

A Professional Growth Module:

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

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Developing Top-Notch CNAs, One Inservice at a Time



A Professional Growth Module:

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

We hope you enjoy this inservice, prepared by registered nurses especially for nursing assistants like you!

Instructions for the Learner

If you are studying the inservice on your own, please do the following:

- Read through **all** the material. You may find it useful to have a highlighting marker nearby as you read. Highlight any information that is new to you or that you feel is especially important.
- If you have questions about anything you read, please ask _____.
- Take the quiz. Think about each statement and pick the best answer.
- Check with your supervisor for the right answers. You need **8 correct** to pass!
- Print your name, write in the date, and then sign your name.
- Keep the inservice information for yourself and turn in the quiz page to _____ no later than _____. Show your Inservice Club Membership Card to _____ so that it can be initialed.
- Email In the Know at feedback@knowingmore.com with your comments and/or suggestions for improving this inservice.

After finishing this inservice, you will be able to:

Explain what it means to think critically.



Discuss the difference between facts and opinions.



Describe the three steps involved in the critical thinking process.

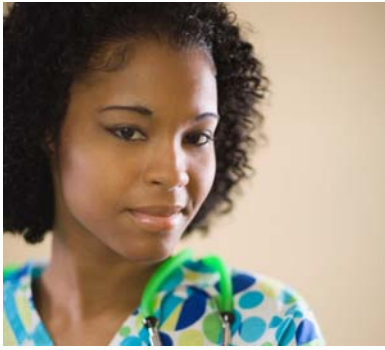


Explain how the nursing process relates to critical thinking.



Demonstrate critical thinking as you perform your client care.

THANK YOU!



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Developing Top-Notch CNAs, One Inservice at a Time

A Professional Growth Module: Critical Thinking Skills

USING YOUR HEAD!

Let's Start With a Laugh!

Jim knocked on a client's bathroom door and asked, "Is anyone in there?"

He heard a mumbled response, to which he said, "Is that a yes or a no?"

(Oh, Jim...use your head!)



Do you know people who seem to:

- Speak without thinking first?
- Believe everything they hear?
- Make the same mistakes over and over?

If so, these people probably need to "beef up" their critical thinking skills. In fact, most of us can benefit from using our heads a bit more often!

Using your head means that you are *thinking critically*. And, critical thinking happens when you pay close attention to what you hear, say and do—and think it all through carefully.

You are thinking critically when you:

- Look for things that may be clouding your judgment.
- Explore ideas that might bring a new solution to an old problem.
- Take responsibility for what you say and do instead of just blindly following other people.
- Expose yourself to new information and keep an open mind about what you learn.
- Recognize that there is usually more than one way of looking at things...and that things are NOT always what they seem.
- Figure out what you really believe—instead of letting others *tell* you what to believe.
- Are more concerned with finding the best solution rather than just being "right".
- Avoid making snap judgments.

**What's the bottom line?
When you think *critically*,
you are taking charge of
your own mind!**

The Way We Think!

- The human brain is the most complex brain of any animal on Earth. There are more nerve cells in the brain than there are stars in the Milky Way.
- In fact, the brain contains over 100,000 million cells! These brain cells connect to each other to form a gigantic “network”.
- Every time we have a creative thought, see something different or smell a new odor, we are creating additional connections between brain cells.
- It’s possible to train ourselves to think faster and be “smarter” by creating new brain connections. Every time we learn something new, we add another connection between two brain cells.
- A simple activity, like doing a crossword puzzle, helps to exercise the brain and create new connections.

Did You Know?

The Cray Computer is one of the world’s largest computers. It can make 400 million calculations in just one second. If it kept that up for one hundred years, it would equal what the human brain can do in one minute!

- Do smart people have bigger brains? Not necessarily. In fact, Albert Einstein’s brain was smaller than average. However, studies have shown that smart people have more *connections* between their brain cells. And, the more connections, the better!
- If you’d like to learn something new, there is certainly no shortage of information. 75% of all the knowledge in existence today has been created since we were born.
- Here’s another way to look at it: Just one issue of The New York Times newspaper contains the same amount of information that people in the 1600’s obtained during their entire lives!



The human brain is about the size of a cantaloupe, has wrinkles like a walnut and feels like a ripe avocado!

Time For a Laugh!

