



CRITICAL THINKING MADE EASY

By

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MY STORY

Shortly after I wrote the eBook – [Five Steps To Staying Present](#) – I had an idea about writing another short eBook. And one of the first things that came to mind was the area of critical thinking. One of the main reasons this came to mind was because it is something that I have naturally done for many years.

From as early as I can remember, I questioned my parents and the people around me. Going against what I was told became a habit.

It didn't matter if what they said was right or wrong, I would still resist it. This would happen a lot and yet fortunately I didn't close down completely. And this largely came down to the fact that I was highly curious.

Perhaps if I didn't have the desire to know more, I would have just blocked everything out and ended up having a closed mind.

So after questioning my parents, this then went on to include the teachers I had at school, at social clubs and the people I would learn from in books and from taking courses.

I wasn't prepared to accept anything blindly; it had to be looked at and measured up against other sources of information and ideas. This didn't mean that I always came to the right conclusion, but it did allow me to form my own ideas from a young age.

INTRODUCTION

Although someone may have been educated through going to school, college, or university for example, it doesn't mean that they have been taught how to think for themselves.

One might wonder why this could be and yet what is often emphasised is the ability to remember things.

Another way to describe what takes place during ones time of being educated is that they learn the art of regurgitation. Perhaps the word art is out of place here.

However, due to the amount of time that one can spend doing this, it would be natural to assume that one would end up being a master of taking in information and then sharing it in their own words shortly after.

When one is able to do this, they will surely be rewarded by their teachers. This will also include things such as: better grades, approval, praise, acceptance, and the chance to further their education by getting into education establishments that are ranked higher than others.

So when one is in this environment, it would make sense for them to go against these expectations. The drive to do well is something that should be applauded and not dismissed.

And during the years that one goes to school, they are likely to have a greater need for approval and to be accepted. One therefore can't be blamed for jumping through the hoops that the educations system provides; as they didn't have much choice.

One of the things this does is program people to obey authority and to see other people, usually those in certain positions of authority/the establishment, as always knowing what's best.

And if other people know best and already have all the answers, then why would one need to think for themselves. Other people will do it for them and the answers have already been found, so why bother?

It is clear that if someone or an organisation has learnt something for a certain period of time, that they deserved to be listened to and even trusted. To have the outlook that everyone is out to deceive and mislead is not going to be healthy.

Paranoia would be something that one becomes accustomed to and being hyper vigilante would be a common occurrence.

But while that is not the best option, going to the other extreme and not questioning anything is just as dangerous. And yet this is often what comes naturally to people. Which is not much of a surprise; especially as they are likely to have been conditioned for many years, to believe everything they were told. This is going to be what comes naturally to them.

For example, with the way the media has become more about sensationalism and spreading hidden agendas, it is vital that one no longer accepts all that they hear. They should read and question what they are being told.

In the age that we live in, which is often described as the information age, it is essential that one has the ability to filter out certain information and doesn't simply accept all that they see or hear.

It is not just the media that one needs to be mindful of; it also applies to what one reads in books or on the internet in regards to all areas of discussion.

What ones friend or family tells them also needs to be questioned and not just taken on board. This is not to say that everything has a hidden agenda; what it means is that as human beings, we are fallible.

Human beings get things wrong, and sometimes that can be the result of one having the intention to confuse and deceive another. On other occasions, it is simply that we didn't know any better than to accept what we were being told, or the person telling us the information had simply unconsciously accepted what they were told as 'the truth'.

And once we allow something to enter our mind, it has the potential to grow and the more it grows the more of an influence it is going to have on our lives.

This could be something that greatly enhances one's life or it could lead one to feeling trapped and limited. Their vista has then not been expanded: it has ended up contracting.

BOUNDARIES

So much could be written about boundaries and this is because they are incredibly important. They protect ones physical body, their emotional body and they define what one allows into their mind.

And the first step that one needs to take here is to develop intellectual boundaries. These will allow one to protect their mind and to monitor what they let in and what they don't.

