Soft Skills Module 10

Critical Thinking Skills
### Soft Skills Module 10

**Critical Thinking Skills**

#### Summary

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Goals:</th>
<th>Instructor:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Build and apply critical thinking skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote the ability to critically evaluate information outside of oneself and have an accurate appreciation for specific circumstances or performance.</td>
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**SMART Objectives:**
*Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-sensitive*  

By the end of this module, students should be able to:

SS10.1: Define critical thinking skills and associated attributes and characteristics.  
SS10.2: Observe or read about other critical thinkers, identifying key attributes and characteristics.  
SS10.3: Develop improved critical thinking skills through analysis, evaluation, and insight of personal performance and situations.

**Instructor:**  
Delivery Method(s):  
Instruction, facilitated discussion, self-explorations, worksheet assessments  
Length:  
Four Lessons  
A total of 3.5 hours

**Any Applicable Business and/or Soft Skills?**

**Business Skills**
- Getting Assistance/Training  
- Looking for Work as a Braille Transcriber  
- Choosing the Best Business Structure  
- Working and Living in the Same Space

**Take Away Message(s):**

This module provides an opportunity for students to build and apply critical thinking skills as well as critically evaluate circumstances and performance.
Title of Module: Building Critical Thinking Competencies

Instructor:

The following are elements of the critical thinking module to emphasize as you are providing the instruction and facilitation.

The competencies involved in building and applying critical thinking promote the ability to critically evaluate information outside of oneself and have an accurate appreciation for specific circumstances or performances.

Key elements include:

- Analyzing and determining the relationships of parts to a whole
- Making associations between information and opinions
- Reasoning using various processes suitable to circumstances
- Questioning and evaluating to form judgments and make decisions
- Engaging in self-reflection of experiences and processes
- Interpreting alternative viewpoints and identifying their strengths
- Understanding data and making conclusions based on the best analysis
- Clarifying viewpoints by asking important questions that lead to improved solutions
- Solving problems using conventional and innovative approaches

Components of Critical Thinking development in students

- Productive, positive activity
- Process not outcome
- Varies depending on context in which it occurs
- Triggered by positive & negative events
- Sensitive as well as rational
- Identifying & challenging assumptions is central
- Challenging the importance of context is crucial
- Imagining & exploring alternatives
- Applying reflective skepticism

Stephen Brookfield, Developing Critical Thinkers

Finally, instructors must remove the penalty for critical & original thought. “...people fear looking stupid or asking something that is dumb. ...must start removing conformity and the fear of dumbness from the classroom.” Carol Travis – co-author of Psychology
Agenda – *topics to be covered in the module and length of each item*

**Topic: Critical Thinking**

**Time Allocated: 3.5 Hours**

A. The Attributes and Characteristics of Critical Thinking Skills  
   *(30 minutes)*

B. Understanding My Critical Thinking Skill Levels  
   *(45 minutes)*

C. Interpreting and Observing Others’ Critical Thinking Skills  
   *(1.5 hours)*

D. Improve Personal Critical Thinking Skills  
   *(45 minutes)*

**Materials & Supplies – items needed in order to carry out the agenda and classroom activities**


2. Bowl/box and names of all students on separate pieces of paper

3. Journal or paper to create one for reflection of observations

**Classroom Preparation – steps to follow when setting up the learning environment**

1. Students configured to facilitate group discussion as well as diads and triads as needed

2. Writing paper and pencils for students

3. Flip chart/pad with markers or board/markers for instructor
A. The Attributes and Characteristics of Critical Thinking Skills (30 minutes)

Objective SS10.1: Define critical thinking skills and associated attributes and characteristics.

PREINSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

Ask students to brainstorm words that define the term “Critical Thinking” – write their words on the chart paper or the board, or on the Critical Thinking Working Definition (10.A.1) handout.

CONTENT PRESENTATION AND LEARNER PARTICIPATION

Present the working definition:

A process of actively and skillfully:

- Conceptualizing
- Applying
- Synthesizing
- Evaluating

Information gathered from or generated by:

- Observation
- Experience
- Reflection
- Reasoning
- Communication

That becomes a guide to belief and action.

