



Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Learning and Your Life

By Richard Paul, Linda Elder

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Appropriate for one or two semester courses in Critical Thinking or Student Success. This text approaches critical thinking as a process by which one takes charge of, and responsibility for, one's thinking. It provides both a holistic theme that runs through-out and practical analytic and evaluative tools that can be used to target and improve specific dimensions of thinking. It is designed to foster the development of critical thinking skills and abilities as well as intellectual dispositions such as fair-mindedness, intellectual humility, and intellectual integrity. Based on 20 years of teaching and research with the Center For Critical Thinking, the approach is an eminently practical one. It is filled with Think-For-Yourself activities and examples from everyday life. It shows the reader how to use critical thinking to achieve deep and significant learning in all disciplines and subjects.

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Editorial Review

From the Inside Flap

PREFACE

You are what you think. That's right. Whatever you are doing right now, whatever you feel, whatever you want—all are determined by the quality of your thinking. If your thinking is unrealistic, it will lead you to many disappointments. If your thinking is overly pessimistic, it will deny you due recognition of the many things in which you should properly rejoice.

Test this idea for yourself. Identify some examples of your strongest feelings or emotions. Then identify the thinking that is correlated with those examples. For example, if you feel excited about college, it is because you think that good things will happen to you in college. If you dread going to class, it is probably because you think it will be boring or too difficult.

In a similar way, if the quality of your life is not what you would wish it to be, it is most likely because it is tied to the way you think about your life. If you think about it positively, you will feel positive about it. If you think about it negatively, you will feel negative about it.

For example, suppose you came to college with the view that college was going to be a lot of fun and you were going to form good friendships with fellow students who would respect and like you and, what is more, that your romantic relationships would become interesting and exciting. And let's suppose that hasn't happened. If this were the thrust of your thinking, you now would feel disappointed and maybe even frustrated (depending on how negative your experience has been interpreted by your thinking).

For most people, thinking is subconscious, never explicitly put into words. For example, most people who think negatively would not say of themselves, "I have chosen to think about myself and my experience in largely negative terms. I prefer to be as unhappy as I can be."

The problem is that when you are not aware of your thinking, you have no chance of correcting poor thinking. When thinking is subconscious, you are in no position to see any problems in it. And, if you don't see any problems in it, you won't be motivated to change it.

The truth is that since few people realize the powerful role that thinking plays in our lives, few gain significant command of it. Therefore, most people are in many ways victims of their own thinking, that is, harmed rather than helped by it. Most people are their own worst enemy. Their thinking is a continual source of problems, preventing them from recognizing opportunities, keeping them from exerting energy where it will do the most good, poisoning relationships, and leading them down blind alleys.

In this book we are concerned with helping you take charge of what you do, what you learn, and how you feel by taking command of how and what you think. We hope that you will discover the power of your thinking and will choose to develop it in ways that serve your interests, as well as the well-being of others.

The single most significant variable in determining the quality of what you learn in college is your thinking. Certainly your teachers will play a role in your learning. Some of them will do a better job than others of helping you learn. But even the best teachers can help you very little if you lack the intellectual skills necessary for thinking well through course content.

This book introduces you to the tools of mind you need to reason well through the problems and issues you face, whether in the classroom, in your personal life, or in your professional life. If you take these ideas seriously, you can do something for yourself of lifelong value.

If all goes as we plan it, you gradually will become more and more aware of the thinking that causes you problems. And you will be able to change that thinking so you can experience a more satisfying life. You will find that learning, both inside and outside of class, will become more and more rewarding. You will increasingly be able to take the ideas you are learning in class and apply them to your life in a useful way.

The choice is yours, and the quality of your choice can only be as good as the thinking you use to come to that choice. If you think that taking command of your thinking is not important (perhaps you assume that you already have that command), this book won't help you learn to think any better than you do now. If, however, you sense that you have not yet achieved the personal control over your thinking we are speaking of, and you recognize its potential value, you will read on, and progressively take the steps to create personal control and power.

From the Back Cover

Widely sought as professional development leaders, Paul and Elder have conducted hundreds of workshops for university faculty all over the world. Their work speaks to the universal need to develop a sharp, open, and analytical mind. Tools that enable us to take charge of our learning and our lives are the very same tools that can help us all do more than merely survive in an economically and socially deprived environment. With them we can work independently or with others to produce positive changes.

Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your Learning and Your Life provides a holistic theme, approaching critical thinking as a process for taking charge of and responsibility for one's thinking. Designed to foster the development of critical thinking skills and abilities, fair-mindedness, intellectual humility, and intellectual integrity, the approach is an eminently practical one. Numerous meaningful, yet common examples coupled with related activities allow the reader to examine and chronicle his/her own understanding and growth, providing the foundation for the lifelong application of critical thinking skills.

A companion web site (www.prenhall.com/paul) provides students with valuable resources to enhance their pursuit to be critical thinkers.

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Joseph Felix:

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Jessica Keith:

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Carolyn Hoar:

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Joseph Dolezal:

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