

Are You Making These Critical Thinking Mistakes?

Critical thinking is a great skill, but like any skill, there's a learning curve. Of course, that means that you're bound to make a few mistakes as you practice and sharpen your critical thinking skills. Let me share three of the most common mistakes with you so you can quickly recognize them, learn from them, or even avoid them all together.

You May Be Asking The Wrong Questions

One of the biggest mistakes is to start off with the wrong question at the beginning, that leads you down the wrong path. If you get your understanding of the problem or the underlying issues wrong, your entire critical thinking process will be flawed.

Pay attention at the beginning and spend a little time analyzing the problem before you dive in and start to gather data. For example, if you're working on paying down consumer debt, focusing on reducing large bills like your rent or mortgage, or working on increasing your income may not be the best or easiest approach. Looking at your expenses line by line and cutting out all those little extras like getting coffee and magazine subscriptions may be a quicker and easier way to reduce your expenses and pay off the debt.

You're Letting Your Opinions Get In The Way

We trust ourselves and what we know. We tend to prioritize the familiar and let our own experiences shade our opinions and choices. Make an effort to look at all the options and possible solutions. Don't dismiss something because it's new or you don't know anything about it.

A good way to get past this is to involve others in your critical thinking process. Work through it with a team or even a mentor with more experience in the areas

where you're unfamiliar or uncomfortable. Challenge yourself to notice when your experiences and opinions affect your critical thinking and then work to neutralize them. It will serve you well in the long run and will quickly become a habit.

You Don't Know Enough Yet

By far the most frequent mistake made is to get excited and move on to the analysis part of the critical thinking process before you have enough data to make the best decision. Get in the habit of asking yourself "what else." It helps you get lots of data to work with before leaving the information gathering process.

If you find yourself not knowing enough to make a decision, don't be afraid to circle back and learn more before finishing your analysis and coming up with a possible solution. It's an easy fix, and before long you'll get in the habit of getting plenty of data before you move on.