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Professor Dowdell began working with Karen Huffman and the Wiley Psychology team as a Wiley Faculty Network mentor in 2007. She has taught and mentored faculty on best practices and the use of technology in teaching. She has conducted numerous online presentations and live workshops. As a decade-long user of WileyPLUS, Professor Dowdell has served as a development consultant on everything from WileyPLUS functionality, to video content, instructional design, user-experience and faculty training.
Brief Contents

PREFACE  x

1  Introduction and Research Methods   1
2  Neuroscience and Biological Foundations  44
3  Stress and Health Psychology  81
4  Sensation and Perception  115
5  States of Consciousness  151
6  Learning  184
7  Memory  220
8  Thinking, Language, and Intelligence  256
9  Life Span Development I  288
10  Life Span Development II  323
11  Gender and Human Sexuality  351
12  Motivation and Emotion  387
13  Personality  421
14  Psychological Disorders  456
15  Therapy  494
16  Social Psychology  531

APPENDIX A  Statistics and Psychology  A-1
APPENDIX B  Answers to Self-tests, Connections, and Research Challenges  B-1

GLOSSARY  GL-1
REFERENCES  R-1
NAME INDEX  NI-1
SUBJECT INDEX  SI-1

AVAILABLE SEPARATELY UPON REQUEST:
17  Industrial/Organizational Psychology  569
18  Psychology at Work in the Global Economy  597
# Contents

1  Introduction and Research Methods  

1.1  Introducing Psychology  

1.2  The Science of Psychology  

1.3  Research Methods  

1.4  Tools for Student Success  

Chapter Summary  

2  Neuroscience and Biological Foundations  

2.1  Neural and Hormonal Processes  

2.2  Nervous System Organization  

2.3  A Tour Through the Brain  

Gender and Cultural Diversity  Are Male and Female Brains Different?  

Research Challenge  Does Lying Lead to More Lies?  

Chapter Summary  

3  Stress and Health Psychology  

3.1  Understanding Stress  

3.2  Stress and Illness  

3.3  Stress Management  

Psychology and Your Personal Success  Can Mindfulness Improve Your GPA?  

Chapter Summary  

4  Sensation and Perception  

4.1  Understanding Sensation  

4.2  How We See and Hear  

4.3  Our Other Important Senses  

Research Challenge  Can Music Improve the Taste of Beer?  

Gender and Cultural Diversity  Are the Gestalt Laws Universally True?  

Research Challenge  Does Wearing Red Increase Your Sex Appeal?  

Psychology and Your Personal Success  Helen Keller’s Inspiring Advice  

Chapter Summary  

5  States of Consciousness  

5.1  Understanding Consciousness  

5.2  Understanding Sleep and Dreams  

Gender and Cultural Diversity  Are There Differences in Dreams?  

Research Challenge  What’s Wrong with Distracted Driving?  

Psychology and Your Personal Success  Can Maximizing Your Consciousness Save Lives?  

5.3  Psychoactive Drugs  

Psychology and Your Professional Success  Potential Career Costs of Addiction  

5.4  Meditation and Hypnosis  

Chapter Summary  

6  Learning  

6.1  Classical Conditioning  

6.2  Operant Conditioning  

Research Challenge  Do Dogs Prefer Food or Praise?  

Chapter Summary  

**Psychology and a Contemporary Success** Michael Jordan  

Psychology and a Contemporary Success  Adele Diamond  

Psychology and a Contemporary Success  Helen Keller  

Psychology and a Contemporary Success  Albert Einstein  

Psychology and a Contemporary Success  Marcus Luttrell  

Psychology and a Contemporary Success  Cesar Millan  

Gender and Cultural Diversity  Culture and Job Stress  

Psychology and Your Professional Success  How Well Do You Cope with Job Stress?  

Psychology and Your Professional Success  Are There Differences in Dreams?  

Research Challenge  What’s Wrong with Distracted Driving?  

Research Challenge  When Do Losers Actually Win?  

Research Challenge  Does Lying Lead to More Lies?  

Research Challenge  Can Music Improve the Taste of Beer?  

Research Challenge  Does Wearing Red Increase Your Sex Appeal?  

Research Challenge  Does Lying Lead to More Lies?  

Research Challenge  Can Music Improve the Taste of Beer?  

Research Challenge  Does Wearing Red Increase Your Sex Appeal?  

Research Challenge  Does Lying Lead to More Lies?  

Research Challenge  Can Music Improve the Taste of Beer?  

Research Challenge  Does Wearing Red Increase Your Sex Appeal?  

Research Challenge  Does Lying Lead to More Lies?  

Research Challenge  Can Music Improve the Taste of Beer?  

Research Challenge  Does Wearing Red Increase Your Sex Appeal?
Contents

7 Memory 220

Psychology and a Contemporary Success Elizabeth Loftus 221
7.1 The Nature of Memory 221
Research Challenge Can Taking Photos Impair Our Memories? 224
7.2 Forgetting 233
Gender and Cultural Diversity Does Culture Affect Memory? 237
7.3 Biological Bases of Memory 238
7.4 Memory Distortions and Improvement 244
Psychology and Your Personal Success Can Memory Improvement Increase Success? 248
Chapter Summary 251

8 Thinking, Language, and Intelligence 256

Psychology and a Contemporary Success Bill Gates 257
8.1 Thinking 258
Psychology and Your Personal Success Strategies for Better Problem Solving 262
Research Challenge Is Creativity Linked with Psychological Disorders? 265
8.2 Language 266
Gender and Cultural Diversity Can Your Nonverbal Language Reveal Your Roots? 270
8.3 Intelligence 272
8.4 Intelligence Controversies 276
Psychology and Your Professional Success Is a High IQ Essential to High Achievement? 282
Chapter Summary 284

9 Life Span Development I 288

Psychology and a Contemporary Success Oprah Winfrey 289
9.1 Studying Development 290
Research Challenge Deprivation and Development 291
Gender & Cultural Diversity Should Diversity Affect Research? 294
9.2 Physical Development 295