It was after midnight when Sue finished her Sunday crossword and turned off the bedside light. Leaning over to kiss her tired husband, she quietly remarked, “*I do those puzzles to keep my brain sharp.*”

Out of the darkness, her husband replied, “*Don’t point that thing at me!*”

*Do you enjoy learning new things? Well, think about this: Every year, around the world, over **1,000,000** new books are published. That’s a lot to read!*



Did you know that, during our lives, we use less than **one percent** of our brain’s potential?

Critical Thinkers Tend To...

- Listen carefully. They don't automatically believe everything they hear or read.
- Ask questions and spend time analyzing information.
- Look for ways to prove information rather than just *believing* it to be true.
- Remain open to new ideas and are able to look at things in a new way.
- Protect themselves from being manipulated because they think for themselves.
- Avoid shooting down ideas just because they didn't think of them.
- Discover better ways to deal with their problems—instead of avoiding them.
- Learn how to react to problems *logically* instead of emotionally.
- Catch their own mistakes by thinking about what they are doing.
- Perform their duties at work without needing to be told what to do every step of the way.



Remember... People who always have to be right are probably not thinking critically or creatively.

The Difference Between Facts & Opinions

Facts are pieces of information that are *objective* and can be proven.

Fact: It's raining outside.

Opinions are beliefs or judgments and are nearly *impossible* to prove.

Opinion: This is the worst rainstorm I've ever seen.

Sometimes, it's not so easy to tell the difference between facts and opinions. For example, which are each of these?

1. *Opinion or Fact?*

Mr. Black has diabetes.

2. *Opinion or Fact?*

Exercise is the main key to successful weight loss.

3. *Opinion or Fact?*

There will be 10% fewer cases of tuberculosis by the year 2015.

4. *Opinion or Fact?*

ABC Nursing Home has employed 20% more nursing assistants since last year.

5. *Opinion or Fact?*

It is pointless to rush through your work.

6. *Opinion or Fact?*

When lifting a client, it's a good idea to ask for help from your coworkers.

Knowledge by itself is useless. People have to be able to "transfer" their knowledge to the real world. For example, John passed his nursing assistant exam with flying colors but he can't seem to complete his client care properly.



People who are critical thinkers are valuable employees!

Here are the answers:
 1. Fact 2. Opinion 3. Opinion
 4. Fact 5. Opinion 6. Opinion

What Other Ways Do People Think?

In addition to critical thinking, there are a number of other ways that people tend to think. Everyone is guilty of not thinking “straight” sometimes, but people who frequently think in the following ways may need to “use their heads” a bit more!

1. Illogical Thinking

People who use *illogical thinking* to solve a problem are usually on shaky ground. They base their ideas on *false information*. **For example:** Sue notices that Mrs. Brown never eats carrots when they are served to her. Carrots are orange. So, Sue figures that Mrs. Brown doesn't like orange foods.

2. Wishful Thinking

Often, wishful thinking keeps people from facing reality. When faced with a problem, they don't look for solutions. Instead, they try to “wish” the problem away or simply hope that it will disappear on its own. **For example:** Jim's favorite client, Mr. Washington, has terminal cancer. Jim keeps telling himself...and the client's family...that Mr. Washington is getting better.

3. Emotional Thinking

Some people tend to rely on their emotions when they think about things. If they feel “good” about something, it must be true. But, if the information makes them feel “bad”, it must be false.

For example: Jim hears a rumor at work that all the CNA's will be getting a 10% raise. He is so happy about this that he doesn't bother to check with his supervisor. Instead, he buys a new TV he's been wanting.

4. Authoritarian Thinking

People who tend to blindly accept what someone in authority says are using authoritarian thinking. When they are told something by a boss or a minister or a family member, they accept what they hear as correct—without questioning it!

For example: The nursing supervisor tells Marsha that her client, Mr. Baxter, slept poorly the night before. She instructs Marsha to let Mr. Baxter sleep through breakfast and lunch so he can catch up on his sleep. Marsha doesn't question the supervisor.

5. Intuitive Thinking

People who think intuitively tend to rely on their “gut” to solve a problem. They believe that the best solution to a problem will just “come to them” because of their own life experiences. **For example:** Sam has a new client, Mrs. Norton, who has multiple sclerosis. Sam has never worked with someone with MS, but he figures that his experience with stroke victims will help him know what to do with Mrs. Norton. He doesn't bother to learn anything about MS.



Remember...critical thinkers are in charge of their own minds!

Here's an example of authoritarian thinking!

Dan had just finished military boot camp when he took a two-day drive across country to his new assignment.

Midmorning of the second day, Dan called his father from the hotel.

“Why aren't you on the road yet?” asked Dan's father.

