

Critical Thinking Questions

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Message Centered

1. Do you have the whole story or only a select part of it?
2. Is the story based upon observation, experience, experiment, research, fabrication, or gossip?
3. Is the message current or dated? Ie: are we discussing this year's average wage or that in 1843?
4. Is the message a local one or a distant one? Ie: are we discussing Aroostook potatoes or Russian spuds?
5. Is the subject a completed act, an ongoing act, or a proposed act?
6. Is the message an obligatory act, an optional act, or a spontaneous act?
7. What options are there -- in terms of action/thought/reaction/response/prevention?
8. Is the message being sent in the appropriate/best channels? Would alternate or added channels work better?
9. Is the message being sent to the right source(s)? Would alternate or added sources work better?
10. Is the message clear; were terms unambiguous, consistent, relevant, coherent, orderly, complete, logical, and purposeful?
11. What ideas, previous action, or advice was used to prepare for the action/message? Was such aid acknowledged?
12. What special symbols [ie: technical language, slang, logos, gestures, inside language] is needed to completely understand the message/act?
13. Is anyone, any group, any act, or any idea being demonized? If so, what are the demonizing symbols?
14. Did action/statements go beyond accepted/normative/usual limits? Did they fall short of typical limits? If so, by how much, why, and with what effects?
15. Were decisions/actions determined openly or in secret?
16. What criteria for statement/action were used? Whose criteria are these? Why were these criteria chosen?

Messenger Centered

1. Is the messenger honest? Is message verification/corroboration possible?
2. Is the messenger trustworthy? What is the messenger's track record?
3. Is the messenger an expert in the field of discussion or is the subject general enough not to require specialized expertise?

4. What are the messenger's biases? Are these known/admitted to? Do such biases raise doubts about the message or conclusions reasonably drawn from them?
5. If the message is a repeat of observation, experience, or what others told the messenger, how reliable is the messenger's memory?
6. What are the messenger's motives? Are these honorable or ignoble? Are these disclosed or hidden?
7. Is the message recorded/transcribed to facilitate accuracy checks? Is there a transcript/video?
8. What amount and/or type of preparation went into message/ action? Was preparation insufficient, adequate, superb? What standards for that decision were used?
9. What qualitative measure of preparation went into planning for action/message?
10. Did the messenger act ethically? Were established standards of behavior met?
11. Were there unintended or ambient audiences/witnesses to acts/events/ideas? Could these have been avoided/ If so, why were they not avoided?
12. Was the act done or utterance stated overtly, covertly, or spontaneously?
13. Does the messenger/actor get to take credit for a well done job or to be blamed for a poor job?
If not, why and who did/could get praised/blamed?
14. Are individuals, groups, organizations, or institutions dominating others [hegemony], withdrawing from others [avoidance], seeking to join/merge with others?
15. Is rank, position, hierarchy a factor in decisions/action? If so, what is the "pecking order" and who determined it?
16. Were alternatives to decisions/actions openly discussed/ debated? What were these alternatives?
17. Were decisions/actions made out of convenience, fear, safety, obligation [legal/moral], greed, spite, hate, retaliation, affiliation, loyalty, honor, love, or revenge?

Occasion/Circumstance Centered

1. Was action taken prematurely or too late? Could bad timing be anticipated?
2. Was action required or optional? If required, why and by whom?
3. What limitations on options did the occasion/situation pose? How much did such limitations affect the outcome?
4. What opportunities [taken or missed] did the situation/ occasion offer? How did these opportunities affect the outcomes?
5. Was the occasion/situation forced, predictable, traditional, natural, or serendipitous?
6. What options for action/statements were available? Why was this one chosen? Is this choice one in a

recognizable pattern of choices?

7. Is this occasion/event a stand alone situation or one in a finite or infinite series?

8. Is this occasion expected to be of finite, infinite, or unknown duration?

9. Is the occasion individually, group, organizationally, or institutionally governed?

10. Did the occasion/situation dominate the act/utterance or was it the other way around?

Effect/Consequences Centered

1. Are desired results best for the persuader, the one being persuaded, or others?

2. Are short-term, intermediate-term, or long-term effects desired?

3. What unintended consequences have emerged or are reasonably anticipated?

4. What were/are/will be the costs of decisions/actions? Costs here include: time, energy, embarrassment, opportunity cost, allegiance, raw material, relationship, and reputation.

5. Is this situation/action causal/co-causal to others; an effect/co-effect of others; coincidental to others, or seemingly unrelated to other circumstances?

6. Were negative consequences avoidable? If so how? Why were these not avoided?

7. Were positive consequences enhanceable? If so, why were they not so enhanced?

8. Did/could perceived negative outcomes affect strategies/ choices/tactics? If so, how?

9. Did/could anticipated positive outcomes curtail rational decision making? If so, how?

10. Were tangible, social, political consequences/effects dominant in issue consideration?