Psychology and Your Professional Success Why Can’t We Get Anything Done Around Here? 205

6.3 Cognitive–Social Learning 206
Research Challenge Does the Media Impact Our Body Size Preferences? 210
Psychology and Your Personal Success Can Learning Principles Help You Succeed in College? 210
6.4 Biology of Learning 211
Chapter Summary 215

10 Life Span Development II 323

Psychology and a Classic Success Nelson Mandela 324
10.1 Moral Development 325
Gender and Cultural Diversity Effects on Moral Development 327
10.2 Personality Development 328
10.3 Neurodevelopmental Disorders 331
10.4 Challenges of Adulthood 335
Psychology and Your Personal Success What Are the Secrets to Enduring Love? 336
Research Challenge Are Brain Differences Associated with Age-Related Happiness? 341
Chapter Summary 346

11 Gender and Human Sexuality 351

Psychology and a Contemporary Success Ellen DeGeneres 352
11.1 Studying Human Sexuality 353
Gender and Cultural Diversity Sexuality Across Cultures 354
11.2 Sexual Identity 356
Research Challenge Is Gender Income Inequality Real? 357
11.3 Sexual Behavior 364
11.4 Sex Problems 367
Research Challenge Does Political Affiliation Reflect Sexual Behavior? 372
11.5 Sex and Modern Life 376
Psychology and Your Personal Success Are Your Conflicts Constructive or Destructive? 380
Chapter Summary 384

12 Motivation and Emotion 387

Psychology and a Contemporary Success Malala Yousafzai 388
12.1 Theories of Motivation 389
12.2 Motivation and Behavior 394
Psychology and Your Professional Success What Are the Best Ways to Increase Motivation? 402
12.3 Components and Theories of Emotion 403
| Research Challenge | Does Wearing “Sexy” Clothing Signal Sexual Interest? | 406 |
| 12.4 Experiencing Emotions | 411 |
| Gender and Cultural Diversity | Are Emotions Affected by Culture and Evolution? | 411 |
| Psychology and Your Personal Success | Are There Research-Based Secrets for Happiness? | 415 |
| Chapter Summary | 418 |

| 13 | Personality | 421 |
| Psychology and a Classic Success: Abraham Lincoln | 422 |
| 13.1 Psychoanalytic/Psychodynamic Theories | 423 |
| 13.2 Trait Theories | 430 |
| Research Challenge | Do Nonhuman Animals Have Unique Personalities? | 433 |
| Psychology and Your Personal Success | Can (and Should) We Improve Our Personalities? | 434 |
| 13.3 Humanistic Theories | 435 |
| 13.4 Social-Cognitive Theories | 438 |
| Psychology and Your Personal Success | Could You Pass the Stanford Marshmallow Test? | 440 |
| 13.5 Biological Theories | 442 |
| 13.6 Personality Assessment | 444 |
| Psychology and Your Professional Success | Should You Match Your Personality with Your Career? | 448 |
| Chapter Summary | 450 |

| 14 | Psychological Disorders | 456 |
| Psychology and a Contemporary Success: Jennifer Lawrence | 457 |
| 14.1 Studying Psychological Disorders | 458 |
| 14.2 Anxiety Disorders | 467 |
| 14.3 Depressive and Bipolar Disorders | 472 |
| Research Challenge | Are Head Injuries Related to Depressive and Other Psychological Disorders? | 474 |
| 14.4 Schizophrenia | 476 |
| 14.5 Other Disorders | 480 |
| 14.6 Gender and Cultural Effects | 484 |
| Research Challenge | Does Unequal Pay for Equal Work Increase Female Anxiety and Depression? | 485 |
| Psychology and Your Personal Success | Can Resilience Promote Mental Health in Children and Adults? | 488 |
| Chapter Summary | 490 |

| 15 | Therapy | 494 |
| Psychology and a Contemporary Success: J. K. Rowling | 495 |
| 15.1 Talk Therapies | 496 |
| 15.2 Behavior Therapies | 505 |
| 15.3 Biomedical Therapies | 510 |
| 15.4 Psychotherapy in Perspective | 516 |
| Research Challenge | Can Watching Movies Prevent Divorce? | 518 |
| Gender and Cultural Diversity | Therapy in Action | 523 |
| Psychology and Your Personal Success: What Are the Keys to Good Mental Health? | 524 |
| Chapter Summary | 526 |

| 16 | Social Psychology | 531 |
| Psychology and a Contemporary Success: Sonia Sotomayor | 532 |
| 16.1 Social Cognition | 533 |
| Psychology and Your Personal Success | How Can We Reduce Attributional Biases? | 535 |
| Research Challenge | Can a 10-Minute Conversation Reduce Prejudice? | 543 |
| Psychology and Your Professional Success | The Power of Affirmative Action | 544 |
| 16.2 Social Influence | 545 |
| Gender and Cultural Diversity | How Does Culture Affect Personal Space? | 546 |
| 16.3 Social Relations | 554 |
| Psychology and Your Personal Success | Using Psychology to Increase Your Dating Appeal | 560 |
| Research Challenge | Can Long-Distance Relationships Survive? | 561 |
| Chapter Summary | 565 |

| APPENDIX A | Statistics and Psychology | A-1 |
| APPENDIX B | Answers to Self-tests, Connections, and Research Challenges | B-1 |
| GLOSSARY | GL-1 |
| REFERENCES | R-1 |
| NAME INDEX | NI-1 |
| SUBJECT INDEX | SI-1 |

| AVAILABLE SEPARATELY UPON REQUEST: |
| 17 Industrial/Organization al Psychology | 569 |
| 18 Psychology at Work in the Global Economy | 597 |
What do you think about the death-defying mountain climber on the cover of this text? Most readers don’t recognize the time and thought authors and publishers commit to visually capturing the essential message of their work. In our case, we’ve always chosen activity-oriented images for all twelve editions of Psychology in Action because, as its name implies, our textbook has earned its reputation as a leader in active learning.

