

# **Key Components of Critical Thinking**

**The process of thinking is as significant as the outcome!** Critical thinkers know that it is the journey to a conclusion that must be carefully evaluated.

**Be attuned to your own beliefs, values, and prejudices as well as your personal experiences!** Critical thinkers are self-aware and self-critical, and acknowledge that their own beliefs, values, and personal experiences play a role in the way they think and act. They may trust their feelings and instincts but they recognize that they are not tantamount to truth.

**Challenge assumptions!** Critical thinkers accept that it is essential to ask probing and clarifying questions in order to assess assumptions, implications, and consequences and evaluate evidence against established criteria and standards.

**Consider the arguments!** Critical thinkers evaluate the veracity of the premises and conclusions of an argument and understand that even widely accepted conclusions are not necessarily accurate or true and credible information is not necessarily factual.

**Consider alternatives!** Critical thinkers think open mindedly and see things from other perspectives, encouraging discussion and consideration of opposing points of view.

**Consider the context!** Critical thinkers recognize that thoughts and actions are shaped by such things as culture, race, age, sex, and sexual orientation as well as by personal experiences.

**Know the sources of information!** Critical thinkers carefully evaluate the sources of information, considering the nature of their expertise and being cognizant of any signs of bias or conflicts of interest.

**Assume a posture of reflective skepticism!** Critical thinkers are disciplined thinkers who take nothing for granted but rather challenge themselves and others to assess their own thinking, reframe questions, recognize ambiguities, test and retest findings and interpretations, and acknowledge fallacies – their own as well as others.