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Critical Thinking - Taking Charge of our Learning and our Life

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Whatever we are doing right now is determined by the way we are thinking. Whatever emotions we feel is determined by our thinking. Whatever we want - all our desires - is determined by our thinking. If our thinking is unrealistic, it will lead us to many disappointments. If our thinking is overly pessimistic, it will deny us the experience of the many things we could enjoy, appreciate and be grateful for.

Most people are frequently victims of their thinking; they are *hurt* rather than *helped* by it. Their thinking is a continual source of problems, preventing them from recognizing opportunities.

Here are some of the qualities the best thinkers have in common:

- **The best thinkers think about their thinking.** They do not take thought for granted. They *notice, reflect on* and *act upon* act upon their thinking.
- **The best thinkers are highly purposeful.** They do not simply act. They know *why* they act. They have clear goals and clear priorities. They continually check their activities for alignment with their goals.
- **The best thinkers have intellectual ‘tools’ that they use to raise the quality of their thinking.** They know how to express their thoughts clearly. They know how to check it for accuracy and precision. They know how to keep focused on a question and make sure that it is relevant to their goals and purposes. They know how to think beneath the surface and expand their thinking to include insights from multiple perspectives. They know how to think logically.
- **The best thinkers distinguish their thoughts from their feelings and desires.** They know that wanting something to be so does not make it so. They know that one can be unjustifiably angry, afraid, or insecure. They do not let unexamined emotions determine their decisions. They have ‘discovered’ their minds and examine the way their minds operate as a result. They take deliberate charge of those operations and capacities.
- **The best thinkers routinely take thinking apart.** They ‘analyze’ thinking. They routinely evaluate thinking, determining its strengths and weaknesses. They do not trust the mind to analyze itself automatically. They realize that examining one’s thoughts is a skill one must consciously learn.

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