**Questions to Consider**

Chapter 12: Reasoning and Decision Making

* **How logical are the conclusions you draw?**

Aristotle and other ancient Greeks established most of what we consider the formal rules of logic. We can use these rules to draw logical conclusions and evaluate formal arguments. However, we don’t always follow these formal rules of logic. Instead, our reasoning behavior reflects the cognitive processes we use to reason and is affected by the limitations and biases of these processes.

* **Why are some things harder to reason about than others?**

The rules of deductive logic are generally independent of the content of arguments. However, often the contents of the arguments do impact our reasoning because of the knowledge about and experience with those contents. Sometimes that knowledge and experience facilitate our reasoning, but in other situations it may interfere. Everyday reasoning is often more difficult because the arguments are often less clearly defined than typical formal arguments.

* **How and when do we make inferences about causal relations?**

When events co-occur in time and/or space, we often infer a causal relationship between the events. However, another important factor is whether or not we can easily infer a mechanism for the causal relationship between the events.

* **What phases do we go through when we make decisions?**

Decision making involves five phases: setting goals, gathering information, structuring the decision, making a final choice, and evaluation of the process.

* **Do we always make the best choices?**

Under ideal conditions we consider all of the available options across all of the relevant conditions when we make decisions. However, often the conditions are not ideal. Because we make decisions using our cognitive processes, our decisions are constrained by those processes. We often use heuristic shortcuts to reduce cognitive demands.