Welcome to the presentation on Critical Thinking and Performing Arts Literacy. The focus of this presentation is on theater: we will learn how to apply critical thinking skills to theatrical acts. We will also have an opportunity to practice our thinking skills when a watching and analyzing a theatrical performance.

For our critical thinking analysis we will use a theatrical performance entitled “Stop It Therapy”.

“The author, in a humorous and silly way, is asking the audience to consider the simple act of telling someone to stop doing undesired behaviors, or stop having unwanted thoughts or feelings, as a legitimate intervention in therapy.”

The critical thinking tool we will be using is the 6 levels of thinking of Bloom’s taxonomy.

- Remembering
- Understanding
- Applying
- Analyzing
- Evaluating
- Creating
The author, in a humorous and silly way, is asking the audience to consider the simple act of telling someone to *stop* doing undesired behaviors, or *stop* having unwanted thoughts or feelings, as a legitimate intervention in therapy.

The idea of “Stop It Therapy” brought these thoughts to my mind:

- I remember as a child that I would bite my finger nails a lot. Whenever my mother would see me with my fingers in my mouth she would yell, “Stop It!” I would immediately stop.
- And sometimes within a minute my fingers would again be in my mouth, without my thinking. Again, my mother would yell, “I told you to stop it. I mean it!”

Now let’s think about a situation my personal experience could be useful. Imagine knowing a friend who has a problem with his weight in regard to eating snack foods.

- He is aware that eating snacks that are high in sugar and salt are not good for him in that sugar contributes to weight gain, and salt increases blood pressure.
- While I might like to think that just telling my friend to, “Stop It,” would be useful, I am aware that learned behaviors, genetics, biology, media, culture, and society may be a few of the possible contributors to his eating unhealthy snacks.
- Rather than just saying, “Stop it,” I would refer my friend to a counselor that can sort out what makes it difficult for him to stop eating unhealthy foods.

I’m thinking that it is so easy, almost impulsive, to tell someone else to stop doing some behavior.

- Yet when I think of my own behaviors that I would like to stop, I know that I struggle and do not readily respond to someone telling me to stop doing something.
- I think of government policies that said, “Just say No to drugs,” or in sex education, “Abstinence Only” programs, that these approaches seem simplistic to a very complex set of problems.
- I also note in watching the performance, and in life, people with power are the ones who can tell someone, with lesser power, to stop something.

I can imagine, given what I said in my analysis, that a conservative, fundamentally believing Catholic priest, Muslim emmon, or Jewish Rabbi would take issue with my thoughts.
From their perspective saying “Stop it” to someone is a valid intervention. What is considered sinful i.e. homosexuality, abortion, pre marital sex, extramarital sex, drug, can, and should be stopped with no equivocation.

Having been challenged with this laughable vignette two salient ideas come to mind.

1. First, is it ever useful, and necessary, to just say, “Stop It.”
   - For example if a little child is about to run across the street without looking, would I not yell, “Stop!”
   - Or, in situation of domestic violence or, is it not important for one to say to another, “Stop it, you can’t not do that.”
   - I think that there are appropriate place where the words, “Stop It” would be important.

2. Secondly, I wonder if sometimes people might need someone to tell them to “Stop It.” That without hearing this, hurtful behavior can result.

3. I immediately think of the gender differences in the use of the phrase. I also wonder about how different cultures would use the phrase. And, I wonder more about the power dynamics in the use of such a statement.