

Introduction

Critical Thinking Skills for Charge Nurses is a four-hour continuing education course designed for front line nursing leaders. The smooth operation of and proper resource management for nursing units requires deliberate critical thinking skills to be successful. By enhancing their critical thinking skills, participants will be better equipped to successfully manage their time as well as their team's time. During the course, participants examine and discuss the following concepts:

- ❖ The decision-making process
- ❖ Fundamentals for Critical Thinking
- ❖ The five essential traits of critical thinkers
- ❖ Key skills of critical thinkers

Course Learning Objectives

- ❖ Recognize how developing strong critical thinking and decision-making skills will enhance effectiveness as a nurse leader
- ❖ Use a decision-making process to make informed decisions when faced with complex situations.
- ❖ Model the essential traits of critical thinkers in all daily work
- ❖ Apply the critical thinking skills of observation, communication, analysis, and inference to make better decisions.

Course Summary

Participants learn to apply the decision-making process to complex decisions, and how to adopt a critical thinking mindset to better analyze the information available to them. The tools and techniques provided are applicable to professional and personal life. By enhancing their critical thinking skills, participants will understand the importance of separating facts from opinions, being aware of biases that can cloud judgment, and remaining open-minded. Participants learn that critical thinking is one of the greatest tools for promoting successful patient outcomes.

Instructor-facilitated activities, centered around realistic workplace situations, provide participants an opportunity to practice decision-making and critical thinking skills in real time, through the workplace. By doing so, the practices and habits are easier to call upon when in a stressful situation that demands critical decision making.

The Role of the Manager

As the supervisor of course participants, your role is integral in ensuring that classroom concepts are successfully applied to workplace scenarios. This document provides exercises that reinforce the use of classroom concepts within the workplace.

Successful supervisors:

- Create appointments with their employees to discuss their learning.
- Complete one or more exercise in this coaching guide to reinforce the application of course content to the work environment. Provide insight and feedback to help the participants accelerate their application of skills to the workplace.

Choose Your Activity

The three activities below reinforce course content and encourage participants to apply course concepts to workplace scenarios. Select the activities that work best in your situation.



ACTIVITY A

Discuss Complex Situations and Action Plan



ACTIVITY B

Identify a New Assignment or Project to Promote Skill Practice



ACTIVITY C

Ask the Participant to Teach Others



ACTIVITY A

Discuss Complex Situations and Action Plan

Instructions:

1. Schedule an appointment with the participant to discuss the course. Focus on the Personal Application and Action Plan activities (see below). **Ask employee to bring the Participant Workbook to this meeting.**
2. Ask the employee if they would like your input and offer additional ideas you may have.
3. Set a follow-up date to discuss successes or obstacles they experience on the job.

Discussion Questions

See Activity: Personal Action Plan on page 14 of the Participant Workbook.

1. What is one complex situation in your professional life that requires a decision?
2. What is the root cause of that decision?
3. What alternatives or options should you consider?
4. Which option offers the best solution? How do you know this is the best solution?
5. How will you implement your decision? What are the necessary steps, resources, and timelines?
6. What steps will you take to evaluate the decision?
 - Ask your employee to keep a journal of any important decisions encountered at work over the next month. Encourage a focus on decisions that are related to process or quality improvement and resource management. Keep details of how the complex situation was addressed using the decision-making process and how course concepts were utilized.

See Attachment 1: My Critical Thinking Improvement Checklist on page 6 of this guide.

Take time to reflect on ways in which you can improve your own critical thinking skills.

Write down your responses.

1. Share and discuss your responses with participant. Listen to their own ideas for improvement and write down specific ways in which both of you can improve upon your critical thinking skills.
 - a) After taking time to review the critical thinking skills, consider which skills is the participant's strength. Give an example and verbally recognize participant for this attribute.
2. Ask: How can I, as your manager, provide support to help you improve and fully utilize your critical thinking skills?



ACTIVITY B

Identify a New Assignment or Project to Promote Skill Practice

Instructions:

1. Review the employee's performance goals and consider current challenges in the unit.
2. Identify an assignment that will require the participant to apply to the workplace the skills they learned from the course. Projects related to team leadership, improving patient safety, reducing hospital-acquired conditions, or utilizing nursing quality dashboards are all relevant.
3. Set an appointment with the participant to discuss how they will apply the course concepts to the completion of the task.
4. Monitor progress and meet regularly to check-in during the project.
5. At the completion of the project, schedule a date and time to discuss what went well, the challenges encountered, and what the employee learned from this experience.

ASSIGNMENT / PROJECT PLAN: _____

ISSUE TO BE ADDRESSED: _____

CURRENT SITUATION: _____

DESIRED OUTCOME: _____

KEY PEOPLE AND/OR DEPARTMENTS TO INVOLVE: _____



ACTIVITY C

Ask the Participant to Teach Others

Instructions:

1. Schedule time to discuss topic 4: Key Skills of Critical Thinkers. Request that the employee create an informative presentation regarding the benefits of skills learned throughout the course.
 - a) Notify team members they're being invited to a fun, interactive meeting where they'll learn more about how to improve their critical thinking skills.
 - b) Make copies of the "Fact or Opinion" activity on page 29 in the Participant Workbook.. Provide a copy to each attendee and ask them to complete it **before the meeting**.
 - c) Review the correct answers for the activity and discuss the importance of differentiating facts from opinions in critical thinking.
 - d) Discuss specific examples or experiences within your unit involving the separation of facts and opinions. Ask team members to brainstorm ideas on ways to improve upon this.
2. Identify key learning objectives for the presentation. Define what team members will learn as a result of attending the presentation.
3. Discuss the time needed for the presentation then set the date and time. Typically, 15 to 30 minutes will provide enough time to teach a key learning point for this topic.
4. Follow up by asking the employee for feedback about how the presentation was received by others.

My Critical Thinking Improvement Checklist

Trait/Skill/Strategy	Things I Can Do To Improve In This Area
<p>Curiosity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions. • Use active listening. • Engage in continuous learning. • Research to gain a deeper understanding. 	
<p>Compassion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice compassionate communication. • Value the ideas and perspectives of others. • Step away from emotions. • Ask what others need. 	
<p>Decisiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze information objectively. • Practice timeliness. • Step outside the comfort zone. • Let go of judgment. 	
<p>Creativity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge the status quo. • Generate new ideas. • Reframe your thinking. • Seek out new experiences. 	
<p>Honesty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn from mistakes. • Re-evaluate your opinions. • Acknowledge what you know and don't know. • Recognize your own biases. 	
<p>Observation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow down and focus. • Pay special attention to observable patterns. • Keep an open mind 	

My Critical Thinking Improvement Checklist, cont.

Trait/Skill/Strategy	Things I Can Do To Improve In This Area
<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embrace difficult conversations. • Listen actively and demonstrate respect. • Encourage open dialogue. • Be proactive in communication. 	
<p>Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look beyond what seems obvious. • Dig deeper to see underlying issues. • Use reason and logic. 	
<p>Inference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice patterns, relationships, and contextual cues. • Consider your prior knowledge and experiences to help you make comparisons. • Use all available information that could provide insights into a given situation. • Evaluate information for credibility, quality, and relevance. 	