Beginning with our first edition, we were the first to include Try This Yourself activities, Study Tips, Research Challenges, and other “hands on” demonstrations (e.g., Critical Thinking Exercises and Media Challenges that are available as graded assignments in the WileyPlus program). Why? We’ve always believed that student success is best assured through active learning, which encourages students to think critically and engage with the material—thus leading to deeper levels of processing. Our enduring foundation in active learning continues in this twelfth edition—as shown in the following examples.

What’s NEW in Psychology in Action 12e? Given our commitment to active learning and evidence-based research, we’ve chosen to make the development of a growth mindset and grit as the central goals and theme of this edition. As you may know, studies find that these two factors may be the most significant factors in determining career and academic success. In fact, some research suggests that they may be even more important than IQ (Datu et al., 2016; Dweck, 2007, 2012; Suzuk et al., 2015).

With this focus on a growth mindset and grit in mind, we start each chapter with a NEW Psychology and a Classic (or Contemporary) Success feature, which offers a brief description of a famous figure who exemplifies both qualities. (See the following example of J. K. Rowling.) The stories are then embedded throughout each chapter to illustrate core concepts. We believe offering these repeated success stories will reassure our readers that achievement is largely under their control, advanced by a positive mindset and desire to overcome obstacles.

In keeping with our commitment to active learning and evidence-based research, you may notice new Try This Yourself activities, Research Challenges, and Critical Thinking exercises. As an active reader, you’ll learn by trying new things, engaging with the material, and applying your knowledge to real-life situations. Our introductory chapter will help you reflect on your own identity and goals as an active learner and consumer of scientific research.

Let’s Get Started

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Preface
and thereby inspire them to use grit and a growth mindset to achieve their own personal dreams and aspirations. As shown in Table 1, we also include two additional NEW features—Psychology and Your Personal Success and Psychology and Your Professional Success—to further demonstrate how the content of each chapter, along with a growth mindset and grit, can help them succeed in the real world.

Given that our gracious and loyal previous adopters may be interested in what changes we’ve made and/or the updating we’ve added in this 12th edition (i.e., to the basic content, key terms, and continued features), we’ve created a handy summary of these changes in Table 2. This table also summarizes the key assets for each chapter provided in WileyPLUS.

**Additional Resources**

**WileyPlus with ORION**

Given that students obviously don’t all learn and achieve at the same rate, WileyPLUS with ORION provides adaptive practice in a digital tutorial, homework, and assessment platform that significantly improves individual student performance and success rates.

- Identify their personal strengths and weaknesses through adaptive, 24/7, robust self-testing with immediate, personalized feedback
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- Truly engage with course content—resulting in deeper levels of processing, higher performance, and overall achievement in the course
- Improve their individual, academic success skills and transfer them to all other college courses
- Quickly assess individual and class activity and track student progress using real time data and analytics, and then adjust lectures and testing material appropriately
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- Save preparation and grading time with high-quality instructor resources and automated grading of assignments, practice tests, and exams
- Enhance lectures and create a focused and personalized course that reflects their individual teaching style
- Quickly identify and understand student learning trends to improve classroom engagement
- Improve their course year after year using WileyPLUS data

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**Psychology and a Contemporary Success | J. K. Rowling**

Joanne Rowling, best known as J. K. Rowling (1965–), is a British novelist, screenwriter, and film producer famous for her authorship of the *Harry Potter* series of fantasy novels (see photo). Rowling (pronounced “rolling”) was born in Yate, England, to parents who, as she says, “came from impoverished backgrounds and neither of whom had been to college.” They did, however, love to read, and Rowling grew up surrounded by books to become the classic “bookworm.” After graduating from Exeter University, Rowling moved to Portugal, where she met and married a Portuguese journalist. The marriage soon ended in divorce, and Rowling moved with her daughter to live near her sister in Edinburgh, Scotland. Struggling to support herself and her young daughter, she reluctantly signed up for welfare benefits, saying that she was “as poor as it is possible to be . . . without being homeless.” Rowling sold her first novel in the Harry Potter series for only $4,000. Since then, though, this series of books has sold over 450 million copies (McClurg, 2017; Rowling, n.d.).

Despite her apparently wildly successful life, Rowling has endured numerous hardships. She reports that her teenage years were very unhappy due to her mother’s protracted illness and a strained relationship with her father. The period after her divorce and her mother’s painful death from multiple sclerosis was a particularly difficult time for Rowling. She saw herself as such a dismal failure that she even contemplated suicide. Fortunately, therapy helped her climb out of her diagnosed clinical depression, and she later reported that it was her experiences with such deep despair that led her to create the Dementors—the soul-sucking monsters found in the *Harry Potter* series (Bennett, 2012; Oppenheim, 2016; Rowling, n.d.).
Wiley E-Textbook

E-Textbooks are complete digital versions of the text that help students study more efficiently as they:

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This twelfth edition particularly benefited from the incredible patience, wisdom, and insight of Emma Townsend-Merino. Her title, Assistant Development Editor, does not reflect the true scope of her responsibilities and contributions. Emma’s patience, wisdom, and professionalism inspire all who know her. As Jason Spiegelman (our incredible Test Bank author) noted, “she’s awesome!”