Teach that there are two components to building Critical Thinking Skills:

- Learning the Skills to process and generate information and beliefs
- Forming the Habit of using those skills to guide behavior

Conclude by stating that the development of critical thinking skills involves:

- Analyses of Experiences
- Reflection and Discernment
- Discussions
- Processing linking intuitive, creative and emotional thought patterns

B. Understanding My Critical Thinking Skill Levels  (45 minutes)

Objective SS10.1: Define critical thinking skills and associated attributes and characteristics.

Objective SS10.3: Develop improved critical thinking skills through analysis, evaluation, and insight of personal performance and situations.

 CONTENT PRESENTATION AND LEARNER PARTICIPATION

Have each student take the Critical Thinking Skills Personal Survey (10.B.1).

Assist students as needed with meaning and understanding of the items on the survey.

Have students complete the Name Three Places (10.B.2) handout.

After everyone has completed the handout, students are to find other students who have two or more of the same/similar responses to a question.

As the students are checking with each other, note the differences and similarities throughout the group. After an adequate time, facilitate a conversation about the differences and similarities, asking questions such as:

- Why were there differences in responses among our group?
- Why did some of you have the same responses?
- Do you think various customers contracting for transcription services will have similarities and differences? What do you think those might be?
- What kinds of observations might you have to do?
- How can you understand and benefit from previous experiences they may have had with other transcribers?
- What types of communication might you have with this person/organization?
C. Interpreting and Observing Others’ Critical Thinking Skills  (1 hour)

Objective SS10.2: Observe or read about other critical thinkers, identifying key attributes and characteristics.

CONTENT PRESENTATION AND LEARNER PARTICIPATION

Provide the story and read *A Secret for Two (10.C.1)* aloud to the students.

After reading, ask students to reflect on the key elements of the story

Pose the following questions:

- If you were there (in Montreal at the time of the story) what questions would you have asked of Pierre? Of his customers? Of Joseph, his horse? Of Jacques, his boss?
- What message do you think the author is trying to give? What can you take away as a personal learning experience?

Activity

Put all the student’s names in a bowl; have each student draw a name (if they get their own they should put it back and draw again).

If there are an uneven number of students then the instructor puts his/her name in the bowl and draws as well.

Assignment: Each student observes the student whose name they drew from the bowl.

Restrictions: Observation is only limited to training/class time; they should not tell the person who they are observing and should try not to be obvious.

Observation: Students should be observing positive traits that they see related to critical thinking skills; they should try to identify key attributes and characteristics seen of the other person that demonstrates critical thinking skills. They can use their Critical Thinking Working Definition (10.A.1) handout with the key words defining critical thinking skills that they added to guide them.

Time: One week

Reflection: What did you observe/see that demonstrated strong critical thinking skills?
After One Week... (30 minutes)

Facilitate a whole group discussion asking students to

- Talk about those things observed that were conceptual or somewhat abstract but noticeable (conceptualizing);
- Talk about things and actions that were clearly demonstrated or could be noted as contributions (applying);
- Compare and contrast things they observed of their person with other personal experiences they have had (evaluating);
- Formulate and express one thing that stood out that they would like to replicate (synthesizing).

D. Improve Personal Critical Thinking Skills (45 minutes)

Objective SS10.3: Develop improved critical thinking skills through analysis, evaluation, and insight of personal performance and situations.

CONTENT PRESENTATION AND LEARNER PARTICIPATION

Throughout the week, have students respond to the Thinking Metaphors and More Thinking (10.D.1) questions.

The organization of activities is up to the group and time—here are some suggestions:

- Discussion in groups of two or three
- Journal writing
- Drawing and artistic creations
- Dramatization
- Discussion – What do you think I should do? (Instructor poses the question)
- Discussion as a teaching strategy
  - What do you know/think?
  - How do you feel?
  - What did you learn?

ASSESSMENT

Have each student re-take the Critical Thinking Skills Personal Survey (10.B.1).

- Ask where they see improvement and growth.
Soft Skills Module 10

Critical Thinking Skills

Handouts
Critical Thinking Working Definition (10.A.1)

A process of actively and skillfully

- Conceptualizing
- Applying
- Synthesizing
- Evaluating

Information gathered from or generated by

- Observation
- Experience
- Reflection
- Reasoning
- Communication

That becomes a guide to belief and action.

