

# Critical Thinking in Nursing Definition

Critical thinking is an active, organized, cognitive process used to carefully examine one's thinking and the thinking of others.

Purposeful, goal-directed thinking aiming to make judgments based on evidence rather than conjecture. It is based on principles of science & the scientific method & develops strategies that maximize human potential & compensates for problems caused by human nature

# Why do we need to think critically?

- Need to make accurate and appropriate clinical decisions
- Need to solve problems and find solutions
- Need to plan care for each unique client and client problem
- Need to seek knowledge and use it to make clinical decisions and problem solving
- Need to be able to think creatively when planning care for clients

# Aspects of Critical Thinking

To develop into an expert critical thinker the nurse needs to use:

- Reflection
- Language
- Intuition

- **Reflection-** Purposely thinking back or recalling a situation to discover its purpose or meaning. Looking back and reflecting on a client situation helps the nurse to have insight and meaning in the situation.
- Reflection allows the nurse to look at a situation honestly and do some self evaluation of the situation.
- When reflecting, important to remain open to new information, knowledge, ways of doing things.
- **Language-** The ability to use language and express yourself is a reflection of the ability to think meaningfully. Nurses must be able to use language effectively (clearly and precisely). When language is not well developed and the spoken word is not clear and distinct it is a sign of sloppy thinking.
- We must communicate (speak) clearly and distinctly with all of those around us, peers, nurses, patients and families. To critically think you must be able to organize and focus your own thoughts.

- **Intuition-** To have an understanding of the particulars in a situation without conscious deliberation. It is an inner sensing about a situation.
- This ability to have intuition about clients come with time and experience. Book points out that intuition can be the spark that starts the flame of analytical thinking (the nurse seeks more info that will confirm what they have been feeling and concerned about for the patient. Can not use only intuition must use all types of knowledge, cognitive and emotional cues to assess clients and seek more info. Nurses also need to be aware of what they do not know, and seek help appropriately

**Basic critical thinking-** Here learner is still trusting that the experts have the answer to every problem and situation

- Thinking is concrete and based on book, principles, rules, policies (whatever they can read or hear about). Lots of following the step by step (doing bed bath).
- At this point there is very limited ability to think critically, resources include instructors, books, other nurses.
- Caution- Don't let relying on resources limit ability to grow, use experiences, practice, and knowledge to grow to next level of thinking.

- **Complex Critical thinking** As people grow and become more independent thinkers the level of critical thinking will grow. Slowly will rely less and less on their resource people and think before asking them, come up with the answers themselves.
- As growth occurs there is a realization that there can be more than one alternative and perhaps solution.
- As nurses begin to think in more complex ways they look at a problem from many more angles and start weighing the risks vs benefits of each decision/ solution. They start developing the ability to be creative, to think out of the box.

**Commitment**-The nurse starts anticipating patient needs independently. At this level, the nurse makes a decision based on alternatives and then stands by the decision. The nurse assumes accountability/ responsibility for the decision and evaluates that decision.

# Critical Thinking Competencies

General critical thinking competencies used by many disciplines, in many everyday situations.

**Scientific method** is an approach to seeking truth or verifying facts. SM is a formal way to approach a problem plan a solution, test the solution, and come to a conclusion. Science fair. Nurse might identify a problem and seek answers with a formal approach (collecting data, formulating a hypothesis, testing the hypothesis, evaluating the results).

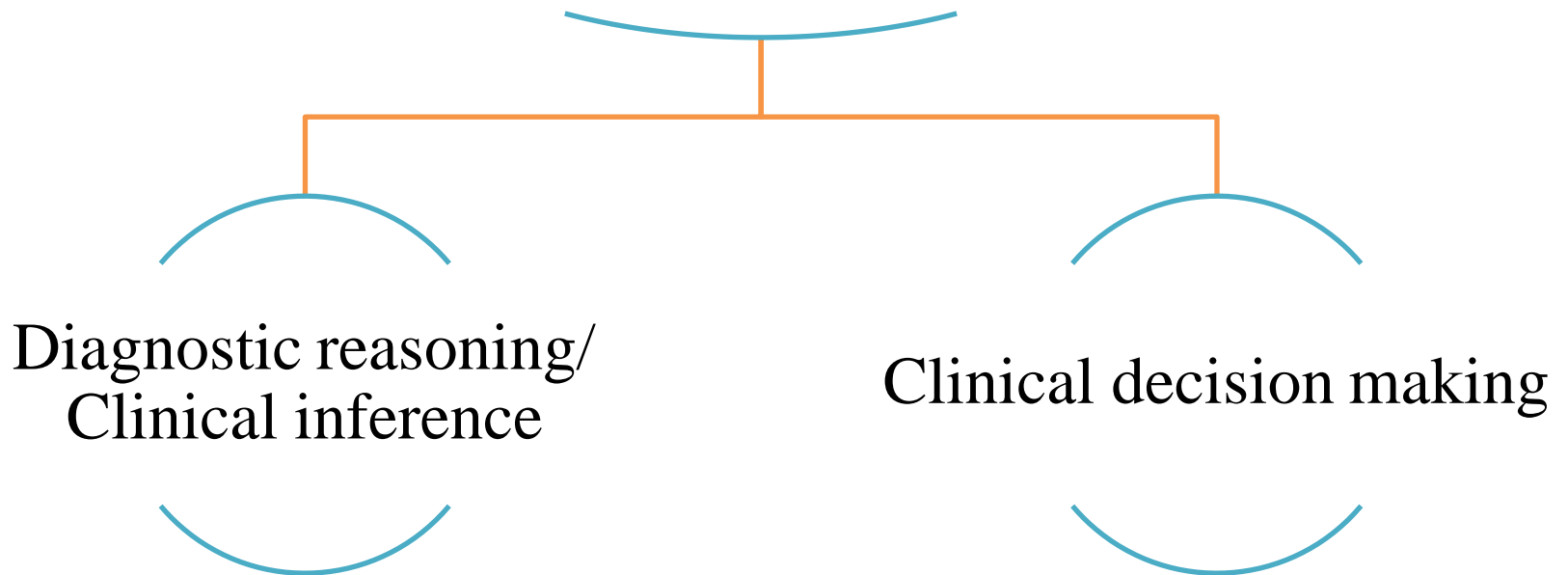
- **Problem solving-** Use problem solving all the time- when problem is identified we seek information about the problem and the information plus knowledge that we already have to find solutions. Effective problem solving means evaluating the solutions and deciding if we need to try other solutions
- **Decision making-** This happens when there are several options or courses of action that one might take to solve a problem or take care of a situation.
- Decision making is an end point of critical thinking. The pros/cons or risks/benefits of each option is weighed to make a final decision. If time is taken to weigh each option appropriately then a well informed decision will be the result



# Critical Thinking Competencies



Specific critical thinking in clinical situations used by physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals.



- **Diagnostic reasoning-** It is a process of determining a client's health status after gathering data and making a clinical judgment. Part of the process involves making inferences given data such as s/s, lab data, behaviors (Inference is the process of drawing conclusions given related pieces of information or data)
- **Clinical decision making-** requires careful reasoning so that the options for the best client outcomes are chosen on the basis of the client's condition and the priority of the problem. Nurse identifies a problem by working with client and then still working with client determines priorities and nursing interventions that will best meet goals of client.
- The nurse may need to select from a wide range of options to meet goals. Clinical decision making can be made for individual patients or groups of patients.

# Critical Thinking Competencies in Nursing Practice

- Specific critical thinking competency used in Nursing Process
  - Assessment
  - Nursing Diagnosis
  - Planning
  - Implementation
  - Evaluation

# Critical Thinking Model

- The model helps to explain how nurses make clinical judgments/ decisions in their clinical practice that result in safe, effective, nursing care. There are 5 components in this model of critical thinking:
  - Knowledge base
  - Experience in nursing
  - Critical thinking competencies
  - Attitudes for critical thinking
  - Standards for critical thinking

# Critical Thinking Attitudes

- Confidence
- Thinking independently
- Fairness
- Responsibility and accountability
- Risk taking
- Discipline
- Creativity
- Curiosity
- Integrity
- Humility