

Analysis of critical incidents

A critical incident is an event that stands out over others. Its significance or impact may be either negative or positive. Looking for key features and patterns as you reflect on critical incidents may alter your perspectives or personal theories about how the world works.

Describe the most exciting, challenging or frustrating incident in your recent experience. Then try the following analysis to see what insights you can gain through reflection.

- Recall the details of the incident. Write a brief vignette, play or dialogue that dramatizes the critical moments of the event. Be as emotional as you wish.
- Now, step back and ask yourself, "What really happened? Can I be sure? How do I know if my perceptions are accurate? How might others view this scene?"
- Analyze the incident in terms of how it affected you. Ask yourself, "Why do I care?"
- Review your part in the critical incident. "How did this situation affect my behaviour, feelings, and attitudes? How did my behaviour, feelings and attitudes affect the situation?"
- Look for patterns that connect this incident to other experiences you recall. Ask. "How is this situation like others I have experienced or observed? What patterns do I notice? What causes these patterns?"
- Summarize your reflections by responding to the question, "Has my understanding of this critical incident changed? What do I see differently now? How can I explain these changes?"
- Think forward to future events. Ask yourself, "What might I understand differently if this were to happen again? How would this affect my responses?"