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Title</th>
<th>Psychology and Professional Success</th>
<th>Psychology and Personal Success</th>
<th>WileyPLUS Assets: Animations(A), Mini Courses(MC), Interactives(I)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction and Research Methods</td>
<td>Michael Jordan Would You Like a Career in Psychology?</td>
<td>Why Are a Growth Mindset and Grit Important?</td>
<td>• Correlation does not mean causation (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Components of an experiment (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Research methods (MC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The scientific method (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Neuroscience and Biological Foundations</td>
<td>Adele Diamond How to Train Your Brain</td>
<td>How to Train Your Brain</td>
<td>• Sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Peripheral and central nervous systems (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Lateralization of the brain (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The human brain (MC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Key parts of the neuron (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Communication between neurons (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Stress and Health Psychology</td>
<td>Marcus Luttrell How Well Do You Cope with Job Stress?</td>
<td>Can Mindfulness Improve Your GPA?</td>
<td>• Three types of conflict (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The HPA axis and General Adaptation Syndrome (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Physical response to stress (MC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Sensation and Perception</td>
<td>Helen Keller's Inspiring Advice</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Sensation vs. perception (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• The body senses (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Understanding perception: Selection and interpretation (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 States of Consciousness</td>
<td>Albert Einstein Potential Career Costs of Addiction</td>
<td>Can Maximizing Your Consciousness Save Lives?</td>
<td>• Inattentional blindness, selective attention, automatic vs. controlled processes (A)</td>
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<td>• Sleep deprivation (A)</td>
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<td>• Why we sleep: Four theories (A)</td>
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<td>• Agonist and antagonist drugs: How do they produce their effects? (I)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Learning</td>
<td>Cesar Millan Why Can’t We Get Anything Done Around Here?</td>
<td>Can Learning Principles Help You Succeed in College?</td>
<td>• Reinforcement vs. punishment (A)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• Effective use of reinforcement and punishment (A)</td>
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<td>• Six principles of operant conditioning (A)</td>
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<td>• Schedules of reinforcement (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Classical conditioning (MC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Memory</td>
<td>Elizabeth Loftus Can Memory Improvement Increase Success?</td>
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<td>• ESR memory model (A)</td>
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<td>• Factors in forgetting (A)</td>
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<td>• Memory distortions (A)</td>
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<td>• Memory tools for student success (A)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Thinking, Language, and Intelligence</td>
<td>Bill Gates Is a High IQ Essential to High Achievement?</td>
<td>Strategies for Better Problem Solving</td>
<td>• Problem solving (A)</td>
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<td>• Barriers to problem solving (A)</td>
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<td>• Issues in measuring intelligence (A)</td>
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<td>• Language and the brain (I)</td>
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<td>• Language acquisition (I)</td>
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<td>Chapter Title</td>
<td>Psychology and a Classic/Contemporary Success</td>
<td>Psychology and Your Professional Success</td>
<td>Psychology and Your Personal Success</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 9 Life Span Development I           | Oprah Winfrey                                 | Does Ageism Matter?                      | The Power of Touch                  | • Research methods in development: Cross-sectional vs. longitudinal design (I)  
• Cognitive development (A)  
• Styles of attachment (A)  
• Parenting styles (I)                                                                 |
| 10 Life Span Development II         | Nelson Mandela                                | What Are the Secrets to Enduring Love?   |                                     | • Moral development (A)  
• Erikson’s psychosocial theory (MC)                                                                                           |
| 11 Gender and Human Sexuality       | Ellen DeGeneres                                | Are Your Conflicts Constructive or Destructive? |                                       | • Cognitive factors influencing arousal (A)                                                                                     |
| 12 Motivation and Emotion           | Malala Yousafzai                              | What Are the Best Ways to Increase Motivation? | Are There Research-Based Secrets for Happiness? | • Environmental factors in eating and obesity (A)  
• Persistence and grit (A)  
• Theories of motivation (MC)  
• Symptoms of anorexia and bulimia (I)                                                                                           |
| 13 Personality                      | Abraham Lincoln                               | Should You Match Your Personality With Your Career? | Can (and Should) We Improve Our Personalities? Could You Pass the Marshmallow Test? | • Trait theories (A)  
• Unconditional love (A)  
• Reciprocal determinism (A)  
• Freud’s personality structure (I)                                                                                           |
| 14 Psychological Disorders          | Jennifer Lawrence                             | Can Resilience Promote Mental Health in Children and Adults? |                                       | • How phobias are created (A)  
• Learned helplessness (A)  
• Gender differences in managing depression (A)  
• Biopsychosocial model of schizophrenia (MC)  
• Anxiety disorders (I)                                                                                                         |
| 15 Therapy                          | J. K. Rowling                                 | What Are the Keys to Good Mental Health? |                                       | • Systematic desensitization (A)  
• Operant conditioning (A)  
• Group therapy (A)  
• Cognitive behavioral therapy (MC)  
• Three major approaches to therapy (I)  
• Five common goals of therapy (I)                                                                                                 |
| 16 Social Psychology                | Sonia Sotomayor                                | How Can We Reduce Attributional Biases? Can Prejudice Affect Your Career Success? | Using Psychology to Increase Your Dating Appeal | • Attribution (A)  
• Groupthink (A)  
• Altruism: Why do we help? (A)  
• Cognitive dissonance (MC)  
• Prejudice and discrimination (I)                                                                                                 |
TABLE 2  Continuing Special Features in Psychology in Action, 12e

