

## Critical Thinking Self-Reflection

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The ability to use critical thinking is very important in my day-to-day life as my profession involves life and death situations on an almost daily basis. The Critical Thinking Community (2013) defines critical thinking as “Critical thinking is the intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action” (para. 3). As this examples states critical thinking is much more than having an opinion on a subject, it carefully looks at all aspects of a situation before a decision is made.

In my current profession as an Air Intercept Control Supervisor and Anti Air Warfare Coordinator in the United States Navy it is very important that I do not jump to a decision in any given situation. It is imperative that I look at all of the data that has been presented to me and analyze it prior to making a critical decision. If I did not take all of the data into consideration, and critically look at the situation, the results of my actions could be detrimental. Critical thinking is such an important skill that classes on the subject has been incorporated into the staff colleges of all branches of the United States Military.

An additional aspect in which critical thinking is very important in the United States Navy is in the taking of advancement exams. In the Navy enlisted members must take an advancement exam to be advanced to pay grades E-4 thru E-7. While this is just one of the requirements for advancement, it carries the largest weight on if a member is going to be advanced or not. The exams that the members take are presented in a multiple-choice format. While I know that there are many educators that feel that multiple-choice format test do not require critical thinking, these questions are written in a way that do require the member to use

critical thinking. The Schreyer Institute of Teaching Excellence (2014) states, “Although multiple choice test items are well-suited for assessing fact recall and comprehension, with some extra effort, they can also be used to assess higher-order thinking such as application, analysis and evaluation” (para. 1). For this reason, if members use critical thinking in answering the test questions they have a much better chance in getting the questions right.

While I routinely employ critical thinking in my professional life, I may not always use it as a tool that I use in my personal life. As I think that most of us do when it comes to our family and close friends, we may tend to want to jump right in and help them before we think about the situation. Many of these situations can involve loaning friends and family members money or property. While the loan that is made may very well be done in good faith with the expectation that it will be returned or repaid my not always be the case. One example of this that I have recently had in my personal life had to do with selling my niece a car and carrying the loan for her. While selling her the car was done in good faith, I did not employ many of the critical thinking techniques that I should have before I made this decision. Some of the aspects of the situation that may have made to jump to this decision included knowing that she needed a car to be able to get back and forth to work and school, me wanting to get rid of the car and wanting to help out a close family member.

If I would have used critical thinking in the above situation, I am sure that I would have done things differently. If I would have looked into the reason why my niece was not able to get a loan from a bank for this car, or any other car for that matter, then I may not have been so willing to carry the loan for her. In addition, I should have also looked closer into why she needed the car. I know that the vehicle that she had was not running well, however, I did not

know till later that this was due to her negligence on maintaining the car properly. If I had used critical thinking in this situation, I would not have carried the loan on this car for her.

The main person that I look too to make sure that I am using critical thinking effectively and at the proper times is a former commanding officer of mine Rear Admiral Dewolfe H. Miller. Rear Admiral Miller always bestowed upon his crew how important it was making the right decision not always the fast decision. This included looking at both the technical and tactical impacts on a decision not only in the immediate future but also down the road. By using critical thinking this way you were always able to stay one step ahead.

Currently an inference that I made that I am dealing with has to do with my next duty assignment. A few months ago I was contacted by my placement officer and was asked where I would like to go for my last tour of duty in the Navy before I retire in three years. I informed him that I would like to stay in the San Diego area. I also informed him of what possible commands I would like to be assigned to. Staying in the same geographic area is not only good for me and my family it is also good for the government as it saves on moving costs. The commands that I listed are all ones that I know would be requiring someone with the same skill set that I have around the time that I was due to transfer. The placement officer then gave me the impression and I drew the conclusion that everything that I had stated was good and that he would make all efforts to keep me here in San Diego and assign me to one of the commands that we had talked about. I could not have been more wrong. Now in my next to last chance to pick orders the only things that have been offered to me are orders in Yokosuka, Japan and Norfolk, Virginia. For this reason I now have a very hard decision to make on whether or not I stay in the Navy till my 26 year mark or I retire at 23 years.

Another inference that I have made in the past had to do with a rental property that I was living in. My landlord at this property gave me indications that I was going to be able to rent his house for as long as I wanted as he was keeping this property as an income property and had no intentions of selling it. This ended up not being the case. Three years into living in his house he sends me a letter telling me that he has sold the property and that I 30 days to find someplace else to live. This incident has made me always get in writing, when I rent a house, that the landlord has to notify me in writing if he is going to put the house on the market.

## References

- Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence. (2014). *Writing multiple choice questions to assess higher-order thinking*. Retrieved from <http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/Tools/MultipleChoiceItems>
- The Critical Thinking Community. (2013). Defining critical thinking. Retrieved from <https://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/766>