

Clinical Critical Thinking (CT) Cards

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What's the Point? Clinical CT cards give you the opportunity to practice two key elements of critical thinking: 1) Thinking ahead--being proactive and anticipating what you might be doing-- and 2) Thinking back (reflective thinking). Reflective thinking involves thinking back over what has happened during your clinical experience for the purpose of growth and improvement. Some goals of reflective thinking include: discovering meaning, making connections between clinical experiences and what you have learned in class, gaining understanding of others' perspectives and roles, developing a deeper understanding of what's involved in CT in the clinical setting, and evaluating and correcting your thinking.

In this assignment, you will use the Evidence-based Critical Thinking Indicators (CTIs) tool available at www.AlfaroTeachSmart.com and addressed in Alfaro-LeFevre (2004, 2006) as a guide for identifying critical thinking behaviors (remember that CTIs are behaviors that promote critical thinking in the clinical setting). Using this tool helps you to be systematic--a key CT behavior--in considering the behaviors you may want to work on. It will also help you to become clear about what you must do to think critically and be focused in your approach to improvement. The CTIs tool gives you a language to talk about your thinking.

Learning Outcomes: After completing the cards, you will:

- Gain an understanding of behaviors that promote CT, as well as the importance of thinking ahead and thinking back over experiences to improve your thinking and performance.
- Be able to communicate with your instructor about your progress.
- Have a "paper trail" that documents your own perspective on progress on developing CT behaviors.
- Give your instructor examples of your critical thinking progress (something that major accreditors like NLNAC and often ask to see).

Instructions:

1. Before going to the clinical setting, use a 5X7 card, or word processing document, and write your name, date, and clinical assignment at the top or on one side of the card/page. Identify 3-5 CTIs you may want to work on. If you want, also write additional comments, such as why you chose those CTIs. Keep your list of behaviors short, so that you stay focused
2. After the clinical experience, reflect on what happened, and whether or not you actually had the opportunity to work on the specific CTIs you listed. On the other side of the card/document, write 3-5 behaviors you *actually used* (these may or may not be what you planned to do.....the aim is to reflect on what actually happened). Understand that the point of this assignment is to be honest with yourself, not to be perfect.

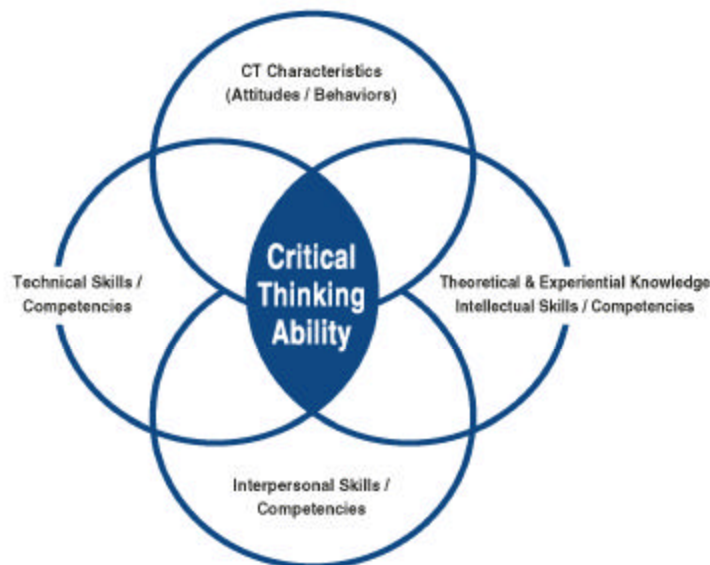
Alternatively:

1. Draw the 4-Circle CT model (see next page and Alfaro-LeFevre, 2004, 2006). Draw a line out of each of the circles, identifying knowledge, skills, or competencies you want to work on. This should be done before and after the clinical experience as well. Circle all behaviors you actually practiced.
2. Write a "critical incident" card, describing an incident that impacted on your ability to think critically (eg, a mistake learned from).

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3. On your card/page, identify things that impacted on your ability to think critically (eg, stress or sensory bombardment can inhibit CT (see Alfaro-LeFevre, 2004, Chapter 1). Identify some things you may be able to do to cope better next time.
4. The first few times you go to the clinical setting, your instructor may suggest that you simply observe what behaviors are being used by the nursing staff.
5. Check with your instructor regarding how (or whether) this assignment will be graded. If you have any suggestions on how to improve this assignment, please hand them in writing. Part of critical thinking is identifying how to improve a process. You have the opportunity to improve this assignment for other students. You can also email your suggestion to the author at AlfaroTeachSmart@aol.com.

4-Circle CT Model:



4-Circle CT Model

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References:

- Alfaro-LeFevre (2004). *Critical Thinking and Clinical Judgment: A Practical Approach, 3rd Ed.* Philadelphia: WB Saunders
- Alfaro-LeFevre (2006). *Applying Nursing Process: A Tool for Critical Thinking, 6th Ed.* Philadelphia: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
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- Blake, T. (2005). Journaling: An active learning technique. *International Journal of Nursing Education Scholarship*, 2(1). Accessed from: <http://www.bepress.com/ijnes>