12.1: Just How “Smart” are You

Imagine that now you have to face one of the most challenging, important, difficult decisions of your life. No, I'm not talking about the decision of getting married. I'm talking about what phone service to sign up with. Picking the right smartphone was challenging enough, now you need to decide on a service plan. Is the actual connectivity and service the important aspect or is it the data plan? Do you want the phone service to be consistent with your television service, which is a challenging decision in and of itself? Your emotional self may be telling you one thing, while your intellectual self is telling you another. What should you do?

In an earlier chapter, we looked at the decision-making process. In this chapter, we will examine the internal workings of critical thinking and how we create arguments and make decisions based on these arguments. Critical thinking is reasonable thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe and how to act. Now that we have examined argumentation and critical thinking, we can put everything together and determine just what it means to be “smart.”

To do this, we need to understand the relationship between intelligence, thinking, and knowledge.