

Social Work Simple Version

Thinking in Social Work with Children

Good thinking is at the heart of good social work. It helps us understand situations clearly, stay fair, and make sure we stay focused on what matters most: the child. This guide is about how to think better—not just make decisions, but reflect, question, and stay open-minded.

Seven Parts of Good Thinking

1. **Purpose**
 - *Ask yourself:* Why am I thinking about this? What am I trying to understand or figure out? Why I am doing this, and how will contribute to child's wellbeing and safety?
 2. **Questions**
 - *Ask yourself:* What questions will help me think more clearly? What don't I understand yet? What are the best questions to ask?
 3. **Assumptions**
 - *Ask yourself:* Am I assuming something without real evidence? What might I be taking for granted? Is this an assumption?
 4. **Perspective**
 - *Ask yourself:* Am I looking at this from the right point of view? Who else's view should I think about? How would the child see this?
 5. **Information**
 - *Ask yourself:* What do I know? What don't I know? Is the information I'm using accurate, up to date, and relevant? What is the best way to interpret this information?
 6. **Concepts**
 - *Ask yourself:* Are we all talking about the same thing? Have we agreed on what terms like "risk" or "neglect" mean? Are we all understanding the concepts or definitions? Are we all on the same page?
 7. **Conclusions**
 - *Ask yourself:* What ideas am I starting to form? Am I jumping ahead, or thinking them through carefully? Given the information available, what is the most rational, ethical, and proportionate decision I can draw? What would the child say of my conclusion?
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What Makes Critical Thinking Work?

To think critically in social work, you need two things:

- **The ability to change your mind** when you see better evidence or hear a stronger idea.
 - **Reflective scepticism**, which means slowing down and asking good questions instead of believing things too quickly. Basically, questioning what is accepted, habitual, and superficially persuasive.
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10 Clear Questions for Reflective Thinking

These questions help you check your thinking:

1. **Is this really a fact, or someone's opinion?**
 2. **Is this information actually relevant to the situation?**
 3. **Is this claim/information true? Can I double-check it? Should I double check it?**
 4. **Is the source of this information trustworthy?**
 5. **Is anything unclear or confusing about what's being said?**
 6. **Am I—or someone else—making assumptions here?**
 7. **Could bias (like personal feelings or past experiences) be affecting information or thinking?**
 8. **Does this include any errors in reasoning, like exaggeration or jumping to conclusions?**
 9. **Is the thinking here consistent, or are there contradictions?**
 10. **How strong is this idea or explanation, really? What might make it stronger or weaker?**
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By asking these questions, staying curious, and being willing to challenge your own ideas, you'll grow as a thinker and practitioner. This kind of thinking helps you stay grounded, fair, and focused on what children need most.