

## **Barriers to Critical Thinking**

Barriers to Critical Thinking and Problem Solving To understand why human beings and especially trainees in many institutions often exhibit less than encouraging levels of interest and understanding, we need to look no further than two general predispositions that many people bring with them from previous socialization: i) an attitude of intellectual passivity or disengagement; and, ii) negative preconceptions about disciplines and cultural integration. Below are some of the common barriers to critical thinking.

- ✓ Inadequate Skills and Dispositions to behave in a certain way
- ✓ individuals' mental anxiety
- ✓ Cultural Conditioning and traditions
- ✓ lack of exposure
- ✓ negative preconceptions
- ✓ Propaganda
- ✓ paternalism
- ✓ Egocentric Thinking
- ✓ Indoctrination
- ✓ Arrogance and Intolerance
- ✓ religious dogmas and influence
- ✓ peer-group and social influence
- ✓ Drone Mentality
- ✓ Biased Experiences
- ✓ Ideological Conditioning and dictatorial tendencies
- ✓ Social Conditioning
- ✓ Schedule Pressures

### **Egocentric Thinking:**

This mode of thinking focuses too much on oneself. People who are egocentric thinkers are so consumed by their self-narratives and self-interests. They fail to consider other people's ideas and thoughts. Sometimes they may not even be aware that they're doing it. Egocentric thinking usually stems from extreme closed-mindedness. If we wish to overcome this barrier, we should start being mindful of other's needs. Our minds will gradually open up once we realize that their perspectives are as valid as ours.

### **Drone Mentality:**

This kind of mentality usually happens when we become too comfortable with the status quo. We begin to act without thinking, without paying attention to the world around us, like we are the "ultimate voice". We forget how to act in the face of new challenges and would rather stay within our comfort zones. To awaken from the "ultimate voice" mode, it is important to constantly expose ourselves to things that excite and challenge us. This can be hard to do on our own, so it definitely helps to surround ourselves with people who will inspire us to go after personal growth.

### **Biased Experiences:**

The biased view of our experiences stems from egocentric thinking. While the saying “experience is the best teacher” rings true, our views of our experiences are usually distorted because of how it made us feel. When we’re too stuck inside our heads, this can lead to a cycle of self-delusion, anger, hate and prejudices. Bias can also manifest through the negative preconceptions individual often bring to the study of particular professions or to certain occupations. Some of these attitudes may result from previous encounters with poor orientation or bad influence, while others may arise from individuals own idiosyncratic likes or dislikes. To get out of our biased experiences, it is important to question ourselves multiple times if we are thinking of our situation rationally. A good way of confirming this is to ask our trusted friends what they think. We must choose someone who can tell us things as it is - someone who isn’t afraid to speak the truth even if that’s not what we want to hear.

### **Social Conditioning:**

We are taught to believe that certain stereotypes are the absolute truth. This is why it’s important to recognize that our way of life is not the only right way to live. Once we choose to see beyond the stereotypes, we will learn to get rid of beliefs that only cause barrier to our critical thinking ability.

### **Arrogance and Intolerance:**

Another offshoot of egocentric thinking are arrogance and intolerance. These two characteristics can set anyone back because it is often a result of a bloated sense of self. When someone believes in themselves too much, they refuse to see that others may have better ideas.

### **Schedule Pressures:**

Most human beings have been transformed into machines for production, often competing with time to meet targets. Working against time can often cause people to think poorly and make the wrong decisions. While it is true that time is of the essence, unrealistic expectations will just result in a vicious cycle of shortcuts, procrastination, and unnecessary stress.

### **Ideological Conditioning:**

A number of political establishments, especially the authoritative and despotic in nature have a tendency of interfering with human liberties and right to individual privacy. When the system is so rigid as not to respect the freedom and liberties of its citizens, it does not only allow people to freely express themselves, hold opinions, associate or make choices, but allow makes efforts to influence their thinking and behaviour.

### **Propaganda:**

A form of communication that is aimed at influencing the attitude of a community toward some cause or position so as to benefit the propagator or his group. Opposed to impartially providing information, propaganda presents information primarily to influence an audience. Propaganda is often biased, with facts selectively presented (thus possibly lying by omission) to encourage a particular synthesis, or uses loaded messages to produce an emotional rather than rational response to the information presented. The desired result is a change of attitude toward the subject in the target audience to further a political, or other type of agenda. Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognition,

and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist in total disregard for a person's critical thinking ability.

### **Peer Influence:**

Peer influence is a crucible to regressive thinking. The impact of our contemporaries, and especially when they harbour personal interests can act devastation to our own thinking. Cultism, political grouping, sectarian organizations, paternalism, etc. all tend to limit independence of thought to the advantage of the group. Group mentality, especially when it entails group justices is a major obstacle to critical thinking. This is so because the opinion of the group or that of the group leader is often the law, often draped with blackmail, coercion, and intimidation.

### **Paternalism:**

The way we are brought up and the kinds of social background we come from has a bearing to the kind of personalities we eventually become. The norms embraced and encoded in the life of a family, and the kind of rigidity exercised within the family set-up greatly determines whether an individual will become an independent thinker or a naïve and passive introvert. Many timid persons- those lacking self-confidence or self-trust are products of hostile upbringing. Paternalism is a major obstacle to critical thinking and effective problem-solving.

### **Religious Doctrines and Dogmas:**

Most religions and religious sects have strict rules, regulations, dogmas, and principles that govern their operations. In many religious contexts, the flock is not supposed to question the existence of the dogma, instead consume and implement what he/she hears; it's a total mental lockdown.