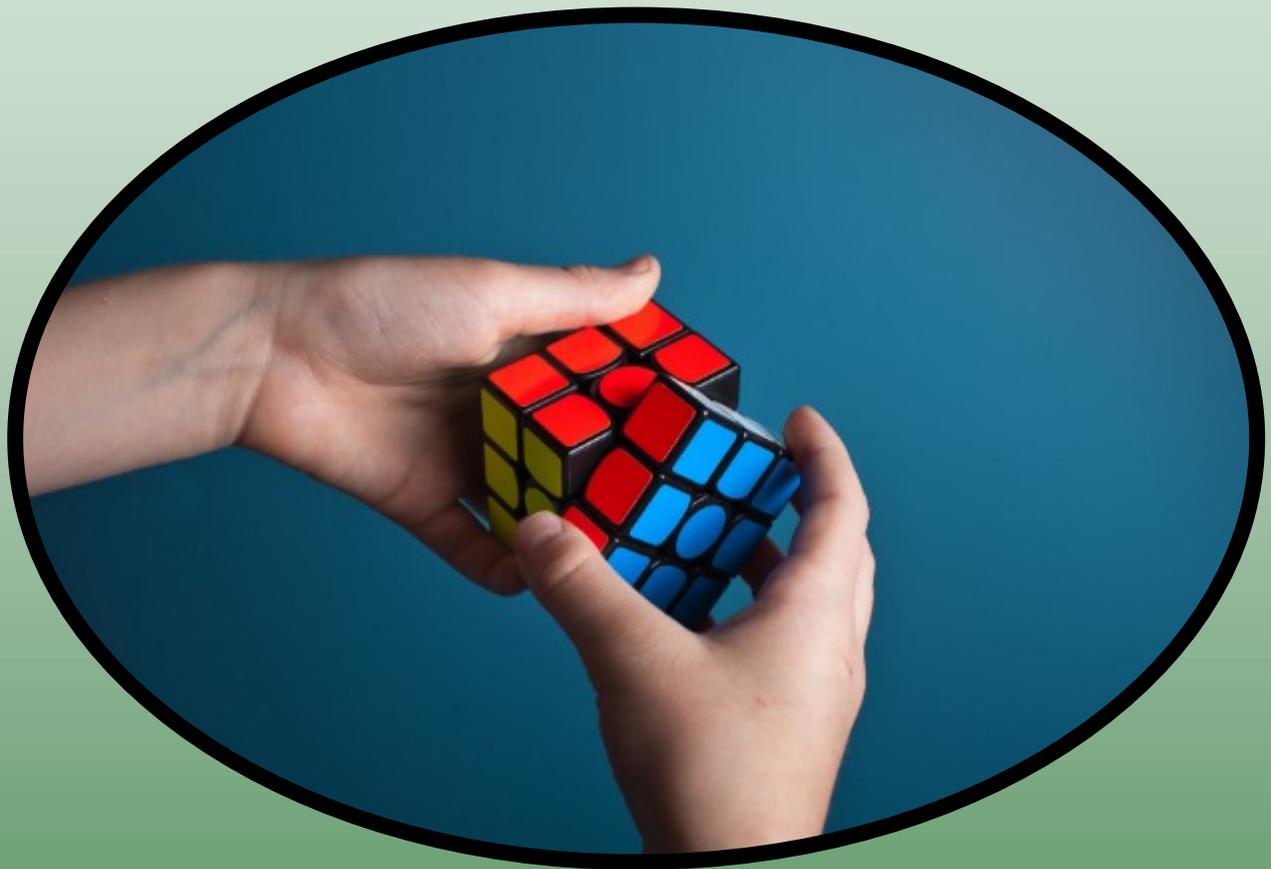


How to Solve Problems



A Pinku and Dadaji
Series

Problems are meant to be solved

Pinku: Good morning Dadaji.

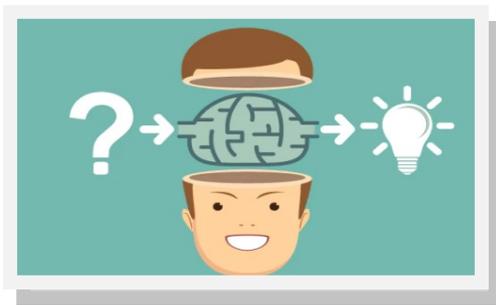
Dadaji: Good morning Pinku. So, what's up today?

Pinku: Nothing Dadaji, I was just thinking how to solve problems. There are lot many problems in life, in our school, in our society. Why there are so many problems Dadaji?

Dadaji: Problems are good, without problems life will be pointless. Problems will enhance your thinking, problems will pave path to what you wish to achieve, and problems let you improve in each step of your life. But Pinku, if you sit on a problem by doing nothing, than you are increasing your problems. If the quantum of problems increases beyond your control, that mean you are not in control and something is not correct with you. Correct yourself first and then tackle the problems.

