



I'm NOT Being Critical  
I'm Just Thinking

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**Defense Financial Management &  
Comptroller School  
Maxwell AFB, Alabama**

**ASMC PDI 2016**



# Critical Thinking is . . .



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Reasonable and reflective thinking  
focused on deciding what to believe or do.

~ Robert Ennis

Thinking about your thinking,  
while you are thinking,  
in order to make your thinking better.

~ Richard Paul



# What Critical Thinking Is NOT...



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- Thinking negatively
- A threat to one's individuality
- Intended to make people think alike
- Replacement for all emotional thinking
- Blind support of everything based on science



# Why Do You Care?



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- ***Critical thinking is*** using our intelligence and knowledge to reach objective and rational viewpoints
- Rational processes – stronger arguments
- Critical thinkers – better equipped to make solve problems and support decision making



# Critical Thinking in Life



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- Preparing budgets
- Buying a house or car
- Moving to another location
- Deciding between job offers
- Making hiring decisions
- Assessing investment opportunities
- Choosing a professional development path
- Developing and selecting your best alternative for any decision



# Some Characteristics



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- Reflective
- Intellectual Standards
  - Clarity
  - Precision
  - Depth
  - Logical
  - Accuracy
  - Relevance
  - Breadth
  - Significance
- Reasonable



# The Critical Thinker...



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- Raises vital questions
- Gathers & assesses relevant information
- Effectively comes to well-reasoned conclusions
- Thinks open-mindedly
- Communicates effectively

Source: <http://www.criticalthinking.org/pages/defining-critical-thinking/4107>



# Keys to Implementing a Critical Thinking Mindset



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- Attitude (open mind)
- Avoid hindrances
- Identify and characterize issues
- Evaluate information sources
- Evaluate arguments
- Take time to think