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Title</th>
<th>Research Challenges (RC)/ Gender and Cultural Diversity</th>
<th>Significantly Revised Topics (RT)/Added New Topics (ANT)</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction and Research Methods</td>
<td>(RC) Why Do Men and Women Lie About Sex? (G&amp;C) Psychology’s History of Diversity</td>
<td>(RT) Moved research ethics to the Science of Psychology section, updated and revised correlational research (ANT) New connections of famous figure (Michael Jordan) with key chapter topics. Added discussion of quasi-experimental designs, growth mindset, and grit</td>
<td>(DKT) The term “survey” replaced with survey/interview (NKT) Functionalism, grit, growth mindset, natural selection, representative sample, structuralism</td>
<td>(CT) How to Think Critically About Psychological Science (MC) Is College Worth It?</td>
<td>Applying Research Methods (V) The Experiment (V) The Art of Prediction (A) Yerkes Primate Center (VFT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Neuroscience and Biological Foundations</td>
<td>(RC) Does Lying Lead to More Lies? (RC) Phineas Gage—Myths versus Facts (G&amp;C) Are Male and Female Brains Different? (G&amp;C) Culture and Job Stress</td>
<td>(RT) Moved Genetic Inheritance to Ch. 9, expanded discussion of frontal lobes (ANT) New connections of famous figure (Adele Diamond) with key chapter topics. Added discussion of executive functions and positive effects of simple mental skills training and physical exercise on brain functioning</td>
<td>(DKT) Moved key terms related to genetics to Chapter 9 (NKT) All-or-nothing principle, executive functions, fight-flight-freeze response, motor cortex, nervous system, somatosensory cortex</td>
<td>(CT) DNA Testing: Changing Lives, Saving Lives (MC) The (Invisible) Plague of Concussion</td>
<td>Dissecting the Brain (V) Interaction of Genes and Environment (V) Drawing and Building A Brain (V) The Brain (A) Alcohol, Neurotransmitters and Your Brain (A) Neuroimaging (VFT) Reading Your DNA (VFT)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Stress and Health Psychology</td>
<td>(RC) What are the Hidden Benefits of Practice Testing? (RC) When Do Losers Actually Win? (G&amp;C) What are the Problems with Acculturative Stress?</td>
<td>(RT) Updated and revised the benefits of stress, social media’s negative effects, and PTSD with a focus on veterans (ANT) New connections of famous figure (Marcus Luttrell) with key chapter topics. Added discussion of acculturative stress, chronic pain, and cognitive appraisal. Moved table and major discussion of defense mechanisms from Chapter 13 to this chapter</td>
<td>(DKT) Type A and Type B (NKT) Acculturative stress, chronic pain, fight-flight-freeze response (versus fight or flight)</td>
<td>(CT) Perils of Procrastination (MC) Are We Denying the Dangers of Stress?</td>
<td>Sources of Stress (V) Coping with Stress (V) Positive Psychology (V) Biofeedback (VFT) Managing Stress Improves Health (A)</td>
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<td>5 States of Consciousness</td>
<td>(RC) What’s Wrong with Distracted Driving? (G&amp;C) Are There Differences in Dreams?</td>
<td>(RT) Significantly updated and revised text on sleep deprivation, opioids, LSD, Ketamine, and marijuana (ANT) New connections of famous figure (Albert Einstein) with key chapter topics. Added discussion of effects of multitasking on learning, new figure on sleep deprivation, emotionality and impulse control</td>
<td>(NKT) Inattentional blindness, suprachiasmatic nucleus</td>
<td>(CT) The Spectacular Now (MC) Teen Night Owls</td>
<td>Automatic Processing and Multitasking (V) Myths about Sleep, Dreaming and Drugs (V) Diagnosing Sleep Disorders (VFT)</td>
</tr>
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<td>7 Memory</td>
<td>(RC) Can Taking Photos Impair Our Memories? (G&amp;C) Does Culture Affect Memory?</td>
<td>(RT) Updated and expanded discussion of infant memories, working memory with new figure, traumatic brain injury, eyewitness testimony, and repressed memories (ANT) New connections of famous figure (Elizabeth Loftus) with key chapter topics. Added discussion and new figure of the four major models of memory</td>
<td>(DKT) Sleeper effect (NKT) Parallel distributed processing, repression</td>
<td>(CT) Critical Thinking Is No Laughing Matter . . . Or Is It? (MC) How Memoirists Mold the Truth</td>
<td>Constructing Memory (V) Organizing Long-Term Memories (V) How Could I Forget That? (V) Eyewitness Memory (V) Enhancing Your Memory (A) USA Memory Championships (VFT) Alzheimer’s Treatment Center (VFT)</td>
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<td><strong>8</strong> Thinking, Language, and Intelligence</td>
<td>(RC) Is creativity Linked with Psychological Disorders? (G&amp;C) Can Your Nonverbal Language Reveal Your Roots?</td>
<td>(RT) Updated discussion on the value of play and creativity, expanded and updated research on controversies surrounding racial/ethnic differences</td>
<td>(DKT) Babbling, cooing, overextension, overgeneralization, savant syndrome, telegraphic speech</td>
<td>(CT) 12 Years A Slave (MC) How Social Media Is Ruining Our Minds</td>
<td>Barriers to Problem Solving (V) Understanding IQ (V) Standards for Psychological Tests (V) Problem Solving (A) Baby Sign Language (VFT) High IQ Society (VFT) Down Syndrome Connection (VFT)</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>9</strong> Life Span Development I</td>
<td>(RC) Deprivation and Development (G&amp;C) Should Diversity Affect Research?</td>
<td>(RT) Expanded discussion of cultural effects on developmental research. Added new research on prenatal exposure to smoke and later obesity and how taking “selfies” relates to narcissism (ANT) New connections of famous figure (Bill Gates) with key chapter topics and added new discussion of artificial intelligence</td>
<td>(DKT) Moved age-related positivity effect to Chapter 10 (NKT) Behavioral genetics, chromosomes, DNA, epigenetics, gene, temperament, theory of mind</td>
<td>(CT) Overcoming Egocentric Thinking (MC) Older and Slower?</td>
<td>Understanding Development in Context (V) The Strange Situation (V) Attachment Through the Lifespan (V) A Guide to Parenting (VFT) Piaget and Cognitive Development (A)</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>10</strong> Life Span Development II</td>
<td>(RC) Are Brain Differences Associated with Age-Related Happiness? (G&amp;C) Effects on Moral Development</td>
<td>(RT) New section on how to increase your positivity and how traveling may increase immoral behavior (ANT) New connections of famous figure (Nelson Mandela) with key chapter topics. Added discussion of connection of theory of mind with autism, along with the age-related positivity effect</td>
<td>(DKT) Moved resiliency to Chapter 14 (NKT) Age-related positivity effect</td>
<td>(CT) Morality and Academic Cheating (MC) Millennials: Not the Marrying Kind</td>
<td>Kohlberg’s Stages of Moral Reasoning (A) Erikson’s Psychosocial Theory (V) Factors in Marital Satisfaction (V) Attitudes Toward Aging (V) Dying with Dignity: Hospice (VFT)</td>
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<td>11 Gender and Human Sexuality</td>
<td>(RC) Is Gender Income Inequality Real? (RC) Does Political Affiliation Reflect Sexual Behavior? (G&amp;C) Sexuality Across Cultures</td>
<td>(RT) Expanded discussion of sexual prejudice and sexual orientation, including LGBTQ (ANT) New connections of famous figure (Ellen DeGeneres) with key chapter topics. Added new discussion on gender and income inequality, the double standard, pair bonding, the fallacy of “stranger danger,” and child sexual abuse</td>
<td>(NKT) Double standard, gender stereotypes, pair bonding, sexuality, sexually transmitted infection</td>
<td>(CT) The Scarlet Letter (MC) Scarcity of Women in Science?</td>
<td>Clearing Up the Confusion: Gender Roles, Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation (V) Gender (A) The Sexual Response Cycle (V) Healthy Sexuality (V) Sexual Communication (V) Planned Parenthood (VFT)</td>
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<td>12 Motivation and Emotion</td>
<td>(RC) Does Wearing “Sexy” Clothing Signal Sexual Interest? (G&amp;C) Are Emotions Affected by Culture and Evolution?</td>
<td>(RT) Revised discussion and figure on intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation, and updated and expanded theories on basic emotions (ANT) New connections of famous figure (Malala Yousafzai) with key chapter topics. Added new table and research: · Emotions · Psychology of happiness · Botox injections and the link to decreased empathy · How expectancies increase alcohol consumption · How sleep deprivation, photos of food, and processed foods increase eating</td>
<td>(NKT) Adaptation-level phenomenon, display rules</td>
<td>(CT) The New Psychology of Success (MC) Mirror, Mirror on The Wall?</td>
<td>Get Motivated (V) Hormones and Hunger (V) Emotional Intelligence (V) The Polygraph (A) Surgical Weight Loss Center (VFT)</td>
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| **14**        | **Psychological Disorders**                                   | (ANT) New connections of famous figure (Abraham Lincoln) with key chapter topics. Added discussion and figures:  
• Freud and modern western culture  
• Mischel's marshmallow test  
• Personality and behavioral genetics  
• Identical vs. fraternal twins and adoption studies  
• Introversion and extraversion misconceptions | (NKT) Mania, major depressive disorder, nonsuicidal self-injury, psychological disorder, psychology student syndrome, resilience | (CT) How Your Thoughts Can Make You Depressed  
(MC) Lefties and Psychotic Disorders | Myths About Mental Illness (V)  
Signs of Suicide (V)  
OCD (VFT)  
Bipolar Disorder (VFT)  
Schizophrenia (A) |
| **15**        | **Therapy**                                                  | (RT) Moved and expanded discussion of the stigma of mental illness, suicide and other general terms to front of chapter to better apply to all disorders, expanded discussion of gender strategies for managing depression  
(ANT) New connections of famous figure (Jennifer Lawrence) with key chapter topics. Added discussion and new figures:  
• OCD  
• Antisocial and borderline personality disorders  
• Nonsuicidal self-injury  
• Psychology student syndrome  
• Resilience | | | | 