Write your Key Words Defining Critical Thinking Skills
### Critical Thinking Skills Personal Survey (10.B.1)

**Answer each question as honestly as you can.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Can You Do the Following?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Maybe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locate an argument in something you are reading.</td>
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<td>Detect flaws in ways of thinking and explain how the line of thinking is inaccurate.</td>
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<td>Evaluate facts and make acceptable assumptions from the facts.</td>
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<td>Tell whether a conclusion is absolute or only probable.</td>
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<td>Identify implied guesses or assumptions.</td>
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<td>Identify the issue in a disagreement.</td>
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<td>Detect logical inconsistency.</td>
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<td>Detect and eliminate vagueess and suspicion.</td>
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<td>Identify the point or purpose of comments.</td>
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<td>Create a discussion that removes a misleading idea and presents a likely case for a position on an issue.</td>
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<td>Given a discussion on a hot or controversial issue, create a reasonable argument that defends a different or opposite conclusion.</td>
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<td>Detect a bad question because its “loaded” or contains hidden faulty data.</td>
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<td>Be able to explain in what way one element or factor is comparable or similar to another.</td>
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<td>Compare the value or worth of two competing explanations.</td>
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10.B.1
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<tr>
<th>Are in your home city</th>
<th>Are wet</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have big doors</th>
<th>You would like to go to</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You had a lot of fun at</th>
<th>A lot of people go to</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People play sports</th>
<th>Are green</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<th>Have a lot of books</th>
<th>Sole proprietors go to</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Musicians go to</th>
<th>Are very warm</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Are very cold</th>
<th>People go during winter</th>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<th>You can get information about starting a home-based business</th>
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A SECRET FOR TWO by Quentin Reynolds (10.C.1)

Montreal is a very large city. Like all large cities, it has small streets. Streets, for example, like Prince Edward street-only four blocks long. No one knew Prince Edward street as well as Pierre Dupin. He had delivered milk to the families on the street for thirty years.

For the past fifteen years, a large white horse pulled his milk wagon. In Montreal, especially in the French part of the city, animals and children are often given the names of saints. Pierre's horse had no name when it first came to the milk company. Pierre was told he could use the horse. He moved his hand gently and lovingly across the horse's neck and sides. He looked into the animal's eyes.

"This is a gentle horse," Pierre said. "I can see a beautiful spirit shining out of its eyes. I will name him after Saint Joseph, who also was a gentle and beautiful spirit."

After about a year, the horse, Joseph, got to know every house that received milk, and every house that did not.

Every morning at five, Pierre arrived at the milk company's stables to find his wagon already filled with bottles of milk and Joseph waiting for him, Pierre would call, "Bonjour, my old friend," as he climbed into his seat, while Joseph turned his head toward the driver. The other drivers would smile. They said that the horse smiled at Pierre.

Then Pierre would softly call to Joseph, "Avance, mon ami." And the two would go proudly down the street. Without any order from Pierre, the wagon would roll down three streets. Then it turned right for two streets, before turning left to Saint Catherine street. The horse finally stopped at the first house on Prince Edward street. There, Joseph would wait perhaps thirty seconds for Pierre to get down off his seat and put a bottle of milk at the front door. Then the horse walked past the next two houses and stopped at the third. And without being told, Joseph would turn around and come back along the other side. Ah yes, Joseph was a smart horse.

Pierre would talk about Joseph. "I never touch the reins. He knows just where to stop. Why, a blind man could deliver my milk with Joseph pulling the wagon."

And so it went on for years-always the same. Pierre and Joseph slowly grew old together. Pierre's huge walrus mustache was white now and Joseph didn't lift his knees so high or raise his head quite so much. Jacques, the boss man of the stables, never noticed that they both were getting old until Pierre appeared one morning carrying a heavy walking stick.

"Hey, Pierre," Jacques laughed. "Maybe you got the gout, hey?"
"Mais oui, Jacques," Pierre said. "One grows old. One's legs get tired."
"Well, you should teach that horse to carry the milk to the front door for you," Jacques told him. "He does everything else."
The horse knew every one of the forty families that got milk on Prince Edward street. The cooks knew that Pierre could not read or write; so, instead of leaving orders in an empty milk bottle, they simply sang out if they needed an extra bottle. "Bring an extra bottle this morning, Pierre," they often sang when they heard Pierre's wagon rumble over the street.

