

## Problem Solving Styles

A **social sensitive thinking problem solving style** is one in which you want to find the best answer for all people involved (focusing primarily on their emotions and values, and you are most comfortable when they add emotion to the problem situation.) You depend on what has been successful for you in the past, rather than focusing on the facts of this new issue. You try to put yourself in the other person's place so that you can identify with the person. You will solve problems based on your value system that respects other people in a situation. You are caring and want to support everyone involved in the problem. This indicates a high level of interpersonal skills.

A **logical thinking problem solving style** involves the exploration of the problem and the effects of your environment. Using this style, you identify the problem that has occurred, explore alternatives in solving the problem, and develop a plan for solving the problem based on information. You carefully weigh the costs and benefits of the various ways to solve the problem. You gather and consider additional information about alternatives and the possible consequences of each alternative. The ultimate solution you find to the problem is based on a logical problem-solving approach.

An **intuitive thinking problem solving style** is one in which you solve problems based on gut-level reactions. You tend to rely on your internal signals. You identify and choose a solution based on what you feel is the best possible solution for everyone involved. You do not spend a lot of time collecting facts and gathering information before you decide on a solution. This style can be useful when factual data is not available. It is important not to substitute intuition for gathering needed information to solve the problem. You often solve problems based on hunches or your *sixth-sense* about the problem situation.

A **practical thinking problem solving style** is one in which you take in information that is clear and real. You want to know what is happening in the situation. You notice what is going on around you, especially the practical realities and facts. You may overlook recurring themes, focusing instead on the concrete issues involved in the situation. You rely on and trust your previous experience in dealing with similar problems.

# Becoming a Skillful Problem Solver

Look back at some of the problems you have solved in the past. Problems may have dealt with your relationships, home-life, education or your job. List these problems and write down how you approached a solution to each pattern that you noticed.

## Problems I Have Solved

How I used the **practical thinking** style to solve a problem?

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How I used the **intuitive thinking** style to solve a problem?

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How I used the **logical thinking** style to solve a problem?

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How I used the **social sensitive thinking** style to solve a problem?

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# The Problem-Solving Process

## OUTLINE (Page 1)

There is no simple step-by-step process that will guarantee you a solution to every problem you encounter in your life. The problem-solving process is a search for, and implementation of, the best possible solution for a specific problem. As a problem solver, you will develop your own method for solving problems. One of the best methods for doing this is to try to use the most effective aspects of the four different styles. The following is an outline of how to integrate the four styles in the problem-solving process.

**Step 1** - Define the problem by using **practical thinking** characteristics to see the problem situation as it really is. You can do so by answering some of the following questions:

- What or who caused the problem?

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- Where did it happen?

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- What happened?

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- When did it happen?

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## The Problem-Solving Process Outline (Page 2)

- With whom did it happen?

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- Why did it happen?

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- What was your part in the situation?

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- What was resolved?

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**Step 2** - Consider the possibilities using **intuitive thinking** characteristics to brainstorm all possible solutions to the problem. You can do so by answering some of the following questions:

- What other ways did you look at the problem?

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## The Problem-Solving Process Outline (Page 3)

- What did you learn by information you gathered?

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- What were the connections to the bigger picture?

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- How did the other people fit into this picture?

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- What did you think caused the problem?

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- What were some possible ways to approach the problem?

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## The Problem-Solving Process Outline (Page 4)

**Step 3** – Weigh the consequences of courses of action to resolve the problem using **logical thinking** characteristics. You can do so by answering some of the following questions:

- What were the pros of each option?

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- What were the cons of each option?

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- What do you think would have been the outcomes of each option?

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- What was the result for each person involved?

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## The Problem-Solving Process Outline (Page 5)

**Step 4** – Weigh the alternatives to each course of action using **social sensitive thinking** characteristics. You can do so by answering some of the following questions:

- How did each alternative fit with your values?

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- How were the other people involved in the situation affected?

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- How did each alternative help everyone involved?

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- How did each alternative enhance positive interactions?

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## The Problem-Solving Process Outline (Page 6)

**Step 5** - Decide which aspects of Steps 1 - 4 will be most effective in solving this problem.

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**Step 6** - Act on your decision. Describe your action.

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**Step 7** - Evaluate whether the problem was resolved successfully.

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# Problem-Solving Activity (Page 1)

Identify a major problem you are currently facing.

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Complete this 4-page activity that will guide you through the appreciation of the problem-solving process.

**Step 1 - Define the problem by using PRACTICAL THINKING characteristics to see the problem situation as it really is. You can do so by answering some of the following questions:**

What is causing the problem?

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Where is it happening?

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What happened?

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When did it start?

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Who is involved?

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## Problem-Solving Activity (Page 2)

Why is it happening?

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What is your part in the situation?

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What has already been tried to resolve the situation?

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**Step 2 – Consider the possibilities using intuitive thinking characteristics to brainstorm all possible solutions to the problem. You can do so by answering some of the following questions:**

What other ways can you look at the problem?

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What does the information that you have gathered suggest to you?

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What are the connections to the bigger picture?

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## Problem-Solving Activity (Page 3)

How do the other people fit into this picture?

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What do you think is causing the problem?

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What are some possible ways to approach the problem?

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**Step 3 – Weigh the consequences of courses of action to resolve the problem using logical thinking characteristics. You can do so by answering some of the following questions:**

What are the pros of each option?

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What are the cons of each option?

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What are the possible outcomes of each option?

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## Problem-Solving Activity (Page 4)

How would each option affect each person involved?

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**Step 4 – Weigh the alternatives to each course of action using social thinking characteristics. You can do so by answering some of the following questions:**

How does each alternative fit with my values?

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How will the other people involved in the situation be affected?

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How will each alternative contribute to harmony for all people involved?

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How will each alternative enhance positive interactions?

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**Step 5 – Decide which parts of Steps 1 – 4 will be most effective in solving this problem**

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## **Problem-Solving Activity (Page 5)**

**Step 6 – Make a final decision.**

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**Step 7 – Act on your decision. What do you need to do to begin?**

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**Step 8 – LATER, answer . . . How was the problem resolved?**

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## **Teen Problems Today**

**The following are just some of the problems teens face:**

- Abuse
- Alcohol and drug-using parents
- Alternative lifestyle acceptance
- Anxiety
- Authority figures
- Body issues
- Bullying
- Cheating
- Cultural acceptance
- Cyber Bullying
- Date rape
- Dating
- Depression
- Deciding on a career
- Discrimination
- Drinking
- Drugs
- Family
- Finances
- Further education
- Gambling
- Gang activity
- Grades
- Illegal actions
- Low self-esteem
- Mental health
- Mixed family
- Money matters
- Obesity
- Peer pressure
- Performing well in school
- Pregnancy
- Prejudicing
- Relationships
- Risky Behavior
- Self-Image
- Self-Injury
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Shoplifting
- Stress
- Suicide
- Teasing
- Unsafe driving
- Unstable home life
- Violence at home
- Youth violence



# Other Ways to Solve Problems

## Divide

Break problems into smaller, solvable problems.

## Brainstorm

List all of the possible solutions, no matter how outrageous they seem.

## Test

Think of possible solutions to the problem and then try to predict the final outcome.

## Research

Get valid information from trusted people and *reliable* sources on the internet.

## Past Experience

Remember similar problems, how you solved them and what worked. Ask others what worked for them in similar situations.

## Trial-and-error

Create and implement solutions, then see if they work.

## Stop focusing on the problem

When your mind is allowed to focus on other things, the solution may become obvious.