THE IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL THINKING

Self-awareness and critical thinking skills can help us make better decisions. Critical thinking is the ability to think in a fair-minded and objective way. Thinking clearly and rationally about an issue or problem requires using reason, logic, and empathy.

Critical thinkers:

- Look at the different sides of an idea or argument.
- Avoid making assumptions or judgments based on their emotions or biases.
- Keep an open mind.
- Seek to understand the logical connection between ideas.
- Identify mistakes and inconsistencies in reasoning.

There are times when we may have flawed reasoning or come to a conclusion without being fully informed. During the course of a typical day we may operate on "automatic pilot," without the need to give deep thought to any particular topic. However, critical thinking plays a vital role when we are faced with making important life decisions. Critical thinking enables us to weigh pros and cons, explore all the options that are available, and evaluate the best course of action.

Ways to improve critical thinking skills include the following:

- **Question your assumptions and beliefs.** If you've always held certain opinions and beliefs, ask yourself whether these opinions or beliefs are based on facts or on emotions and flawed reasoning.

- **Practice self-awareness.** We all have biases in our thinking, but becoming aware of our preconceived notions is the first step to see beyond them.

- **Evaluate information objectively.** Ask who, what, and why when presented with information that seeks to sway people's opinions.

- **Be an independent thinker.** It's human nature to go along with the crowd. But critical thinking involves asking questions and not accepting all information at face value.

Developing and improving critical thinking skills is a lifelong process. There is always something to learn. Being open to different possibilities and being willing to challenge your own beliefs makes critical thinking possible.

CAL★HR
CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Magellan HEALTHCARE sm