"So you have visitors for dinner tonight," Pierre would happily answer.

Pierre also had a wonderful memory. When he arrived at the stable he always remembered to tell Jacques, "The Pacquins took an extra bottle this morning; the Lemoines bought a pint of cream..."

Most of the drivers had to make out the weekly bills and collect the money, but Jacques, liking Pierre, never asked him to do this. All Pierre had to do was arrive at five in the morning, walk to his wagon, which always was in the same place, and deliver his milk. He returned about two hours later, got down from his seat, called a cheery "Au voir" to Jacques, and then walked slowly down the street.

One day the president of the milk company came to inspect the early morning milk deliveries. Jacques pointed to Pierre and said, "Watch how he talks to that horse. See how the horse listens and how he turns his head toward Pierre? See the look in that horse's eyes? You know, I think those two share a secret. I have often felt it. It's as though they both sometimes laugh at us as they go off. Pierre...Pierre is a good man, Monsieur President, but he is getting old. Maybe he ought to be given a rest, and a small pension."

"Oh but of course," the president laughed. "I know Pierre's work. He has been on this job now for thirty years. All who know him love him. Tell him it is time he rested. He'll get his pay every week as before."

But Pierre refused to leave his job. He said his life would be nothing if he could not drive Joseph every day. "We are two old men," he said to Jacques. "Let us wear out together. When Joseph is ready to leave, then I too will do so."

There was something about Pierre and his horse that made a man smile tenderly. Each seemed to get some hidden strength from the other. As Pierre sat in his seat, with Joseph tied to the wagon, neither seemed old. But when they finished their work-then Pierre walked lamely down the street, seeming very old indeed, and the horse's head dropped and he walked slowly to his stall.

Then one cold morning Jacques had terrible news for Pierre. It was still dark. The air was like ice. Snow had fallen during the night. Jacques said, "Pierre, your horse, Joseph, didn't wake up. He was very old, Pierre. He was twenty-five and that is like being seventy-five for a man."

"Yes," Pierre said slowly. "Yes. I am seventy-five. And I cannot see Joseph again."

"Oh, of course you can," Jacques said softly. "He is over in his stall, looking very peaceful. Go over and see him."

Pierre took one step forward, and then turned. "No... no ... you don't understand, Jacques."
Jacques patted him on the shoulder. "We'll find another horse just as good as Joseph. Why, in a month you'll teach him to know all the homes as well as Joseph did. We'll...." The look in Pierre's eyes stopped him. For years Pierre had worn a large heavy cap that came down low over his eyes. It kept out the bitter cold wind. Now, Jacques looked into Pierre's eyes and he saw something that shocked him. He saw a dead, lifeless look in them.

"Take the day off, Pierre," Jacques said but Pierre was gone limping down the street. Pierre walked to the corner and stepped into the street. There was a warning shout from the driver of a big truck. There was the screech of rubber tires as the truck tried to stop. But Pierre... Pierre heard nothing.

Five minutes later a doctor said, "He's dead... killed instantly."
"I couldn't help it," the truck driver said, "He walked in front of my truck. He... he never saw it, I guess. Why, he walked as though he were blind."

The doctor bent down. "Blind? Of course the man was blind. See those growths? This man has been blind for five years." He turned to Jacques, "You say he worked for you? Didn't you know he was blind?"

"No... no." Jacques said softly. "None of us knew. Only one... only one knew--a friend of his, named Joseph... It was... it was a secret, I think, just between those two."
Thinking Metaphors and More Thinking (10.D.1)

Thinking Metaphors

Object
- What object would you be if you had a choice? Why?

House
- What kind of house would you be if you had a choice? Why?

Animal
- What kind of animal would you be if you had a choice? Why?

Color
- What color are you? Why?

Meggert, Sandra S., Creative Humor at Work

More Thinking

1. Why are they called a “pair of pants?” or a pair of glasses?
2. What are five things you value most in life and why?
3. What is the one thing you think of that always makes you smile? Why?
4. What makes something beautiful?
5. What does the phrase “Do you know that you already know more than you think you know” mean?