

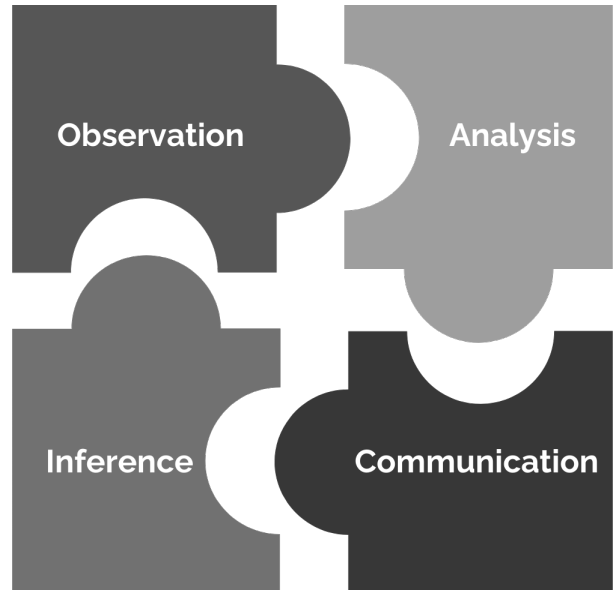
Topic 4

Key Skills of Critical Thinkers

Key Skills – Observation, Communication, Analysis, Inference

There are four critical thinking skills you should be familiar with and apply to your valuable work as a nurse leader.

The benefit to you... These core skills will help you to make better choices, ask better questions, communicate your opinions in a logical way, and develop better arguments to support your decisions.



Observation

Observation involves actively paying attention to details in your surroundings. This helps you gather relevant information, which is a fundamental step in critical thinking. By observing, you can identify patterns, behaviors, and occurrences that contribute to a deeper understanding of a situation.

As a nurse leader, your proficiency in observation (i.e., gathering information from your senses) helps you to recognize potential problems. It also helps you comprehend the underlying causes and anticipate potential challenges before they manifest.

To refine your observation skills, practice the following:

- Consciously slow down and focus your attention on your environment.
- Pay special attention to patterns in patient and team behavior, procedural transactions, and data trends.
- Keep an open mind.

Activity: Critical Communication: A Role-Play Script

Directions

- Review the scenario background, script, and your assigned role in the scenario.
- Read and “play” the part of your assigned role when prompted.
- The instructor will lead a discussion based on this scenario.



TRANSITIONING TO A NEW EHR SYSTEM

The hospital administration has decided to implement a new Electronic Health Records (EHR) system to improve patient care and data management. During shift change huddle, the nurse leader discusses the transition to the new system.

Nurse Leader: “Alright, everyone, let’s make this quick. We’re moving to the new EHR system. The organization’s goal is that everyone will be

comfortable using the new platform by the go-live date, which is in two weeks.”

Experienced Staff Nurse: “I know nurses who use this system, and it is too complicated. It will take time away from patient care. We will never get our charting done by the end of our shift.”

Novice Nurse: “How much training and support or resources will we have during this transition?”

Nurse Leader: “We are all busy. There is no time for training, and we don’t have enough people to staff as a resource. The manuals will be available on the intranet.”

Experienced Staff Nurse (frustrated): “This is not fair. You’re not even listening to our concerns. This is going to impact our ability to care for our patients.”

Novice Nurse (disheartened): “Our concerns are valid. ... It’s about our patients.”