Pinku: But mostly I see people complain, worry and cry about problems.

Dadaji: Very true Pinku...Problems are meant to be solved, but unfortunately, a lot of us choose to complain, worry, and cry about them. The other problem is that we always hope for

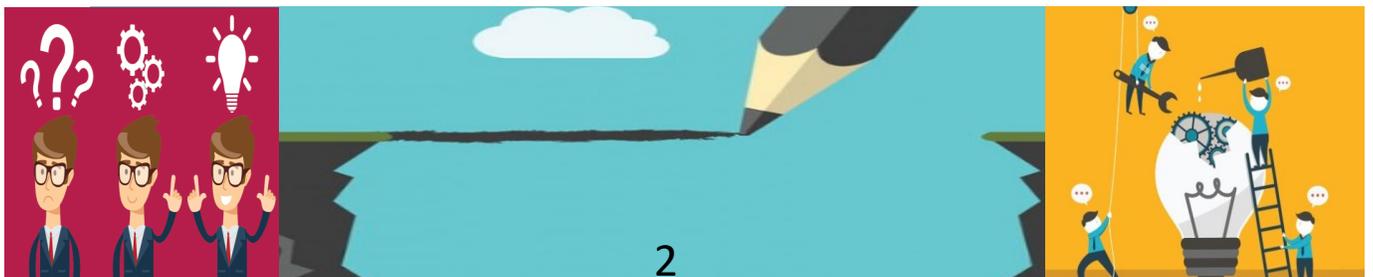


One Cannot Sit on a Problem Doing Nothing

easy fix for every problem i.e. erase that problem in a single stroke. But the problem is that all problems do not come with single stroke fixes as there are certain problems which form chains of other problems built in each step of that problem. One should have that insight whether this problem can be resolved in one stroke or requires multiple strokes. If the problem requires multiple strokes, don't try to figure out solution all at once instead one should take small steps one after the other to avoid slipups, goof ups and the solution is found by itself.

Pinku: Uh! You made it so simple Dadaji. Is there any instant solution to any problem?

Dadaji: There is no formula built as on date which gives instant solution to the problems Pinku. Einstein said **“If I had an hour to solve a problem I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solution”**. This is a similar thought we have been taught since childhood **“First sharpen your axe before you start to cut trees”**. In short to solve a problem, stay calm, think before you act, digest information thoroughly, stay on task longer, give up less easily.



Ask yourself five Why's

Pinku: Will problems have a permanent fix Dadaji?

Dadaji: Well! Say you have a lot of weed growing in your lawn. If you remove the weed using a lawnmower, will that solve the problem? Temporarily yes. Visually, the garden looks good. However, you probably know that this is only at the surface level. After a short period of time, the weed will grow back. So how do you fix this long term? The solution is by removing the weed from the root. Understanding the root cause is central toward resolving our all problems. Once the root has been removed, the effects will also get addressed accordingly.

Pinku: Ah! Great example Dadaji...Is there any strategy that you can suggest to solve problems.

Dadaji: Yes Pinku... For many years, the Japanese have approached the process of problem-solving with a strategy known as "the Five Whys". In its simplest form, many Japanese will ask themselves "why?" five times when they're confronted with a problem. By the time the fifth "why?" is answered, they believe they will have found the ultimate cause of the problem. Asking "why" repeatedly direct one's focus toward



Solution of a Problem Should be Long Term and Sustainable.

root-cause, enabling problem to be solved and solution to be found in a long-term, sustainable way.

Pinku: Oh Great! That's the reason that country is so rich in culture and even economically.

Dadaji: Bang on Pinku... You got the logic now. Last time you failed in Maths correct?

Pinku: Yes Dadaji.

Dadaji: Let us try five why's to understand.

1st: Why you were not able to score even the minimum pass mark?

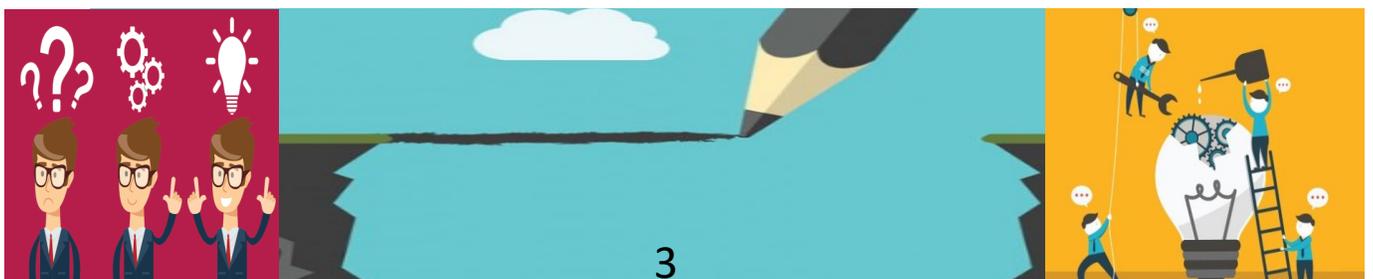
Pinku: Dadaji Because I left 5 questions which I was not prepared.

Dadaji: 2nd: Why did you miss these five questions?

Pinku: Because I was absent when chapter 2 and chapter 4 were being taught in school.

Dadaji: 3rd: Why didn't you prepare yourself with chapter 2 and 4 when you knew that you were absent?

Pinku: Because tuition teacher was sick and hence, I could not prepare for chapter 2 and chapter 4.



Effectively communicate the problem

Dadaji: 4th: Why didn't you ask your parents to teach you?

Pinku: Because I thought those chapters might not come in examination.

Dadaji: You see Pinku you have got the solution in 4th Why itself. You should have asked your parents to guide you in order to teach these chapters which you did not do. So the root cause is the same which I explained you earlier. Sitting on the problem while you know there is a problem and doing nothing about it. You did not take guidance from anyone else. That's the reason you failed in the exams.

Pinku: Oh God! This works

Dadaji: Yes it does...that's not all Pinku; problem solving requires transparent communication where everyone's concerns and points of view are freely expressed. I've seen one too many times how difficult it is to get to the root of the matter in a timely manner when people do not speak-up.

Pinku: What exactly do you mean by that Dadaji?

Dadaji: What I meant was when a solution to a problem is discussed in a group; everyone should participate and put their views across the table. Most of the people don't do it due to some fear in their minds.

Pinku: What type of fears Dadaji?



Negligence Leads to Problems

Dadaji: Well! "If I put my point, people may laugh", "what if my idea is rejected? ", "Am I exposing somebody else's wrong doing and that second person may create problems to me", so on and so forth.

Pinku: Hmm... That makes a lot sense. So what should one do then?

Dadaji: Pinku, communication is a fundamental necessity. Effective communication towards problem solving happens only when
a) An open dialogue between people who trust each other's intentions and
b) Each member feels that they are in a safe environment to share why they believe the problem happened.

Pinku: Hmm... well said Dadaji.

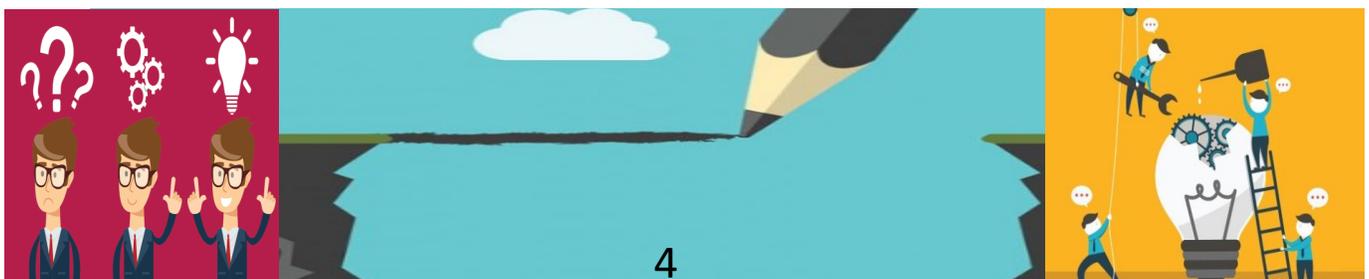
Dadaji: The communication problems come when people work in silos.

Pinku: Silo and what is that?

Dadaji: Silo is a mentality of a group or a person who deliberately avoid sharing of information with others or other groups who also have common interests.

Pinku: But why silos happen?

Dadaji: Silo's happen mainly because of attitude issues.



Problems and conflicts will happen

Pinku: Meaning?

Dadaji: Meaning the mentality of “If I share this idea” a) what’s in it for me? B) Am I going to be benefited? C) There will not be any difference even if I share my ideas, so on and so forth.

Pinku: Ok... how do people see the problems?

Dadaji: People tend to see a problem as a problem. There are two reasons why we tend to see a problem as a problem 1. It has to be solved and they are not sure how to find the best solution, and 2. There will probably be conflicts about what the best solution is as most of us tend to be "conflict-averse". We don't feel comfortable dealing with conflict and we tend to have the feeling that something bad is going to happen.

Pinku: Then how to overcome this Dadaji?

Dadaji: Well! There are two important things to remember about problems and conflicts 1. They happen all the time and they are opportunities to improve and 2. They are actually providing us with information that we can use to fix what needs fixing and do a better job. Just a change in mindset will bring in lots of opportunities to improve.