“Well, Dad, I'm all ready to go,” replied Dan, “but the sign on the door says ‘Checkout at 11a.m.’”



How to Think Critically

To think critically, the first step is to collect information. It's important to make sure that the information you gather is accurate and complete—and that you don't make snap judgments about it.

- We are living in the “information age”. You can gather information about most any subject by:
 - Watching television.
 - Reading newspapers, books and magazines.
 - Listening to the radio.
 - Surfing the internet.
- At work, you gather information by:
 - Talking to coworkers—and watching them work.
 - Talking—and listening—to your supervisor.
 - Observing your clients.
 - Talking to your clients and their family members.
 - Reading your workplace policies and procedures.
- In order to make sure you are gathering the facts, you need to listen carefully. Otherwise, you might make decisions based on false information. For example: *Tammy overhears part of a negative comment made by one*

coworker to another. She feels sure that they are talking about her. She spends the rest of the day feeling angry and decides to ignore both those coworkers—even when they ask for her help. The next day, Tammy finds out that the negative comment was not about her...but about a coworker's sister. Tammy put unnecessary stress on herself by acting on incomplete information!

- Be sure you read carefully, too. It's easy to rush through information—and get it wrong. For example: *Ted reads Mrs. Carter's care plan and remembers it saying, “turn client every four hours”. Ted performs his care, turning Mrs. Carter at 11 and again at 3. He documents his care thoroughly. Several days later, Ted is reprimanded by his supervisor for not following Mrs. Carter's care plan. When Ted reads it again, he sees it actually says, “turn client every two hours”.*
- Remember, it's possible to think critically about information and still make mistakes—if you are working with false information. Do your best to make sure the information you collect is accurate and complete!



Critical thinking leaves you open to learning new things—every day!

Critical thinking is not just for “smart” people. It is not some secret process that only professors do. We all think critically every day—without knowing it!



Critical thinking increases your understanding of the world.

How to Think Critically, *continued*

Once you have gathered information, the second step to critical thinking is to question your information. It's important not to believe everything you hear or read!

- People who think critically ask a number of questions about the information they hear or read. These questions include:
 - Did this information come from a reliable source?
 - Can I prove this information to be true?
 - Does this information go against what I already know?
 - Is this information useful to me? Why or why not?
- When the information you've collected is about a *client*, you might ask yourself questions like:
 - Do my observations of the client point to a serious situation? If so, who is available to help me?
 - What does the client expect from me?
 - What are my workplace policies about this particular situation?
 - Do I have enough experience to handle this situation?

- As you go through this questioning process, remain open to the world around you...and to other people's ideas and beliefs.
- Examine your own ideas and beliefs to see if they are *logical*. Remember that there is always the possibility that you might be wrong.

The third step in the critical thinking process is to use the information. Information by itself doesn't help us. It's what we do with that information that matters.

- Now that you have gathered the facts and questioned the information to your satisfaction, it's time to take action. For example, you might be able to use the information to:
 - Solve a problem.
 - Make a decision—at home or at work.
 - Come up with a new idea to improve client care.
 - Help you get along better with your coworkers.
 - Understand someone else's beliefs or customs.

Remember...the critical thinking process turns facts into thoughts and thoughts into actions!



When people practice thinking critically often enough, it becomes second nature to them.

Be sure to look critically at the *big picture*, not just the details, especially during client care. For example: *Millie has a new client, Mr. Wilson, who must be moved with a Hoyer lift. Millie has only used a Hoyer lift a few times and is worried about doing it right. She focuses so hard on using the lift that she doesn't notice that Mr. Wilson is short of breath, pale and sweaty.*



Critical Thinking vs. Care Plans

Aren't you supposed to follow each client's care plan, without questions? Well, yes and no. It is important to follow the care plan, but it is your responsibility to think about your assignment before you perform the client care. This means asking yourself—and others—questions about each care plan you read.

Remember, client care involves *three* things:

1. Knowledge

Your **knowledge** about each client comes from the care plan, what you learned in school and all your prior experiences as a nursing assistant.

2. Thought

It shows that you have **thought** about your client care when you ask questions and when you spend time planning the best way to accomplish your assignment.

3. Action

You take **action** when you perform the care that best helps your clients meet their needs.

Keep in mind...

It takes all three components—knowledge, thought and action—to make sure you provide *quality* client care.



Robots and computers use information without thinking about it. The human brain is more advanced than that!

Time for a Laugh!

A brand new CNA was seen lying in bed with her patient. When questioned about it, she responded, "I was told to take the patient's blood pressure lying down and standing up."

Using the Nursing Process

The nursing process is a problem-solving approach to client care. It is based on the way scientists look at their work—and involves a lot of critical thinking. The nursing process provides the foundation for how nurses perform their jobs *and* for how care plans are created.

The nursing process involves five separate steps that are repeated over and over throughout the delivery of client care. These five steps require people to think creatively. They also require the use of problem-solving and decision-making skills. Nurses are taught to use the nursing process to help them think critically!

The five steps include:

1. **Assessing** the client by gathering as much information about the client as possible.
2. **Identifying** the client's needs by sorting and studying the client's information.
3. **Planning** the client's care by looking for ways to solve the client's health care problems.
4. **Delivering** the client's care by putting the plan into action.
5. **Evaluating** the client's status by gathering *new* information about how the client is doing.



The nursing process involves gathering knowledge, thinking about that knowledge and taking action based on the facts.

Thinking About Health Information

There is so much health-related information available today. It's in magazines, newspapers, books, on television and throughout the internet.

If people don't practice critical thinking, they could end up being manipulated. Look at this example of statements from TV commercials for five different pain relievers:

- "The medicine in **Anacin** is recommended by doctors four to one over substitutes like Tylenol."
- "**Bayer Aspirin** is recommended by doctors four to one over substitutes."
- "**Tylenol** is recommended by doctors more than any brand of aspirin."

- "Four out of five doctors surveyed recommended **Excedrin's** formula."
- "**Bufferin** works better than any other pain reliever tested."

OK, so what *is* the truth? It's impossible to know for sure.

The best approach to conflicting reports like these is to gather as much information as you can. For example:

- What does your doctor say is the best pain reliever...and *why*?
- What has worked for you in the past...and what *hasn't* worked?
- Are there other factors to consider such as how much each brand costs and whether it's available near you?

Now, make up your own mind!



There is so much information available today. It's important to sort through it to determine what is useful to you and what is not.

For years and years, it was the doctors who knew best. They decided if and when patients needed to know about their own medical condition. "Informed consent" is a fairly new idea that came about when patients began thinking critically about their own health care.

A Great Example of Critical Thinking

"Informed consent" is a terrific example of the power of critical thinking. The idea behind informed consent is that people need to be able to make medical treatment decisions *for themselves*. But, to do so, they must be given enough information to help them make good decisions. Doctors and nurses are responsible for providing this information.

To give an informed consent, clients must:

- Be given enough information.

- Understand the information.
- Be free to say yes or no...without anyone forcing them into a certain decision.

Informed *refusal* is the opposite of informed consent. If, after hearing all the information, clients decide not to have a certain medical treatment, they do not sign the consent form. Sometimes, they are asked to sign an *informed refusal* document to prove that they made an educated decision.



Both "informed consent" and "informed refusal" require the use of critical thinking.

How to Practice Thinking Critically

You've been thinking all your life, so it may seem silly to talk about how to "practice" thinking. However, thinking is like any other skill—it can improve with practice.

Here are some suggestions for how to practice your critical thinking:

- Listen carefully when people talk and try your best to understand the *reasoning* behind their words.
- Read books, magazines or newspapers to learn what new ideas are being discussed. When you read about something new, think it over carefully and decide for yourself how you feel about it.
- Are there some coworkers to whom you've never spoken? If so, spend some time trying to get to know them better. Really listen when they speak and keep an open mind about their opinions and beliefs.
- When you hear new information, try to think about whether it can be *proven*. Analyze the information *before* you react to it!
- Ask questions! And, pay careful attention to the *answers* you get to your questions.
- Be prepared to change your mind and to let other people be "right" sometimes!



Critical thinkers have *flexible* minds and are willing to take risks!

Think, Think, Think!

As you go through your day, think about the things you hear and read. For example, what's wrong with these real-life product labels?

- On the bottom of a Coca-Cola bottle: **"Do not open here."**
- On a container of lighter fluid: **"WARNING: Contents are flammable!"**
- On a blow dryer: **"Do not blow dry in your sleep."**
- On a can of Woolite carpet cleaner: **"Safe for carpets."**
- On a container of salt: **"Warning: High in sodium."**
- On a baby stroller: **"Remove child before folding."**
- On a bottle of bathtub cleaner: **"For best results, start with a clean bathtub before using."**
- On a bar of Dial soap: **"Use like regular soap."**
- On a Rowenta iron: **"Do not iron clothes on body."**
- On a chainsaw: **"Do not attempt to stop the chain with your hands."**
- On Christmas lights: **"For indoor or outdoor use only."**

Time For a Laugh!