What this ultimately means is that one will hold what they are hearing or reading about in their mind, they won't just accept it and they won't necessarily reject it either.

This will give one the opportunity to question the information, instead of just going along with what other people are doing or are not doing.

It is important that people test the information they are being given. A person could go away and look at the other side of the debate at hand, and make their own mind up based on a variety of sources and evidence.

An Analogy

This is similar to when one picks an apple off the ground in an orchard. As it has been on the ground, it would be normal for one to pick it up and to take a closer look.

Through doing this, one will have the chance to see what kind of condition the apple is in. It could be rotten, contain insects or it could be in perfect condition.

The Next Step

By one conducting this assessment, they are looking after their physical health. And once this has been done, they can decide if they are going to discard the apple or eat it.

So through holding the information in one's mind, just like they would hold the apple, it gives them chance to protect themselves. And once the information has been kept at a safe distance, one can take the next step.

REFLECTION

Here, one can decide what they would like to do with what they have heard or what they have read. Of course, at times one will be in situations where they need to make a quick decision and it won't be possible to engage in reflection.

So reflection will involve one doing at least two things. One of those will be to match up what one is being exposed to with what one already knows and the other will be to acquire new information.

These two sources will create a contrast and allow one to have a reference point. Without having this contrast, it is going to be more of a challenge for one to question what they are being told.

Authority

Authority figures and people who are recognised experts are often listened to without any thought as to whether they are right or not. This not a bad thing per se: it limits the amount of thinking that one has to do and saves energy.

And when one doesn't know any better or doesn't have anything to compare what they are hearing, they go along with the views that these people or organisations promote.

However, just because a source is recognised as an authority on a certain area or are widely viewed, it doesn't mean that what they espouse is the truth. One of the biggest examples of this is the mainstream media.

They have been looked upon for many years as the bringers of truth, and yet it doesn't take much effort to see that their intention is not to assist the people; it is to control them, amongst other things.

Effort

So this is going likely to require more effort at first. And this is to be expected, as if one has had a habit of accepting everything they hear, to try something new, is going to feel unnatural during the early stages.

INDIVIDUALITY

To no longer just accept things and to reflect on and research if they are true or not, is also going to challenge ones sense of self. The power of the tribe and the need to fit in cannot be downplayed.

If one has an excessive need to be accepted by others, they are unlikely to question if something is true or not. Their focus is going to be to go along with the status quo and to believe what majority of people believe.

The alternative media has grown significantly and more people have jumped on board. And yet, for some people, this won't be a conscious decision: it will be one that has come about through simply following other people who have chosen this path.

It will therefore be important that one develops a certain level of inner stability or at least doesn't have a high need for approval. This will make it easier for them to handle the position that may arise when they go against popular opinion and commonly held viewpoints.

Time

And if one has always been someone who has fitted in and been on the 'inside' then this could be more of a challenge; especially as they are so used to getting the acceptance and approval of others.

But if one is committed enough and doesn't mind putting in the extra effort required to questioning things then it will pay off. One will gradually form their own views and therefore their personality will develop.

CONCLUSION

The above is just a rough guide to what can enable one to think critically, it is not the only way to achieve critical thinking. Some people may find that certain parts are easy to apply and others are not.

It is not important how fast one develops this ability; what matters is developing critical thinking skills.

One may also require more assistance with this and may want to seek the guidance of a coach and/or to read up about this area even further.

If you have any questions or feedback about what I have written above, or if anything else comes to mind, I would be happy to answer them through my website.

All the best on your journey,

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THE AUTHOR



Prolific writer, thought leader and coach, Oliver JR Cooper hails from the UK. His insightful commentary and analysis covers all aspects of human transformation; love, partnership, self-love, and inner awareness. With several hundred in-depth articles highlighting human psychology and behavior, Oliver offers hope along with his sound advice. Current projects include "A Dialogue With The Heart" and "Communication Made Easy"

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