



10 books that will enhance your critical thinking ability

ZAKIA SAMEEN NOOR

While it's true that the best way to learn is through personal experiences, it's not the only way. Effective application of knowledge consumed from reading books adds value to our lives and work. We present you a list of 12 such books to enhance your critical thinking ability.

The Art of Thinking Clearly by Rolf Dobelli

The Swedish serial entrepreneur Rolf Dobelli delves into our psychological biases and heuristics, testing whether our thinking is objective or not.

A fun example is the survivorship bias. We are surrounded by examples of people achieving success after facing countless hurdles. Yet, the cold hard truth is this is just the tip of the iceberg. For every winner, there are scores of losers. The next time you hear a motivational talk, be mindful not to just focus on the winners.

Mindset: The New Psychology of Success by Carol S. Dweck

Stanford psychologist Carol S. Dweck has dedicated her whole life to understanding why some people succeed and others do not. With multiple real-life and interesting examples, she concludes on one reason: mindset. People with a growth mindset are focused on continuous self-development and being gritty. Those with a fixed mindset are driven by their egos and can't shake off any failures.

Besides exploring our psychology about success, this book will teach you how you can adopt the growth mindset too to find your fulfilment.

So Good They Can't Ignore You by Cal Newport

Georgetown CS Professor, Cal Newport, is obsessed with workplace motivation. Inspired by the famous Steven Martin line, "be so good that they can't ignore you", Newport argues that passion is overrated. With a plethora of real-life examples and guidance, Newport shows that the real ingredients of work fulfilment are a combination of being

excellent at what you've already been doing, having the right skills, and having control of hours worked. Passion follows when you become excellent in your efforts in adding value.

Agree or disagree, this book is a thought-provoking read for any aspiring careerist.

Deep Work by Cal Newport

In this digital age of distractions and short attention spans, how many of us can do deep work? This is the ability to concentrate on 'cognitively demanding' work for long periods. Newport argues that this ability is a rare skill today. It's crucial for making an impact in whatever you do. Aside from supporting his argument with real-life examples like Carl Jung, Newport also gives a walkthrough on how to master the deep work ethic.

Again, you may not agree with all his claims. Yet, this book is indispensable in learning how to prevent distraction and producing the best results through efficiency.

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl

Viktor Frankl was a budding psychologist when he was taken as a Holocaust prisoner. Despite all the unfathomable horrors, he survived. Frankl encapsulates all the philosophies that helped him survive the Holocaust in this gem of a book. One of his most profound lessons is that, if anybody can find a 'why' for their suffering, or have the love that radiates their soul or does purposeful work – anybody can bear anything that befalls them. Typing these lines from the comfort of my home might not be convincing. But, coming from a Holocaust survivor whose words have changed lives since 1946 – that's saying something.

Seeking solace from your personal turmoil? This book is for you.

Ego is the Enemy by Ryan Holiday

By giving examples of several historical

people from disparate fields who ruined their lives after success by giving in to ego, Ryan Holiday cautions the reader. Unchecked ego and ambition can cloud your sense of judgment. However, recognizing it and trumping it can help you be more thoughtful and practical to find your peace and perhaps, pinnacle.

Reading this book will lead you to question yourself: if something's holding you back, what is it? Something external? Or, is it actually your ego? A crucial question for those whose identity is strapped to achievements.

7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen R. Covey

Look, before you manage your work or other people, you need to learn how to manage yourself first. We often trumpet about efficiency, but efficiency is worth making loud noise about only if it catalyses effectiveness. This means that you need to make habits that strengthen your character and direct you to your goals. Not the goals set by society, but the goals you'd wish to strive for on your deathbed.

This classic business book will teach you how to infuse those habits into your personal and professional life.

Read it alongside any Peter Drucker book.

The 48 Laws of Power by Robert Greene

This is a controversial book. It's even banned in American prisons. Its author isn't a professor with years of scientific research backing up his claims either. But, he is obsessed with the concepts of power, strategy, seduction, and the darker side of human nature. He's a meticulous researcher when it comes to inferring from books, and observing patterns in historical figures to come up with his assertions. There are many massive fans of his books, for which he's multiple best-sellers.

If you love Game of Thrones for its power and politics, perhaps you'll enjoy this book. Drawing on historical figures

for their display of power, Greene talks explicitly about manipulation tactics. (Can you now guess why it's banned in prisons?)

The fickle nature of power is displayed everywhere, even at home. Observing the 'laws' around you is fun to relate to, and to protect yourself against undue advantage as well.

Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion by Dr Robert Cialdini

Now, here's a book written by a distinguished professor who spent years training as a psychologist and researching what makes people say the magic word, 'yes!'. Dr Robert Cialdini is Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Marketing at Arizona State University and has garnered respect from top authorities like Dan Ariely and Charlie Munger for his work on influence.

Published in 1984, "Influence" is still a must-read book for budding marketers, salespeople, and anyone looking to influence. People are bombarded with information every day. To tackle this, we usually generalize information for easy and swift comprehension. These generalisations are the basis of the psychological principles that sway people. "Influence" is loaded with sufficient empirical studies to persuade you of its efficacy.

How We Learn: The Surprising Truth About When, Where, and Why It Happens by Benedict Carey

Forget all that you have been taught about learning. In this book, New York Times science journalist Benedict Carey will introduce you to unconventional ways in which your brain retains information. Even being a night owl and procrastinating can be good for you at times!

Let this book push you to take charge of your lifelong learning for exam/work success.