

25-30 minutes, giving about one hour total block of time for the leadership session at a typical CAP meeting (25-30 minutes for the informal discussion, plus 25-30 minutes for the activities).

Along with any questions found in the activities themselves, you should be sure to ask, **“How does this activity tie in with our discussion?”**

CAP recommends activities from the *Learn to Lead Activity Guide* by Rob Smith (published by the Civil Air Patrol). You are free to substitute another activity, or create your own, as long as you tie in with one or more concepts of the informal discussion.

Main concept for this lesson: **Leading others; consensus building; empowering.**

7 – CRITICAL THINKING (CHAPTER 5)

Overview Statement: Leadership is an intellectual activity. One avenue to developing your brainpower is to think critically.

Connection to the Curriculum: Ties in with a central theme of chapter five in *Learn to Lead*, Team Leadership.

Estimated Time: 25-30 Minutes

Resources Required: *Learn to Lead*, Module Two; Whiteboard (or chalkboard, butcher paper or easel pad).

Key Terms:

Critical Thinking – “The habit of being guided by universal values of logic and a deep respect for the truth.” *Learn to Lead*, Module Two

Inference – “A conclusion drawn from evidence or reasoning.” Encarta Dictionary

INTRODUCTION

Attention: How many times in a day do you think?

Motivation: If you answered “always,” you probably disagree with H.L. Mencken’s view that simple answers to complex questions are usually wrong. It’s in looking at the complexity of reasoning that we find critical thinking.

Overview: In today’s lesson we will defend the claim that critical thinking has a direct impact on a leader’s effectiveness.

Your role in this discussion is to be an active participant. You are free to share your views with each other. Please be involved and considerate of one another. My role will be to take notes on what you say, and I may occasionally ask a question or two. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions. I am simply interested in what you have to say.

MAIN POINT 1: CRITICAL THINKING IS SELF-GUIDED

As with other aspects of leadership, becoming a critical thinker is more a journey than a destination. Everyone is subject to lazy thinking or irrational thought from time to time. Therefore, developing the ability to think critically is a lifelong endeavor, a never-ending process. The great philosopher Socrates expressed this idea when he said, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” To become better at critical thinking, learn to slow down your initial thoughts and question your own assumptions and emotions before responding.

Question: Describe a time when you reacted before thinking and made the *wrong* decision. Based upon this experience, how can you make better decisions?

Question: Describe a time when you reacted before thinking and yet made the *right* decision. Based upon this experience, can you conclude that quick thinking typically yields the right decisions? Respectfully defend your answer.

Question: Think of times when a good decision led to a bad outcome; or when a bad decision didn’t really impact a good outcome. How can critical thinking better affect the consistency of the desired outcomes?

MAIN POINT 2: CRITICAL THINKING INVOLVES REASONING

{Draw the following on the board:

Reasoning

1. Has a purpose

2. Attempt to figure something out
3. Based on assumptions
4. Has a point of view
5. Based on data
6. Expressed through ideas
7. Contains inferences
8. Has a conclusion. }

Eight basic structures are present in all thinking. Critical thinking generates purposes, raises questions, uses information, utilizes concepts, makes inferences, makes assumptions, generates implications, and embodies a point of view.

Question: Look at these eight elements of thought. What do you think each element means and describe how each element is vital for leaders?

Question: How can reasoning be based both on assumptions and data?

Question: Why must reasoning lead somewhere and where must it lead?

Question: Have you ever tried to win an argument where the other person was factually incorrect and unwilling to hear logic? How can critical thinking help in such situations?

CONCLUSION

Summary: As with other aspects of leadership, becoming a critical thinker is more a journey than a destination. Everyone is subject to lazy thinking or irrational thought from time to time. Therefore, developing the ability to think critically is a lifelong endeavor, a never-ending process.

Remotivation: A leader's critical thinking skills have a direct influence on his or her effectiveness.

Closure: Become a leader who has a habit of thinking sharply.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Note to the instructor: Every informal discussion should be followed by one or more hands-on activities that reinforce one or more of the concepts being discussed. These activities should last 25-30 minutes, giving about one hour total block of time for the leadership session at a typical CAP meeting (25-30 minutes for the informal discussion, plus 25-30 minutes for the activities).

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CAP recommends activities from the *Learn to Lead Activity Guide* by Rob Smith (published by the Civil Air Patrol). You are free to substitute another activity, or create your own, as long as you tie in with one or more concepts of the informal discussion.

Main concept for this lesson: **Critical thinking; reasoning.**