# Attitude

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Open-mindedness

Healthy skepticism

Intellectual humility

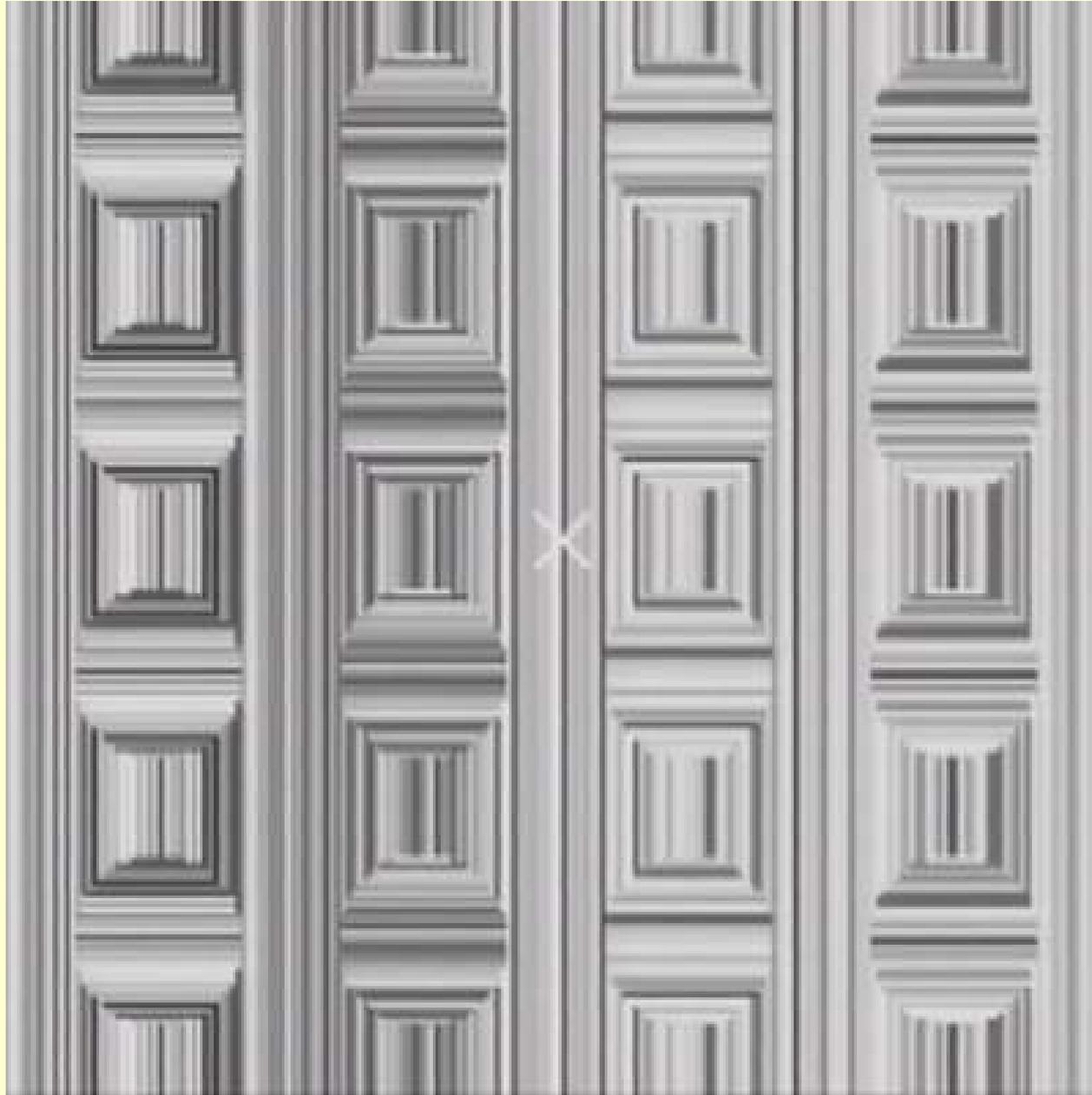
Free thinking

High motivation

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# Change the way you look at things

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**and things you look at may change.**



# Recognize & Avoid Critical Thinking Hindrances

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# Critical Thinking Hindrances



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**Pride and ego**

**Wrong focus**

**No gut feelings**

**Mental laziness**

**Assumptions**

**Negative expectations**

**Need for instant gratification**

**Lack of awareness of the poorly-wired mind**





# Identify and Characterize Issues

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# Identify and Characterize Issues



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- Look for patterns among issues
  - Has something like this happened before?
  - If so, how is this issue different?
- Benchmark solutions
  - What solution worked before?
  - Can we modify that solution to fix this issue?





# Evaluate Information Sources

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# Evaluate Information Sources



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- Does the source have . . .
  - The necessary qualifications or level of understanding?
  - A reputation for accuracy?
  - A motive for being inaccurate or overly biased?
- Are there any reasons for questioning the honesty or integrity of the source?





# Evaluate Arguments

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# Evaluate Arguments



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- Three step process assessing whether . . .
  - Assumptions are warranted
    - "known to be true"
    - Reasonable to accept
  - Reasoning is relevant and sufficient
  - Relevant information has NOT been omitted





# Take Time to Think

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# Take Time to Think



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## **Your ongoing task is to think critically about...**

- what people say to you
- what you read
- how you speak and write; the words you use
- how you argue
- what you believe and why



# Critical Thinking Resources



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- Critical Thinking: Tools for Taking Charge of Your life
  - ~ *Richard Paul & Linda Elder*
- Learning to Think Things Through
  - ~ *Gerald M. Nosich*
- Foundation for Critical Thinking
  - ~ *[www.criticalthinking.org](http://www.criticalthinking.org)*



