Critical Thinking and Decision Making
Dr. Kirk Smith

My former employee, Mike

Did each of you remember a decision like my example?
Why was it so hard to think of a decision you made that turned out poorly?

Check your ego at the door

Where did your decision-making process go wrong?
Workshop Objectives

1. For each of you to understand how you personally come to reasoned conclusions; how you think.
2. To improve your ratio of "good" to "bad" decisions

What is Critical Thinking?

Complete this sentence,

"Critical thinking is…__________________ "

Find a partner
Pull out your mini guide

What is Critical Thinking?

Compare with your partner

Pause for a moment

What is the relationship between critical thinking and creative thinking?
Mini-guide, Page 3

- **The Elements of Thought (or reasoning)**
  - The parts of making a decision

- **Intellectual Standards (criteria)**
  - The quality of the reasoning

Understanding the Elements of Thought (Part 1)

- One person is “Partner A” and the other “Partner B”
- Person A takes Assumptions and Concepts
- Person B takes **Purpose of the Thinking** and Question at Issue
- Complete workbook (not mini-guide) pages 6-7 and then explain what you have to your partner

Understanding the Elements of Thought (Part 2)

- Person A takes **Information and Interpretation and Inference**
- Person B takes Point of View and Implications & Consequences
- Complete workbook (not mini-guide) pages 8-9 and then explain what you have to your partner
Understanding the Elements of Thought, Part 1

Time allotment: 20 minutes

Use this page and the next one to state, elaborate, exemplify, and illustrate your two elements as described below.

Explain what you have to your partner and test for understanding.

Element 1: ________________

State – Write a one-sentence paraphrase beginning with, “(Element) is…”

Elaborate – Provide another sentence or two to give more depth and additional description; perhaps say what it isn’t.

Exemplify – Give a business example (a conversation, a meeting, a written proposal, etc.) of this element in action.

Illustrate – Provide a metaphor or simile. “(Element) is like…”

Element 2 next page please
Element 2: ________________

State – Write a one-sentence paraphrase beginning with, “(Element) is...”

Elaborate – Provide another sentence or two to give more depth and additional description; perhaps say what it isn’t.

Exemplify – Give a business example (a conversation, a meeting, a written proposal, etc.) of this element in action.

Illustrate – Provide a metaphor or simile. “(Element) is like...”
Understanding the Elements of Thought, Part 2

Time allotment: 20 minutes

Use this page and the next one to state, elaborate, exemplify, and illustrate your two elements as described below.

Explain what you have to your partner and test for understanding.

Element 3: ____________________

State – Write a one-sentence paraphrase beginning with, “(Element) is...”

Elaborate – Provide another sentence or two to give more depth and additional description; perhaps say what it isn’t.

Exemplify – Give a business example (a conversation, a meeting, a written proposal, etc.) of this element in action.

Illustrate – Provide a metaphor or simile. “(Element) is like...”

Element 4 next page, please
Element 4: ____________________

State – Write a one-sentence paraphrase beginning with, “(Element) is...”

Elaborate – Provide another sentence or two to give more depth and additional description; perhaps say what it isn’t.

Exemplify – Give a business example (a conversation, a meeting, a written proposal, etc.) of this element in action.

Illustrate – Provide a metaphor or simile. “(Element) is like...”
Applying the Elements of Thought

- Select a reasonably important decision you participated in.
- "Bad" decisions are more illustrative.
- Complete the "Applying the Elements of Thoughts" worksheet, pages 11-12 in the workbook.
Applying the Elements of Thought:
What were we thinking?

Time allotment: 30 minutes (10 minutes to write yours, 10 minutes to explain yours, 10 minutes for your partner to explain his/hers)

Identify a reasonably important decision that you made yourself or a group decision in which you were deeply involved. Re-examining a decision that turned out poorly is generally more enlightening. Identify the decision under “Interpretation and Inference” below.

Answer the questions provided by the other elements below on this page and the next one.

Explain, to your partner, how this decision was made by explaining your use of each of the eight elements.

*Interpretation & Inference*: What was the decision? What other options were considered?

*Points of View*: What points of view were considered? What ones were not but maybe should have been?

*Implications & Consequences*: What positive things should happen because of this decision? What negative things might happen?
**Assumptions:** What assumptions were made that support the decision you identified? Were they appropriate?

**Concepts:** What underlying theories, business models, or principles did we build the decision on? (These are sometimes thought of as generally accepted grand assumptions.) Do these general theories apply here?

**Information:** What data or facts did we consider? What was missing that we should have tried to get?

**Question at Issue:** What problem did we address? Did our solution address the problem?

**Purpose of the Thinking:** What was our broad goal in this endeavor? Why did we have this question at issue and make the decision that we did?
Which are your favorites?

- Which elements are easiest for you because you naturally consider them?
- Which ones do you rarely consider or do you find most difficult to use?

Pause for a Moment

How can you use what you’ve learned about critical thinking at work right away?

Prepare for the next big decision you face

Workbook, pages 14-15
The Next Big Decision

Time allotment: 15 minutes

Examine a big decision you have coming soon by filling out the eight elements below. Wait to discuss it with your partner. You’ll get your chance soon.

*Question at Issue:* What big problem is waiting for you to address?

*Interpretation & Inference:* What are the possible solutions?

*Points of View:* What points of view should be considered?

*Implications & Consequences:* What positive things should happen because of this decision? What negative things might happen too?
**Assumptions:** What assumptions do you need to make here?

**Concepts:** What underlying theories, business models, or principles are in play here?

**Information:** What data or facts must we consider?

**Purpose of the Thinking:** What is our broad goal in this endeavor?
What are “Intellectual Standards”?

Mini guide, pages 8-10

The Importance of Asking Good Questions

On each of the eight elements, ask your partner questions of:
- Clarity
- Accuracy
- Precision
- Relevance

Improve your “Next Big Decision” Worksheets
Workshop Objectives

1. For each of you to understand how you personally come to reasoned conclusions; how you think.
2. To improve your ratio of “good” to “bad” decisions

How Well Do You Think You Think Now?
The Next Big Decision: *Extra Copy*

*Question at Issue:* What big problem is waiting for you to address?

*Interpretation & Inference:* What are the possible solutions?

*Points of View:* What points of view should be considered?

*Implications & Consequences:* What positive things should happen because of this decision? What negative things might happen too?
Assumptions: What assumptions do you need to make here?

Concepts: What underlying theories, business models, or principles are in play here?

Information: What data or facts must we consider?

Purpose of the Thinking: What is our broad goal in this endeavor?