critical thinking is an essential skill, allowing one to support arguments and maintain diplomatic conversations. Critical thinking ensures that one can demonstrate a complete understanding of a situation, encouraging debate and promoting effective communication relating to a particular topic. Critical thinking is at the heart of everything one does, effective planning, conversing and debating. But first, critical thinking skills must be identified to apply them effectively. Knowing how to use the skills and when to apply them. A direct result of critical thinking skills are better outcomes. Without the use of effective critical thinking, correlation and cause can sometimes be confused, where correlation suggests that two variables can change, and where causation means that a variable changes as a direct result of another.

Another skill around critical thinking is knowing when and where it is appropriate. Knowing how to label these skills and knowing when to apply them. Everyday activities, such as reading an article in a newspaper for example, may require the use of critical thinking. Supporting a conclusion will require evidence and reasons, entering a debate will require knowledge of a topic and an ability to question why. Questioning the credibility of a source and questioning its authenticity before drawing on the information in a conversation. Being open and willing to look at the credibility of a source, questioning the reliability. In this current age of technology and social networking there are multiple opportunities to be misinformed and without the skill of critical thinking one may become tricked into believing information which is simply not true. This can be dangerous for those who are considered vulnerable, being misled and fraudulently persuaded to financially invest in unscrupulous activities or goods. Critical thinking allows one to consider if a situation appears to be too good to be true and to be confident to not take part.