

**University of Virginia Health System  
Nursing Professional Development Services  
Preceptor Essentials Program  
Critical Thinking in Nursing**

***Characteristics (Attitudes) of Critical Thinkers***

Characteristics 1-6 are focused on interpersonal competency skills & 7-18 are focused on the critical thinking competency.

1. **Empathetic**, putting their own feelings aside, and consciously imagining themselves in the place of others in order to genuinely understand them.
2. **Knowledgeable of their biases and limitations.** know intellectual limits.
3. **Fair-minded**, keenly aware of the powerful influence of their own perceptions, values, and beliefs, but seeking to treat all viewpoints alike.
4. **Good communicators**, realizing that *mutual exchange of ideas* is essential to understanding the facts and finding the best solutions.
5. **Humble**, recognizing that no one, including themselves, has all the answers or is immune to error.
6. **Honest with themselves and others, admitting when their thinking may be flawed or requires more thought.**
7. **Active thinkers**, maintaining a questioning attitude, and double-checking both the reliability of information and their interpretation of the information.
8. **Willing to exert a conscious effort to work in a planned manner**, gathering information, checking for accuracy, and persisting, even when solutions aren't obvious or require several steps.
9. **Open-minded**, willing to consider other perspectives and suspending judgment until all the evidence is weighed.
10. **Independent thinkers**, making their own judgments and decisions, rather than allowing others to do it for them.
11. **Curious and insightful**, questioning deeply, and interested in understanding underlying thoughts and feelings.
12. **Proactive**, instead of *reactive*, anticipating problems and acting *before* they occur.
13. **Organized and systematic in their approach** to solving problems and making decisions.
14. **Flexible**, able to explore and imagine alternatives, and change approaches and priorities as needed.
15. **Cognizant of rules of logic**, recognizing the role of intuition, but seeking evidence and weighing risks and benefits before acting.
16. **Realistic**, acknowledging that we don't live in a perfect world, and that the best answers aren't always the perfect answers.
17. **Team players**, willing to collaborate to work toward common goals.
18. **Creative and committed to excellence**, continually evaluating, seeking clarity and accuracy, and looking for ways to improve how things get done.

ADAPTED FROM:

Alfaro-LeFevre, R., (2004), *Critical thinking and clinical judgment: a practical approach* (3rd ed.);  
St. Louis: Saunders.