

LC-DC Podcast Episode 2: Critical Thinking with Kash and Tavleen

Transcript

00:00:11

Kash

Hello everyone, welcome to LC-DC Podcast where we at Douglas College Learning Centre explore methods of tutoring, studying and learning. I'm your host, Kash, and today I'm joined by cohost Tavleen.

Tavleen

Hello everyone! Wondering what's our topic for today?

Kash

Yeah, I bet.

Tavleen

It's critical thinking. Get ready for success! But before we dive into our podcast, let's do the land acknowledgement.

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Douglas College respectfully acknowledges that our campuses are located on the unceded traditional and ancestral lands of the Coast Salish Peoples, including the territories of the ḡíḡáy (Katzie), q'w'a:ḡá'ḡḡ (Kwantlen), k'wíḡá'ḡḡ (Kwikwetlem), x'w'mḡk'ḡá'ḡḡ (Musqueam), qíqéyt (Qayqayt), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), scḡwáḡḡ (Tsawwassen) and sḡlilwḡḡ (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples.

00:00:56

Kash

Thanks, Tavleen. You told me you had a midterm. How did it go?

Tavleen

Let's just say it was pretty rough.

Kash

That bad?

Tavleen

Mmmhmmm. I mean, I thought I knew the material, but the exam proved me otherwise.

Kash

Oh, that's actually a perfect example of why we are talking about critical thinking today.

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Tavleen

How so?

Kash

Because thinking you know something and actually understanding it are two different things. A lot of students memorize facts without questioning them or making real connection. That's where critical thinking comes in. It's about not taking information at face value, but instead analyzing it, questioning it and making sense of it logically.

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Tavleen

So basically it's thinking smarter and not just memorizing harder?

Kash

Exactly. And when you apply it to studying, it helps you actually understand what you're learning instead of just cramming and hoping for the best.

Tavleen

OK, I could've actually used that before my midterm. How do I start?

00:02:03

Kash

Glad you asked. So you ask how to start applying critical thinking? Well, the first place to use it is how you study.

Tavleen

But how is critical thinking related to studying?

Kash

Because a lot of students, including you apparently, think and studying means just reading the textbook, highlighting notes, and hoping it all sticks.

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Tavleen

Yeah, I mean, that was literally my study strategy. Didn't work though.

Kash

That's because real learning isn't just about taking in information. It's about engaging with it. You have to make connections and ask questions and actually think about what you are learning.

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Tavleen

OK, but give me a real example, how do I actually do that?

Kash

Let's say you're learning about adjusting entries in accounting. Most students just try to memorize the types, like accurate expenses, prepaid expenses, unearned revenue, and so on. But without really understanding why they matter.

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Tavleen

Yeah, I'm guilty. I just wrote flash cards and hoped for the best.

Kash

Exactly. And that doesn't work. Instead of seeing accounting rules as random formulas to memorize, critical thinking helps you to see why those rules exist. It's about seeing connection, not just remembering facts.

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Tavleen

Alright, I see how this works in accounting, but what if I'm studying something else? Let's say business.

Kash

It's the same idea. Let's take business strategy. Say a company is deciding whether to expand into a new market, instead of just going with gut feeling, a critical thinker would ask what are the risks and rewards? What data support this decision? Are biases influencing this choice, like overconfidence from past success?

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Tavleen

So instead of just copying what a competitor is doing, they would actually analyze whether it's the right move.

Kash

Exactly. And this applies to personal decisions, too. Whether you're choosing a major, picking an internship, or even deciding how to spend your time.

Tavleen

Speaking of time, my biggest problem wasn't just studying wrong. It was thinking I had way more time than I actually did, and then suddenly, boom, midterm panic.

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Kash

That's actually a real cognitive bias called the planning fallacy. We tend to underestimate how long things will take, even when we've been in the same situation before.

Tavleen

Wow! So it's not just me?

Kash

Nope, it happens to everyone, but critical thinking helps you work around it. Instead of assuming "I'll finish studying in three hours", you can try this, for example: look at your past experiences. How long did similar tasks actually take you? Or add some buffer time. That means assume things will take longer than expected. You can also use active learning. That means instead of just reading summarize and try to teach material to a friend or test yourself.

00:05:18

Tavleen

Yeah. So instead of trusting my “it'll be fine” instincts, I should actually look at how things went last time and adjust. That's what you mean, right?

Kash

Exactly.

Tavleen

But I also want to point out one more issue. And I guess I'm not alone. Most students face it. It's exam day. I mean, I read the question and my brain just freezes. Totally blank.

00:05:51

Kash

That's rough. What's the first thing that runs through your head?

Tavleen

Usually, “oh no, I'm about to fail”. That's the one thing that comes to my mind. And then I start overthinking, second guessing myself, and boom! I waste time, rush through the rest of the exam. And that's so frustrating.

00:06:13

Kash

Classic exam panic. A lot of students struggle with this and most of the time it's not because they don't know the material. It's because they don't have a strategy for breaking down the problems.

Tavleen

Can you give an example?