(RC) Are Head Injuries Related to Depressive and Other Psychological Disorders?  
(RC) Does Unequal Pay for Equal Work Increase Female Anxiety and Depression?  
(RC) Can Watching Movies Prevent Divorce?  
(G&C) Therapy in Action
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| 16 Social Psychology | (RC) Can a 10-Minute Conversation Reduce Prejudice? (G&C) How Does Culture Affect Personal Space? (RC) Can Long-Distance Relationships Survive? | (RT) Moved prejudice to social cognition section, expanded discussion on flirting, deleted female named hurricanes (ANT) New connections of famous figure (Sonia Sotomayor) with key chapter topics. Added new discussions and/or new figures:  
- Prefrontal cortex and relation to social behavior  
- How taking pain pills can change attitudes  
- Implicit biases  
- Saving your own life  
- Social facilitation  
- Social loafing | (DKT) Frustration-aggression hypothesis, mere-exposure effect  
(NKT) social facilitation, social loafing, changed triarchic theory of love to triangular theory of love | (CT) To Kill A Mockingbird (MC) When Science Becomes News | Implicit Attitudes (V)  
Bystander Effect (V)  
Attitudes and Cognitive Dissonance (A)  
Internet Dating (VFT) |
Successful Living Through Critical Thinking

Co-authored with Thomas Frangicetto (and generous contributions from his students at Northampton Community College, Bethlehem, PA)

“Sherlock Holmes is not a cold, calculating, self-gratifying machine. He cares for Watson... and for Mrs. Hudson. He has a conscience... In other words, Holmes has emotions—and attachments—like the rest of us. What he’s better at is controlling them and only letting them show under very specific circumstances.”

Maria Konnikova (2012), “Stop Calling Sherlock Holmes A Sociopath!”

Psychologist Maria Konnikova also could have said that Sherlock Holmes – the famous fictional detective created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and popularized in numerous movies, books, and TV shows – is an excellent critical thinker. In applying fundamental, psychological principles of deduction, perception, skepticism, and logic, Holmes realized that emotions could be the enemy of sound reasoning (Kellogg, 1986). Even the most sublime emotion of all, love, is not to be trusted. In one story, Holmes says to his best friend and crime-solving companion, Dr. John Watson, “Love is an emotional thing, and whatever is emotional is opposed to that cold reason which I place above all things.”

Why are we opening this Prologue on Critical Thinking with a discussion of emotions? We believe, as Sherlock Holmes did, that our capacity for objective reason is compromised when we are highly emotional (Halpern, 2014; Paul & Elder, 2002). What about Sherlock Holmes’ love life? Although he “cared deeply” about special people in his life, he apparently never experienced romantic love. Had Holmes been a real person working with Dr. John Gottman (a pre-eminent authority on romantic relationships—see Chapter 10), and had he applied his critical thinking skills to his love life, he may have been more successful. Effective critical thinking is the best route to finding lasting love, as well as the best antidote to self-defeating, repetitive thoughts, feelings and actions. Unlike the common use of “critical” as a negative type of criticism and fault finding, critical thinking is a positive, life-enhancing process and key to success in all parts of our lives.

