A Checklist for Reasoning

1) All reasoning has a PURPOSE.
   • Can you state your purpose clearly?
   • What is the objective of your reasoning?
   • Does your reasoning focus throughout on your goal?
   • Is your goal realistic?

2) All reasoning is an attempt to figure something out, to settle some QUESTION, to solve some PROBLEM.
   • What question are you trying to answer?
   • Are there other ways to think about the question?
   • Can you divide the question into sub-questions?
   • Is this a question that has one right answer or can there be more than one reasonable answer?
   • Does this question require judgment rather than facts alone?

3) All reasoning is based on ASSUMPTIONS.
   • What assumptions are you making? Are they justified?
   • How are your assumptions shaping your point of view?
   • Which of your assumptions might reasonably be questioned?

4) All reasoning is done from some POINT OF VIEW.
   • What is your point of view? What insights is it based on? What are its weaknesses?
   • What other points of view should be considered in reasoning through this problem? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these viewpoints? Are you fairmindedly considering the insights behind these viewpoints?

5) All reasoning is based on DATA, INFORMATION, and EVIDENCE.
   • To what extent is your reasoning supported by relevant data?
   • Do the data suggest explanations that differ from those you have given?
   • How clear, accurate, and relevant are the data to the question at issue?
   • Have you gathered data sufficient to reaching a reasonable conclusion?

6) All reasoning is expressed through, and shaped by, CONCEPTS and THEORIES.
   • What key concepts and theories are guiding your reasoning?
   • What alternative explanations might be possible, given these concepts and theories?
   • Are you clear and precise in using concepts and theories in your reasoning?
   • Are you distorting ideas to fit your agenda?

7) All reasoning contains INFERENCES or INTERPRETATIONS by which we draw CONCLUSIONS and give meaning to data.
   • To what extent do the data support your conclusions?
   • Are your inferences consistent with each other?
   • Are there other reasonable inferences that should be considered?

8) All reasoning leads somewhere or has IMPLICATIONS and CONSEQUENCES.
   • What implications and consequences follow from your reasoning?
   • If we accept your line of reasoning, what implications or consequences are likely?