As Ruth was driving home with her kids, they all heard the car making rattling noises.

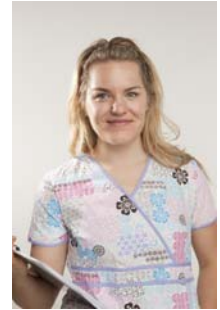
When Ruth arrived home, her children rushed into the house with news for their father: "Daddy, the car was breaking down, but Mom made the noise stop!"

Impressed, Ruth's husband asked, "How did you fix it?"

Ruth replied, "I turned up the volume on the radio."

Tips for Thinking Critically

- If you think that an idea or statement isn't logical, try to figure out why you feel that way. Don't just brush the idea off as unimportant!
- Being in the habit of pointing out problems is a good thing. But, if all you do is talk about problems, it turns into *complaining*, not critical thinking. To be a critical thinker, you have to work toward *solving* every problem that you spot.
- Remember that most arguments lead nowhere—and rarely involve critical thinking. When people argue, they seldom listen to each other and they almost never come to a solution that solves the argument.
- Keep in mind that critical thinking on the job requires:
 - Knowing your own strengths and weaknesses.
 - Understanding the policies and procedures of your workplace.
 - Recognizing what resources are available at work.
 - Knowing the role of each of the members of your health care team—including the client!
- Keep in mind that decisions are choices. Making a decision involves looking at all the choices and narrowing them down to one. Whenever you make a decision, you are practicing your critical thinking skills.
- Avoid relying on old "safe" habits. As long as you do things *today* the same way you did them *yesterday*, you'll probably feel secure. However, if you always follow old habits, you're probably not thinking critically or creatively.
- Keep in mind that when people are under pressure and stressed out, their minds tend to shut down. It's hard to think when you feel overwhelmed—so try not to make important decisions if you are under stress.
- Remember that it's important to tell others what you have done throughout your work day. All the critical thinking you do at work means nothing if you don't document it.
- Use your head as you document. If you don't think critically when documenting your client care, others may not understand what you write. This may cause harm to the client.



People who think critically tend to be observant—so practice your observation skills every day!

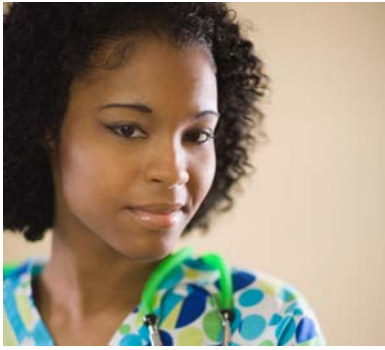
Time For a Laugh!

After examining a patient, the doctor said, "You'll be okay if you take half of an aspirin pill every night before going to sleep."

The patient thanked the doctor, but said she had a question. "What am I supposed to do with the other half?"

(It's important for patients to use their heads, too!)





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EMPLOYEE NAME
(Please print):

DATE: _____

- ***I understand the information presented in this inservice.***
- ***I have completed this inservice and answered at least eight of the test questions correctly.***

EMPLOYEE SIGNATURE:

SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE:

Inservice Credit:

<input type="checkbox"/> Self Study	1 hour
<input type="checkbox"/> Group Study	1 hour

File completed test in employee's personnel file.

Are you "in the know" about thinking critically? Circle the best choice or fill in your answer. Then check your answers with your supervisor!

- 1. Which of the following statements is a fact?**
 - A. Stroke victims recover faster if they maintain a positive attitude.
 - B. More Americans are obese than ever before.
 - C. Nurse aides are the kindest people in the world.
 - D. In a hospital, people on the night shift work the hardest.
- 2. True or False**
The main purpose of critical thinking is to criticize other people's ideas.
- 3. Whenever you learn something new, you are creating additional _____ between brain cells.**
- 4. True or False**
People who think illogically base their ideas on false information.
- 5. Critical thinking requires three steps: collecting information, then _____ it and finally, putting it to use.**
- 6. To think critically, it is important to really _____ to what other people are saying.**
- 7. True or False**
The nursing process helps nurses think critically about their clients.
- 8. If all you do is point out _____ instead of trying to solve them, you are not thinking critically.**
- 9. True or False**
Critical thinking helps people to get along better.
- 10. Critical thinking lets you be in charge of your own _____.**