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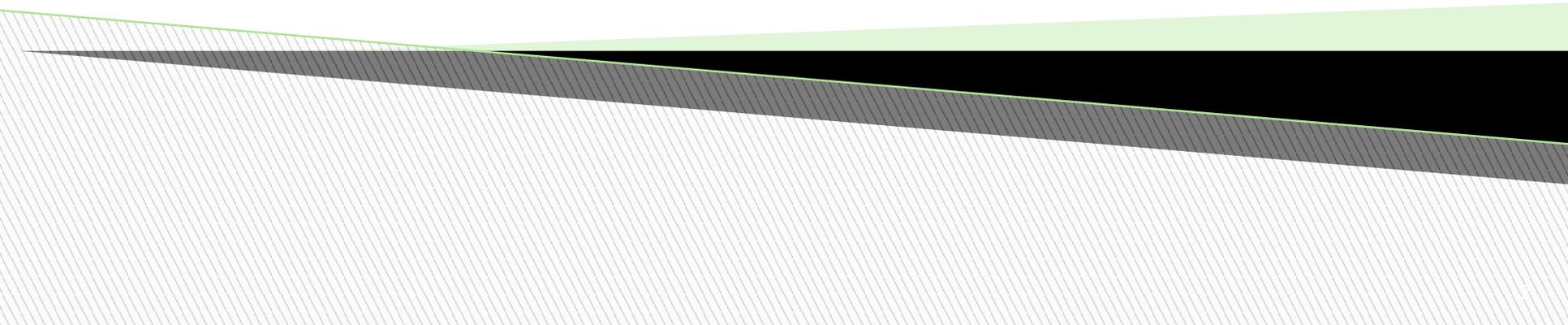


“You are surrounded by simple, obvious solutions that can dramatically increase your income, power, influence and success. The problem is, you just don't see them.”

Critical Thinking & Socratic Interviewing

“The unexamined life is not worth living.”

– Socrates



Critical Thinking



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Critical Thinking Defined

Critical thinking is that mode of thinking — about any subject, content, or problem — in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking through skillful analysis, assessment, and reconstruction. Critical thinking is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It presupposes assent to rigorous standards of excellence and mindful command of their use. It entails effective communication and problem-solving abilities, as well as a commitment to overcome our native egocentrism and sociocentrism.

Reference: <http://www.criticalthinking.org/>



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The Anatomy of a Masterful Critical Thinker:

1. Raises vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely.
2. Gathers and assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively.
3. Comes to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards.
4. Thinks open-mindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as needs be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences.
5. Communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems.
6. Is aware of their own emotions and the influence they have over their decisions.
7. Recognizes the degree of conformity their peers display, understanding that these factors have an influence over their thoughts and actions.
8. Observes their egocentric thinking, replacing it with more rational thoughts through systematic self-reflection.
9. Distinguishes between pieces of information that may seem similar on a superficial level, avoiding making judgments too quickly.
10. Brings clarity and understanding to problems and situations that may at first seem hard to grasp.

Socratic Interviewing



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Socratic Questioning

Socratic questioning is disciplined questioning that can be used to pursue thought in many directions and for many purposes. These include: to explore complex ideas, to extract the truth of things, to open up and expand issues and problems, to uncover assumptions, to analyze concepts, to distinguish what we know from what we don't know, to follow out logical implications of thought or to control the discussion. The key to distinguishing Socratic questioning from questioning per se is that Socratic questioning is systematic, disciplined, deep and usually focuses on fundamental concepts, principles, theories, issues or problems.

Reference: <http://www.wikipedia.org/>



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The Six Types Of Socratic Questions



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Conceptual Clarification Questions

Get others to think more about what exactly they are asking, thinking about, or presenting. Draw out proof for the concepts behind their argument. Use basic 'tell me more' questions that prompt them to go deeper.

- *Why are you saying that?*
- *What exactly does this mean?*
- *How does this relate to what we have been talking about?*
- *What is the nature of ...?*
- *What do we already know about this?*
- *Can you give me an example?*
- *Are you saying ... or ... ?*
- *Can you rephrase that, please?*

Probing Assumptions

Probing others' assumptions makes them think about the presuppositions and unquestioned beliefs on which they are founding their argument. This is shaking the bedrock and should get them really going (though you may want to proceed with caution)!

- *What else could we assume?*
- *You seem to be assuming ... ?*
- *How did you choose those assumptions?*
- *Please explain why/how ... ?*
- *How can you verify or disprove that assumption?*
- *What would happen if ... ?*
- *Do you agree or disagree with ... ?*

Probing Rationale, Reasons and Evidence

When others give a rationale for their arguments, dig into that reasoning rather than simply assuming it is a given. People often use poorly thought through or weakly understood supports for their arguments.

- *Why is that happening?*
- *How do you know this?*
- *Show me ... ?*
- *Can you give me an example of that?*
- *What do you think causes ... ?*
- *What is the nature of this?*
- *Are these reasons good enough?*
- *Would it stand up in court?*
- *How might it be refuted?*
- *How can I be sure of what you are saying?*
- *Why is ... happening?*
- *Why? (keep asking it -- you'll never get past a few times)*
- *What evidence is there to support what you are saying?*
- *On what authority are you basing your argument?*

Questioning Viewpoints and Perspectives

Most arguments are given from a particular position. Attack that position. Show that there are other, just as equally valid, viewpoints.

- *Another way of looking at this is ..., does this seem reasonable?*
- *What alternative ways of looking at this are there?*
- *Why it is ... necessary?*
- *Who benefits from this?*
- *What is the difference between... and...?*
- *Why is it better than ...?*
- *What are the strengths and weaknesses of...?*
- *How are ... and ... similar?*
- *What would ... say about it?*
- *What if you compared ... and ... ?*
- *How could you look another way at this?*

Probe Implications and Consequences

The argument that others give may have logical implications that can be forecast. Do these make sense? Are they desirable?

- *Then what would happen?*
- *What are the consequences of that assumption?*
- *How could ... be used to ... ?*
- *What are the implications of ... ?*
- *How does ... affect ... ?*
- *How does ... fit with what we learned before?*
- *Why is ... important?*
- *What is the best ... ? Why?*

Questions about the Question

You can also get reflexive about the whole process, turning the question in on itself. Bounce the ball back into their court.

- *What was the point of asking that question?*
- *Why do you think I asked this question?*
- *Am I making sense? Why not?*
- *What else might I ask?*
- *What does that mean?*