# Summary



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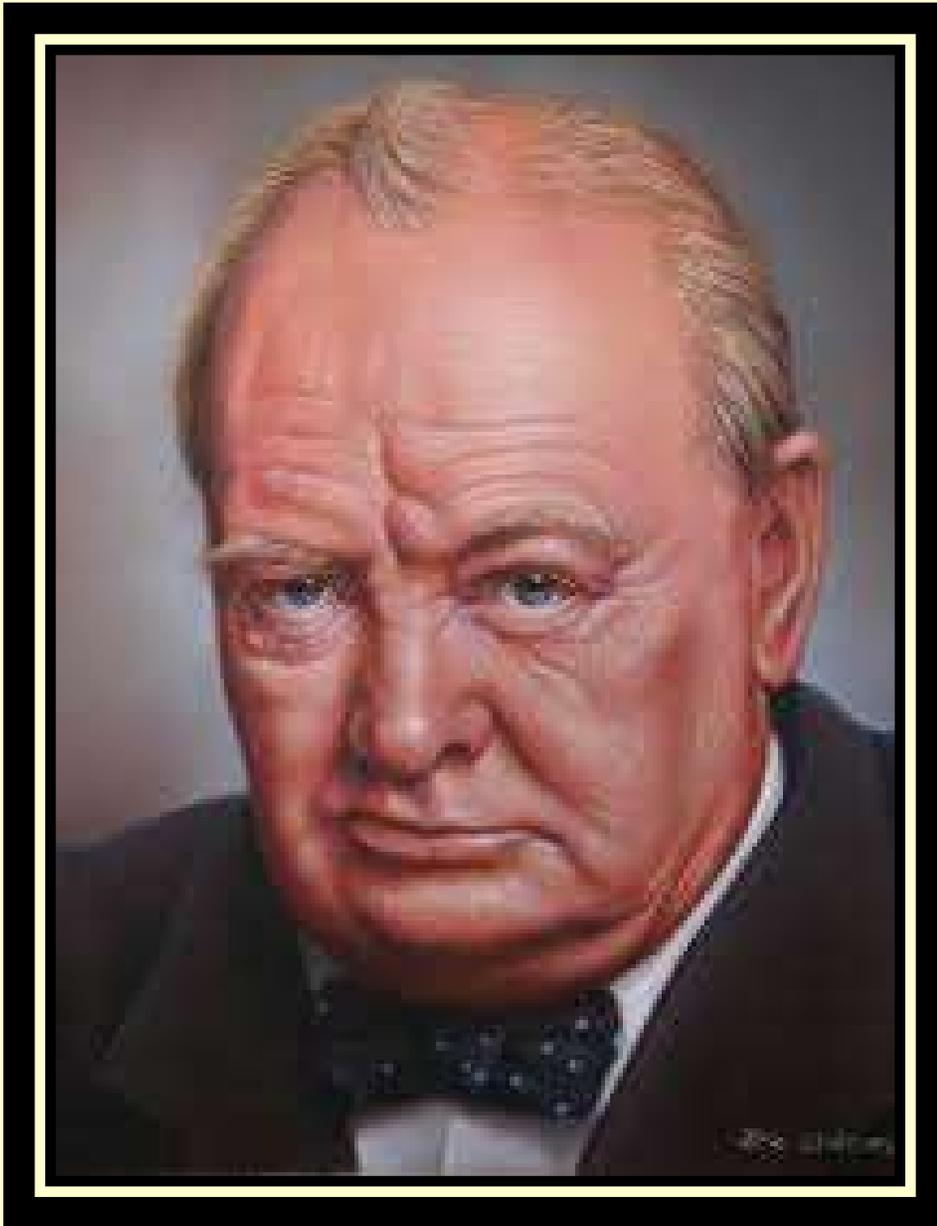
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- **Critical Thinking . . .**

- enables us to think outside of our comfort zone
- enables us to make better decisions and stronger, more rational arguments
- enables us to see OTHER possible solutions
- is NOT instinctive; you actually have to THINK about doing it





**“Gentlemen, we are out of money. Therefore, we shall have to think.”**

~ Winston Churchill





# Questions?

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