A model of Critical Thinking in Nursing

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Definition

Critical Thinking is an active, organized, cognitive process used to carefully examine one’s thinking and the thinking of others. Five modes of thinking that, collectively, represent critical thinking in nursing.

The five modes are – T.H.I.N.K

T – TOTAL RECALL
H – HABITS
I – INQUIRY
N – NEW IDEAS AND CREATIVITY
K – KNOWING HOW YOU THINK

T.H.I.N.K Assumptions

1. Thinking, feeling and doing are all essential components of nursing expertise that work together with synergy.
2. Although thinking, feeling and doing are inseparable in real-life nursing practice, they can be artificially separated for discussion in texts and in the classroom.
3. Nurses and students of nursing are not blank slates; they come to nursing with a variety of thinking skills.
4. Enhancing thinking is a deliberate act that can be taught and learned; it does not occur through osmosis.
5. Most students and nurses find it difficult to describe their thinking skills.
6. Critical thinking in nursing is a composite of several thinking activities that are linked to the context of the situation in which thinking occurs.

T.H.I.N.K Modes

Total Recall (T): Total recall means remembering facts or remembering where and how to find them when they are needed. Nursing facts come from many sources – the content taught in classes, information in books etc. These facts are stored in memory, for either short or long periods of time.

There are ways to remember:

- Putting facts into pattern
- Association of a fact with some experience

Habits (H): Habits are thinking approaches that are repeated so often they become second nature. They result in accepted ways of doing things that work, save time. Habits allow one to do things without having to figure out a new method each time. There are other habits whose thinking roots are not as obvious. These are intuitive processes. Intuition is often described as a “gut level reaction.”

Inquiry (I): Inquiry means examining issues in depth and questioning those that may seem immediately obvious. It involves digging and questioning everything—especially one’s own assumptions in a given situation. It means not taking anything at face value, looking for the less evident factors, doubting all first impressions, and checking out everything, no matter how seemingly insignificant. Inquiry is the primary kind of thinking used to reach conclusions. The process of collecting and analyzing information to confirm or to make additional conclusions beyond the obvious ones is the essence of inquiry. The ability to self-critique also is essential to inquiry based conclusions.

New Ideas and Creativity (N): This thinking mode is very special to each individual. This individualized thinking goes beyond the usual to reconfigure the norm. It allows going beyond textbook ideas. It is very important in nursing because they are at the root of customized or individualized care. Many things nurses learn have to be mixed, matched and reworked to fit each unique patient situation.

Knowing How You Think (K): It means thinking about one’s thinking. Thinking about thinking is called “metacognition”. Part of critical thinking is the constant striving to make one’s thinking better.
or to “know how you think”. One of the ways to identify where you are now and to begin exploring how you think is with the use of self reflection.

Critical Thinking Skills

References: