

Problem solving

A **problem solver** sees a problem as a challenge to be overcome, or a new opportunity.

Problem solving is a skill that can promote success in both your personal and professional life. It demonstrates a desire to take action and promote positive change, rather than accept things as is, or remain stuck. It is a skill that helps with personal transition, relationships, and competitive success in the workplace. To develop your problem solving skills follow this five step process:

1. **Sensing a Problem.** Identify an area of your life where you feel stuck. Describe in detail what you are experiencing. This process is driven by your self-confidence, and motivation to confront problems rather than avoid them. (Possible guiding questions: What is my concern? What is happening? When is it happening? Where is it happening? Why is it happening?)
2. **Define the Problem as Clearly as Possible.** What do I want to achieve or change?
3. **Brainstorm Approaches to Solve the Problem.** Generate alternatives. What can I do? (strategies to get you what you really want)
4. **Pick an Approach.** How should I do it? Evaluate the pros and cons of each possibility. What are the potential consequences; what might happen? Choose the best option for you and implement it. Give your strategy a real chance to work before going back to square one.
5. **Assess the Result.** How did it work? Did you get your desired outcome?

If at first you don't succeed - If you didn't get your desired outcome or the problem still exists, repeat the process again. Need more help? Visit a Success Coach.

Additional problem solving tips

1. Can't think of a solution for the whole problem? Can the problem be broken down into more simple parts for you to work on?
2. If you know there is a problem but are having trouble brainstorming approaches:
 - Identify your desired outcome
 - Work backward identifying what needs to happen for that outcome to be possible. (Imagine yourself taking the steps required to get to your end result.)
3. Controlling one's emotions is key in problem solving. Emotions can hurt your focus on finding a solution, and slow down the process (you may come up with fewer alternatives or less useful ones).

Adapted from Stein, S. J. & Book, H.E. (2006). *The EQ Edge: Emotional Intelligence and Your Success*. Mississauga: John Wiley & Sons Canada. Ltd.