What exactly is critical thinking? We define it as: Thinking about our feelings, actions, and thoughts so we can clarify and improve them (adapted from Chaffee, 1988, p. 29). As you can see in Figure 1, there are 3 main categories of critical thinking, with at least 15 overlapping critical thinking components (CTCs): Affective (feelings/emotions), Behavioral (actions), and Cognitive (thoughts).
Critical Thinking Components (CTCs)

(Note: Most CTCs include personal examples generously provided by students at Northampton Community College.)

Affective Components (Emotional foundation for critical thinking)

1. **Empathize and Demonstrate Altruism:** Critical thinkers are empathic. They try to understand others’ feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. Noncritical thinkers view everything in relation to themselves, which is known as “egocentrism” (Chapter 13). The ability to consider the perspective of another person is the most effective antidote to egocentric thinking. There are children who lag behind in language development. It’s best to empathize. When I am a teacher, there are going to be many times where I need to know that differences are “okay.”

   Can you see how empathy would naturally lead to altruism—actions designed to help others with no obvious benefit to the helper (Chapter 16)? Once we stand in another’s shoes and mirror their emotions, we naturally want to help them.

2. **Welcome Divergent Views and Critical Dialogue:** Critical thinkers examine issues from every angle, especially opposing viewpoints. This quality is especially valuable in decision-making and avoiding groupthink (Chapter 16). Most Americans don’t try to understand the sociocultural influences of suicide bombers. They believe that martyrs are crazy, while Palestinians believe that martyrdom is to be idolized. My decision to believe that martyrdom is a form of self-expression may clash with the views of many, but as an American, I have the right to believe what I want.

   Critical thinkers also actively question others, challenge opinions, and welcome questions and challenges in return. Socratic questioning is an important type of critical thinking.

   My mother has been calling me for the last year because she is dying. It has taken a long time to warm up to her because of the past. After many years, we are finally expressing our feelings with each other. This has been gratifying because we have become friends. My hope is that when the end comes, we will know that, despite our faults, we really loved each other.

   Critical thinkers “recognize that comprehension comes from combining various elements into a useful composite.” By seeing patterns or “warning signs”—such different symptoms of depression and changes in behavior—you can recognize suicidal thinking.

3. **Tolerate Ambiguity, but not Magical Thinking:** Formal education often trains us to look for a single “right” answer (aka convergent thinking—Chapter 8). But critical thinkers know that many issues are too complex to have one right answer. They value qualifiers such as “probably” and “not very likely.” A big difference between high school and college level thinking is tolerating ambiguity. In high school, we were often taught there was one right answer. In college, we learn that things are more complex. We also learn that some questions do not even have an “answer” or may have multiple answers.

   Tolerating ambiguity does not mean that all beliefs and opinions are equally valid. Despite scientific consensus on many issues, noncritical thinkers often resort to magical thinking, which makes unwarranted links between one event—some action we’ve taken—and some unconnected result (Riggio, 2014). Consider superstitious behaviors, the belief in supernatural forces—such as ghosts, alien abductions, possession by spiritual entities—or even winning big one time at gambling and expecting to win repeatedly (Sagan, 1996; Shermer & Gould, 2007). The problem with magical thinking is that we can believe that our actions are caused by the magical force instead of being due to us or the social environment. Reliance on magical thinking to explain things leads to self-deception and a lack of insight.

4. **Appreciate Eclecticism and Synthesize:** Critical thinkers are not bound to one way of thinking. They appreciate and select what appears to be the best or most useful option when faced with competing ideas and approaches. For example, a psychotherapist might have training in one theoretical perspective, but also use techniques from other perspectives when more appropriate for the problems presented. This CTC goes beyond welcoming divergent views; it also involves analyzing all potential sources for value and content.

   Critical thinkers are also able to combine or “synthesize” various elements into a useful composite. Understanding a suicidal person is the key to saving them. Critical thinkers “recognize that comprehension comes from combining various elements into a useful composite.” By seeing patterns or “warning signs”—such different symptoms of depression and changes in behavior—you can recognize suicidal thinking.

5. **Value Emotional Intelligence (EI):** Defined as “the ability to know and manage one’s emotions, empathize with others, and maintain satisfying relationships,” emotional intelligence (Chapter 12) can serve as the bridge between our intelligence and emotional reactions. I think increasing children’s emotional intelligence is a superb idea—especially a focus on managing aggressive impulses. The ability to manage aggressiveness means you are well on your way toward learning to control your feelings and recognizing the feelings of others too.

   Amy Harding
Behavioral Components (Actions necessary for critical thinking)

6. **Listen Actively and Cultivate Trust:** Critical thinkers fully engage their thoughts, feelings, and actions when listening to another person. They ask questions, nonverbally affirm what they hear, and request clarification. My brother was diagnosed with a rare kidney disease, and I tried my hardest to communicate with him and appreciate his thoughts and feelings. When he would try to talk about his feelings, I would often interrupt or tell him what he should think or feel. I was trying to focus on my need to control my own feelings when I should have been doing what he needed the most from me: active listening.

   In addition to active listening, being both trusting and trustworthy are essential qualities to bring to all meaningful relationships. One caution: Not everyone is worthy of your total trust. It is a privilege that must be earned over time and trial. For Gottman, trust is not something that just “grows” between people; rather, it is the “specific state that exists when you are both willing to change your own behavior to benefit your partner”—in other words, “you have each other’s back” (Gottman, 2012).

7. **Employ Precise Terms and Define Problems Accurately:** Precise terms help critical thinkers identify issues clearly so they can be objectively defined and empirically tested. When two people argue about an issue, they are often defining it differently without even knowing it. I have had a Japanese girlfriend for the last year and a half. Our cultures are very different and at times we do not understand each other. But, if we remain open and help each other appreciate what words like “love” and “commitment” mean to us, we can learn how to understand each other better.

