

The Psychology of Critical Thinking

How Critical Thinking is an everyday survival skill!

Claudia Fernandez, DrPH, MS, RD, LDN
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Critical Thinking is a *self-directed* process
by which we take *deliberate steps*
to think at the *highest level* of quality.



Master Thinker
Good habits of thought become 2nd nature

Advanced Thinker
Keeps up with disciplined practice in thinking

Practicing Thinker
Aware of the need to actually practice thinking

Beginning Thinker
Aware of problems in thinking and trying to improve but without regular practice

Challenged Thinker
Faced with significant problems in our thinking

Unreflective Thinker
Unaware of significant problems in our thinking

Source: The Foundation for Critical Thinking, online at www.CriticalThinking.Org

Standards of Reasoning and Questions

<i>Test for:</i>	<i>By asking this:</i>
CLARITY	Can you give me an example? Can you elaborate? Could you illustrate what you mean?
ACCURACY	How could we check on that? How could we verify that?
PRECISION	Could you be more precise? Could you give me more details?
DEPTH	What factors make this a difficult problem? What are some of the difficulties we need to deal with?
LOGIC	Does all this make sense together? Does your first paragraph fit in with your last? Does what you say follow from the evidence?
RELEVANCE	How does that help us with the issue? How does that relate to the problem?
FAIRNESS	Am I sympathetically representing the viewpoints of others? Do I have a vested interest in this issue?
SIGNIFICANCE	Is this the most important problem to consider? Which of these facts are most important? Is this the central idea to focus on?
BREADTH	Do we need to look at this from another perspective? Do we need to look at this in other ways?

Egocentric Thinking

Innate Ego-centrism	"It's true because I believe it"
Innate Socio-centrism	"It's true because WE believe it"
Innate Wish Fulfilment	"It's true because I want to believe it"
Innate Self-Validation	"It's true because I have always believed it"
Innate Selfishness	"It's true because it's in my selfish interest to believe it"

S.E.E.I.

- ◎ **STATE** in your own words what someone else has said or written or the key concepts, problem or question at issue
- ◎ **ELABORATE** on your statement.
“In other words...”
- ◎ **EXEMPLIFY**: give an example of the concept from your life and from the content
- ◎ **ILLUSTRATE**: create an analogy, metaphor, simile, graph, chart, cartoon, etc.



The elements of thought...

In attempting to answer a **question**
we think for a **purpose**
within a **point of view**
based on **assumptions**



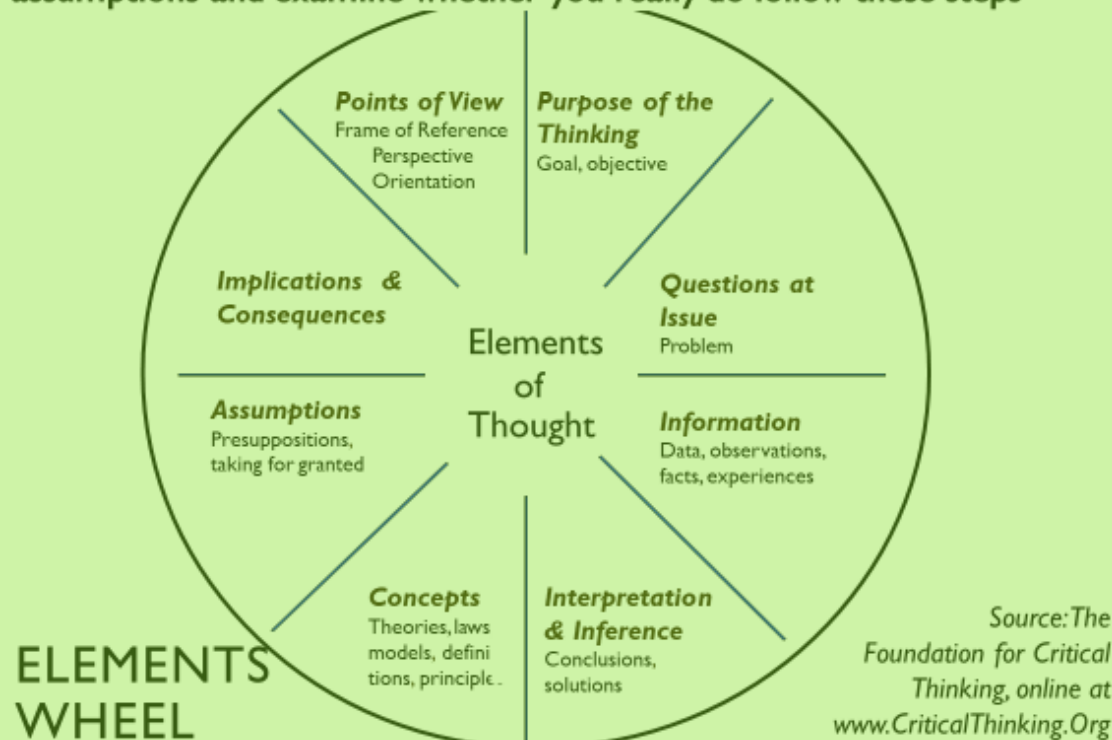
leading to **implications** and **consequences**.

We use **data, facts, and experiences**
to make **inferences** and **judgments**

based on **concepts** and **theories**

*Make sure your thought process includes these steps.
It is like showing your work in math class.*

These *Elements of Thought* might seem intuitive, but check your assumptions and examine whether you really do follow these steps



Reflecting on your knowledge of thinking

Test yourself by writing your answers to the following:

Can you describe the role that thinking is playing in your life? (Be as clear and as detailed as you can.)

1. What was a recent assumption you made (that you should not have made)?
2. What is a recent concept you formed (that you previously lacked)?
3. List five inferences that you made in the last hour.
4. Name and explain a point of view that you sometimes use to guide your thinking.
5. Briefly describe how you analyze and assess thinking.
6. Name some intellectual standards (e.g. fairness, relevance, accuracy, etc.) you use. Explain how you apply them.
7. Explain the role of egocentric thinking in your life.
8. Take one or two intellectual traits (i.e. intellectual humility, courage, or empathy, perseverance) and explain what you are doing to try to embody them.

Source: The Foundation for Critical Thinking, online at www.CriticalThinking.Org