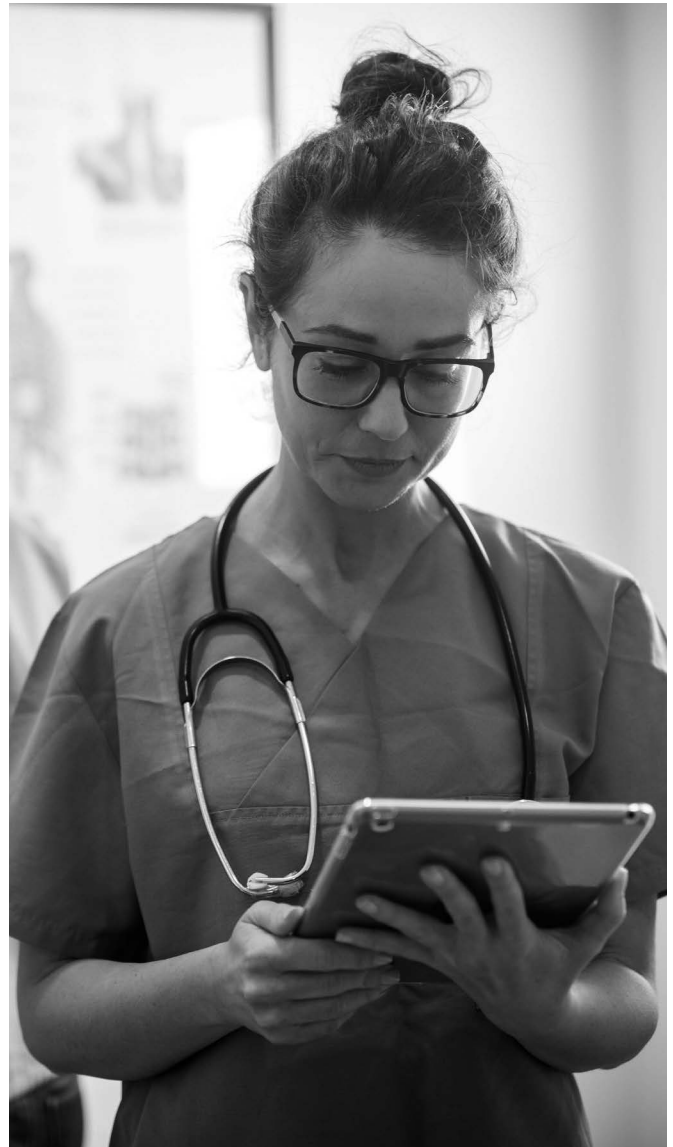
Nurse Leader: “The discussion is over. I expect you to start using the system next week without any complaints.”

Communication

Communication is a fundamental aspect of critical thinking. The ability to express ideas clearly, engage in active listening, ask questions, and collaborate effectively all contribute to the development and application of critical thinking skills.

To improve your communication skills as part of critical thinking, practice the following:

- Embrace difficult conversations; view disagreement as an opportunity to learn.
- Use strong communication practices such as active listening and demonstrating respect to promote psychological safety among the team.
- Encourage open dialogue to gather a variety of diverse perspectives.
- Be proactive in your communication to encourage the sharing of information in a timely manner. This serves to build team trust and helps you make more well-informed decisions.



Think About It!

Effective leadership begins with communication. Knowing how to communicate effectively helps build trust and encourage collaboration within your team.

Analysis

Analysis involves breaking down complex information into smaller components, looking for insights or nuances that aren't obvious, and evaluating the credibility of what you've learned.

The importance of analyzing in critical thinking:

- It forces you to look beyond what might seem obvious.
- It requires you to dig deeper rather than accepting what is at the surface level.
- It takes your thinking to a higher level by using reason and logic, rather than relying on emotions or simply guessing.



When you analyze information, search for the facts and weed out the opinions to clearly understand the intended meaning.

Fact: Information or knowledge that can be tested or proven to be true based on objective evidence.

Opinion: A belief, judgment, or impression that reflects a person's subjective feelings about a topic or situation.



Key Point

Distinguishing between fact and opinion is a key part of analyzing a situation. Until you determine what the facts are, you will not be able to move on and logically evaluate the situation.

Activity: Fact or Opinion: Sample Scenarios

Directions: Review the scenarios. The instructor will lead a discussion based on these scenarios.

1. A nurse leader is considering whether the current staffing levels are adequate for providing quality patient care. The nurse leader states, "I feel we are understaffed. The number of nurses on duty is five, and the patient-to-nurse ratio on the floor is 5:1. The hospital generally strives to achieve a ratio of 4:1."
 Fact Opinion
2. A nurse leader is evaluating patient satisfaction scores in the hospital. The nurse leader informs management, "The patients are generally happy with our services."
 Fact Opinion
3. The nurse leader is evaluating the effectiveness of a training program for the nursing staff. The hospital has set a goal for all staff to complete the training and implement the new process by the end of the month. The nurse leader reports, "I believe the staff will complete the training in time. To date, 10 out of 12 staff members have completed the training with a score of 90 percent or higher."
 Fact Opinion

Notes:
