

Are you a critical thinker?

by Valerie Hunter

When you see something on social media, do you think critically on what you are reading/watching?

What is critical thinking?

The ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking. In essence, critical thinking requires you to use your ability to reason. It is about being an active learner rather than a passive recipient of information as is seen so often in social media. People claim to be competent researchers, but do they really know how to research and what are their sources. Check the sources, note and research who they follow before deciding that they are a valid resource for information. Do you see signs of closed mindedness, disrespect, and intolerance for other ideas/opinions? Ask them for solid proofs and for their sources before just accepting things as truth.

What are some barriers to critical thinking? ([LinkedIn](#)):

Thinking in Black or White - Ignoring a situation's complexities thinking there's only one way to solve a problem. [WebMd](#)

Thinking with the Ego – Thinking with a lack of understanding others wants, needs, and experiences. [Psychology Today](#)

Social Thinking - Thinking only in the way of the popular point of view – or spouse, companions, parents, and friends think.

Thinking outside the box is almost impossible with this barrier. [Wikipedia](#)

Authoritative Thinking - Just because someone in authority says it's true doesn't mean it is. The authority is right simply because they're in an authoritative position. [Britannica](#)

Judgmental Thinking - Judging something or someone based on moral evaluation typically done in haste and based on our past. Blocks understanding and insight about a person or an issue. [Psychology Today](#)

There seems to be an issue these days with confirmation bias seen in social media postings. Everyone has some level of confirmation bias. Some more extreme than others and more damaging to others. If you critically think through these postings, you just might find that they are staged or just not in context with what really happened and/or just don't make sense all things considered. If we are concerned about future generations, shouldn't we try to believe in facts not someone's misguided, unformed opinion? This is a dangerous situation that causes hate and discontent among our families, communities, and the entire world.

We should ask ourselves:

- *Do I want to be a part of this negativity?*
- *By sharing this even though I'm not sure of its legitimacy, am I helping our society or causing more hate?*
- *What is my true purpose in sharing this? Will it be helpful in bringing people together or cause more anger?*
- *Do I really know more than everyone else? (Read about the [Dunning/Kruger](#) affect. Note [politics](#) section.)*
- *Could I be missing something?*
- *Do I have room to grow as a person and in knowledge or am I somehow the all-knowing?*
- *Are there other ways to help society or am I content with sitting behind a screen and sharing things I'm unable to prove are true?*
- *Am I gravitating towards and sharing angry, negative postings for a reason?*

People claim continually they are competent researchers. But... where are they really doing their research? Do they keep things in context and provide unequivocal proof? Who do they follow? Are they looking at the entire picture and getting facts or just the opinion of someone else to prove they are correct (confirmation bias)? I would propose that we all stop believing everything we see/hear and realize that confirmation bias is damaging. Social media and all its inaccuracies are not helping any of us. It promotes arrogance, causes hatred and unrealized embarrassment.

Social media to me, should be a way to connect with people we don't often get to. To share in our lives both successes and losses, share funny stories, feel good about life. If you are someone who uses it to slander, attack, or cause people to hate one another, do you feel good about it? Is it also causing you undue stress and ill will? Contrary to popular behavior, we can disagree respectfully. Not all circumstances are like a box of chocolates, but perhaps we try and get back to a little respect, kindness and positive thinking and see if we can't all get some perspective again...see article from [Web MD - What is positive thinking?](#)

Be well, be safe and stay positive!

