

Claim from Brookfield's Work: What is Critical Thinking?

In the passage from Chapter 1 of Brookfield's What is Critical Thinking? found on Blackboard, it is clear that he believes critical thinking is a multi-step process. On page 11, he states that "we do four things" when we think critically. He says that we hunt for assumptions, check them, see them from different viewpoints and then take action.

This claim has validity in many sources. In Dr. Vincent's presentation on August 26th, 2014, she expressed agreement with Brookfield by citing his book Teaching for Critical Thinking and describing these four steps in detail. In a 2000 article by T. Riddell found in the Journal of Nursing Education titled *Critical Assumptions: Thinking Critically About Critical Thinking*, Riddell states, "Even authors who do talk about identifying assumptions fail to describe the process, which is a major omission considering the centrality of this activity to critical thinking." Riddell is expressing how important she feels it is to explain and teach critical thinking as a step by step process.

There have been a few times in my past that trying to take these steps out of order has proven ineffective. For example, in high school, a friend and teammate sustained a serious shoulder injury. The injury required surgery and a few months of physical therapy. Since she was attending physical therapy to exercise the shoulder, she assumed that more exercise outside of physical therapy would prove beneficial to her healing process. She made this assumption without seeking evidence to confirm it and acted upon it. As her healing slowed and pain increased, she also increased her activity level hoping to speed the healing. The healing practically halted and full strength has never been returned to her shoulder. This is a simplistic example of someone taking action before testing the validity of their assumptions and it led to negative results. If only my friend would have looked at some research, questioned the doctors, or asked someone with similar experience she could have handled her healing process in a more beneficial manner.

Someone who may disagree with this claim may believe that critical thinking is a talent that cannot be learned but is a skill a person is born with. They may not believe in critical thinking as a process that can be learned and mastered because it is simply natural for those who are born with the skill (Mulnix).

After reading this excerpt, I know the important of digging deep to find the assumptions that I take for granted. I will look for the root of the problem I am facing and treat the problem from the underlying assumptions that may be creating it.



<http://cdn.freshome.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/staircaseslide.jpg>

Sources

Mulnix, J. W. (2012), Thinking Critically about Critical Thinking. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 44: 464-479. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-5812.2010.00673.x

Riddell, Thelma, MScN,R.N., C.O.H.N.(C. (2007). Critical assumptions: Thinking critically about critical thinking. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 46(3), 121-6. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/203948831?accountid=6167>

Vincent, E. "Critical Thinking Intro." Clemson University. Clemson, SC. 26 August 2014. Powerpoint.