Kash

Hmm, let's say you get a finance question about the time value of money. You see a bunch of numbers and your brain freaks out. Instead of staring at page, this time, try to do this. First, identify the key details. Identify if they are asking for a future value or present value and then see the relevant information. For example, what is the interest rate?

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Second, use a timeline. Draw out the cash flows to visualize what's happening, and then add all the relevant information on it, and the rest is easy. You just need to apply the correct formula. Because you see the problem clearly, solving it becomes much easier.

Tavleen

Oh, wow. So it's about organizing my thinking instead of just guessing.

00:07:19

Kash

Exactly. And this works for more than just finance. If you're writing an essay, break down the prompts into a smaller question first. If it's a case study, outline the problem before jumping into the solution.

Tavleen

OK. But even when I know the material, I still manage to mess up MCQ's [Multiple Choice Questions]. I'll be so sure about an answer and then I get back my exam. And no, it was all wrong.

00:07:48

Kash

Actually, that's super common and usually because of two big thinking traps: overconfidence and anchoring.

Tavleen

Oh no. We are talking about biases.

Kash

Only these two because they mess students up all the time. Overconfidence is when you trust your first instinct without really checking. Anchoring is when your brain locks into the first number or fact you see, even if it's misleading.

00:08:16

Tavleen

Wait, so when I see a big number in a question and assume the answer must be somewhere close to it, that's anchoring?

Kash

Yep. And when you pick an answer just because it feels right without double checking, that's overconfidence. The trick is to slow down, reread the question carefully, and challenge your first assumption before locking in your answer.

00:08:40

Tavleen

OK, I'm definitely gonna follow that. I think I just need to start second guessing my gut instincts just a little, right?

Kash

That's right.

Tavleen

Alright, I get why critical thinking is important. But now tell me how do I actually get better at it?

Kash

Just like everything else you practice and not just in a school - everywhere. The more you train your brain to think critically, the better it gets.

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You should try to expand your knowledge, but don't seek just one source because one of the biggest mistakes a student makes is getting all their information from the same place.

Tavleen

Like how some people only follow one YouTube channel or read one author?

Kash

Exactly. If you only watch one finance YouTuber or read one business blog, you're getting a very limited perspective. Real critical thinking means exposing yourself to different viewpoints.

00:09:39

Tavleen

OK, so what should I do instead?

Kash

Mix it up, read different books, listen to different podcasts, and watch videos from different creators, and most importantly, compare their opinion. Ask yourself, do they agree or contradict each other? What's their background? Do

they have expertise or they just sharing their opinions? And most importantly, are they giving both sides of the story or just pushing for one perspective?

00:10:08

Tavleen

So instead of just accepting what I hear, I should be looking at who's saying it and what's the angle of it?

Kash

Exactly. And that's how you avoid misinformation and actually build knowledge.

Tavleen

What about outside of studying? How can I practice critical thinking in real life?

Kash

There are so many ways. I'll give you a few. Try this. Join a case study competition. In case study you solve real world problems by analyzing data and defending your conclusions. That's a big practice for critical thinking. Or join a debate club because arguing both sides of a topic forces you to see different perspectives.

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You can also talk with people with different opinions and try to analyze trends and news by yourself. That means instead of just scrolling social media, ask yourself why certain trends are happening and who benefits from them.

Tavleen

So basically, be more curious, challenge myself, and get out of my comfort zone?

Kash

Yep, the more you do that, the stronger your critical thinking will get.

00:11:20

Tavleen

OK, so let's talk about something most students won't admit: Using ChatGPT for assignments now.

Kash

Oh, we are going there.

Tavleen

Absolutely. I mean it's just so easy to copy-paste an answer and move on, but I'm guessing you're about to tell me that's a bad idea, right?

Kash

Look, AI is super useful, but if you rely on it too much, you're letting it think for you instead of training your own brain.

Tavleen

So it's like using a calculator for everything and forgetting how to do math.

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Kash

Exactly. That was a great example. If you use AI to help you learn, that's great, but if you let it replace your thinking, your critical thinking skills will get weaker over time.

Tavleen

OK, so how do I actually use AI without killing my brain?

00:12:13

Kash

Do this: You can use it for brainstorming. Ask it to suggest ideas, but develop them yourself. Or have it quiz you. You can ask it to generate practice questions instead of just giving you the answers. And remember: Fact Check everything. AI can make mistakes so always verify information before trusting it. AI should be an assistant, not a replacement for your own thinking. Use it wisely and it can actually help you become a better critical thinker.

00:12:46

Tavleen

Alright. This has been an eye opener. I guess critical thinking isn't just for school; it's something you use everywhere.

Kash

Exactly. The more you practice it, the sharper your mind gets.

Tavleen

OK, challenge accepted. Next exam, I'm coming in prepared!

Kash

Good luck Tavleen and that's it for today's show. Thanks for listening!

00:13:15

Tavleen

And remember, the Douglas College Learning Centre provides free one-on-one peer tutoring to all the Douglas students.



Kash

You can book an appointment or find out more information at our website:
library.douglascollege.ca/learningcentre

Tavleen

And don't forget to follow us on Instagram. The username is @dclearningcentre.

Kash

And for those about to learn, we salute you.

Bye.