   Anar Akhundov

   A critical thinker also tries to frame the issues as accurately as possible to prevent confusion and to lay the foundation for gathering relevant information (see CTC #8). This CTC appears to contradict tolerating ambiguity (see CTC #3), but critical thinkers are able to tolerate ambiguity until it is possible to define problems accurately.

8. **Gather Information and Delay Judgment until Adequate Data are Available:** Impulsivity is a major obstacle to good critical thinking. Rash judgments about others, impulse purchases of a new car or home, uninformed choices for political candidates, or “falling in love at first sight” can all be costly mistakes that we may regret for many years. A critical thinker does not make snap judgments. Instead, he or she collects up-to-date, relevant information on all sides of an issue and delays decisions or judgment until adequate information is available. *I am a white male. I have met African Americans I don’t like, I have met Asians I don’t like, I have met Hispanics I don’t like, and yes, I have met whites I don’t like. So if I don’t like an entire race of people because I don’t like certain people of that race, then I shouldn’t like my own race either, because there are people of my race I don’t like. You cannot judge a race by its worst representatives. I know I would not want my whole race judged by “White Power,” KKK members. Maybe someday we will just have one race—the human race.*

   Ryan Umholtz

9. **Cultivate Open-Mindedness and Modify Judgments in Light of New Information:** Critical thinkers are willing to examine their own thinking and abandon or modify their judgments if compelling evidence contradicts them. Non-critical thinkers stubbornly stick to their beliefs and often value self-interest above the truth. The ability to say, “I’m rethinking my opinion,” reflects the open-minded flexibility of a good critical thinker. *For much of high school, I procrastinated. However, I procrastinate less now that I am in college. I know now that these assignments are for my benefit and that a certain level of self-motivation is required in order to succeed in life. I am paying for my education, so I may as well get as much out of it as I can.*

   Tom Shimer

10. **Accept Change:** Critical thinkers remain open to the need for adjustment throughout our life cycle. Because critical thinkers fully trust the processes of reasoned inquiry, they are willing to use these skills to examine even their most deeply held beliefs, and to modify these beliefs when evidence and experience contradict them. *It’s easy to tell a woman to get out of a bad relationship because she doesn’t deserve to be abused. It’s much harder when you’re the one in the relationship. It’s important for the abused woman to stop trying to “change” the man, thinking the situation will get better. It’s vital not to be stuck in a toxic situation and accepting change is the first step.*

   Katrina Kelly

Cognitive Components (Thought processes required for critical thinking)

11. **Recognize Personal Biases and Value Truth above Self-Interest:** Being an effective critical thinker does not mean the absence of bias, but rather the willingness to recognize and correct it. *We may think we are hitting the benchmarks on social issues when we drop a “bill or two in the bucket” and consider our job done. Some of us view the suffering of others as the result of their own actions. Over-generalizing that all “purple people” are lazy and all “orange people” are uncivilized reflects bias . . . [where] there is no room for empathy or simple kindness. Unless we recognize our personal biases, instead of hiding behind them as a cover for a lack of humanness, we will never witness another’s oppression and “feel their pain.”*

   Mary Ellen Allen

Critical thinkers also avoid the tendency to cater to our self-interests, while ignoring conflicting information. We must recognize that, even when it appears otherwise, the “truth” is always in our self-interest. *No matter what my interest was in watching my friends do drugs, I valued the truth against their reasons for why I should begin to smoke with them. Anytime I felt tempted, I valued what my mother told me. The truth was in front of my eyes. Family
members that were homeless, indulging in illegal drugs, were the truth for me. I valued my life more than I wanted to fit in.

Nicole Bouvet

12. **Recognize Fact versus Opinion and Resist Overgeneralization:** Facts are statements that are supported by objective evidence. Opinions are statements that express how a person feels about an issue or what someone believes to be true. It is easy to have an uninformed opinion about any subject, but critical thinkers seek out and evaluate facts before forming their opinions.

Overgeneralization is applying an experience to other situations that are only superficially similar. It's also a form of “tunnel vision”—failing to see the bigger picture because you see just a small sample of the whole. While watching a rerun of “Jersey Shore,” I made an over-generalization about “Jersey guys”? The show convinced me that every Jersey boy in his twenties was a meathead without moral values and who only cared about his looks. I met a Jersey boy and automatically thought he was like one of the guys from the show. Turns out he was an educated man who happened to come from New Jersey.

Caitie Stoneback

13. **Analyze Data for Value and Content and Apply Knowledge to New Situations:** By evaluating the nature of evidence and the credibility of sources, critical thinkers recognize blatant appeals to emotion, unsupported claims, and faulty logic. They also can spot sources that contradict themselves, or have a vested interest in selling a product, idea, or viewpoint that is only partially accurate (a “half-truth”). This is an important CTC when it comes to choosing a religion because it takes a full analysis of a religious system in order to make the right choice. If I break down all of a religion’s content for its inherent value, I will be making a well-informed decision.

Ali Nabavian

14. **Independent Thinking:** Rather than passively accepting the beliefs of others or being easily manipulated, critical thinkers are independent. They hold firm to their own values, while recognizing the difference between being independent and just being stubborn (Sagan, 1996; Shermer & Gould, 2007). All my life, I was a follower. I did what everyone else did—the designer clothes, the makeup, the highlights, etc. Instead of thinking independently, I went with the crowd. And that was one of my greatest downfalls.

Courtney Fisher

15. **Metacognition (aka reflective thinking)** involves analyzing your mental processes—thinking about your own thinking. Critical thinkers who are motivated to examine and trace the origin of their beliefs can often be heard saying things like: “What was I thinking?” or “I don’t know why I believe that, I’ll have to think about it.” My dad and I had a torn relationship following my parents’ divorce. I couldn’t live with my mother anymore, so I thought about living with my dad. I began employing meta-cognition. I wanted to understand my anger toward him. I realized when we fought, it was just frustration. I decided to move in with my dad, and I’m happy to say our relationship has changed dramatically for the better. Using critical thinking made a huge difference.

Laura Markley