Problems Cannot be Solved When in Stress or Anxiety

Pinku: Why problems cause anxiety Dadaji?

Dadaji: Good question Pinku. Problems become more difficult when there is no obvious solution for it or strategies that you have tried in the past don't work. These types of problems cause a great deal of stress and anxiety and require new and different strategies to deal with.

Pinku: How do you identify that there is a problem?

Dadaji: Ah! That's a great question Pinku. Your instinct decides any issue to be a problem or it is just a quick fix. As a first step, it is important to realize that there is a problem. Because issues can cause anxiety, many people will try to avoid, ignore or procrastinate when dealing with them and suddenly issues become problems and then they start reacting/action the problem. The best way to deal is to kill every issue as and when they arise before they get converted to a problem.

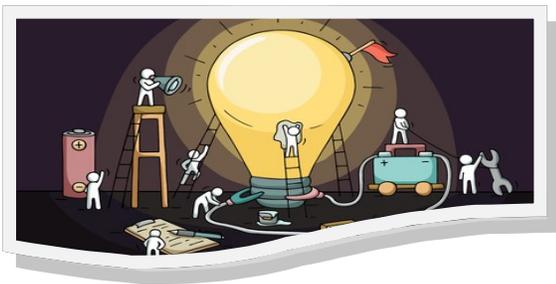
Pinku: That's a great idea Dadaji. What should be the most appropriate strategy solving a problem Dadaji?



Problems once resolved can reappear

There is no one strategy which can solve every problem. Instead there are several strategies that people use to solve problems. Let's see some of them:

1. **Create visual images:** Many problem-solvers find it useful to create “mind pictures” of a problem and its potential solutions prior to working on the problem. Mental imaging allows the problem-solvers to map out many dimensions of a problem and “see” it clearly.
2. **Guesstimate:** Some people try trial-and-error approach to problem-solving.
3. **Create a systematic list:** Recording information in list form is a process used quite frequently to map out a plan of attack for defining and solving problems.
4. **Create a table:** A table is an orderly arrangement of data. When people have opportunities to design and create tables of information, they begin to understand that they can group and organize most data relative to a problem.
5. **Work backward:** It's frequently helpful for people to take the data presented at the end



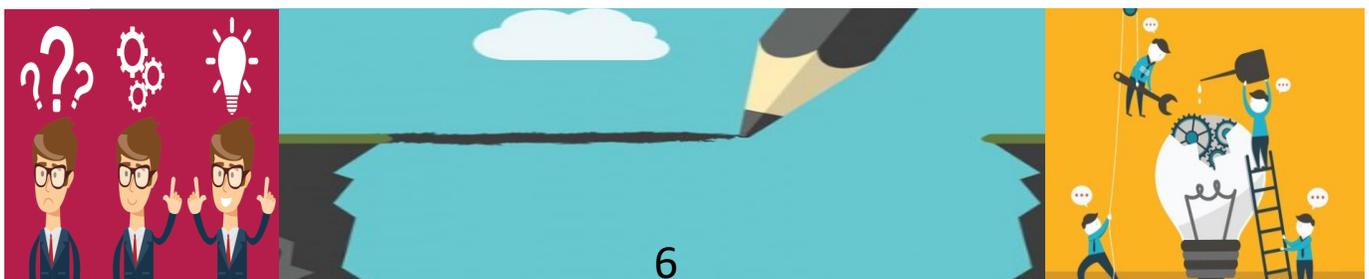
Problem has Multiple Solutions

of a problem and use a series of computations to arrive at the data presented at the beginning of the problem.

6. **Look for a pattern:** Looking for patterns is an important problem-solving strategy because many problems are similar and fall into predictable patterns. A pattern, by definition, is a regular, systematic repetition and may be numerical, visual, or behavioral.

Pinku: Wow great strategies Dadaji. What should I do if a problem is resolved?

Dadaji: There is no guarantee that once a problem is resolved, it will not re-appear. The problem with problems is their re-occurrences. Hence, always try to find a permanent fix. However, if these problems tend to be re-occurring, you should have stepwise strategies already defined through your previous experience to avoid them or kill them again if occurred. Not only that Pinku, after a problem is resolved, there are certain questions which are required to be answered properly.



Juggle priorities' to solve problems

- A. How often does the problem occur?
- B. How many people are affected?
- C. For what amount of time are they affected?
- D. How severe (significant) is the effect?
- E. How important is the problem or goal perceived to be by others?
- F. How effective are efforts to address it likely to be?
- G. Are there any likely negative impacts of addressing the problem?

These are called side effects or aftermath of problems that have been resolved.

Pinku: Isn't that every problem require behavior change in a person?

Dadaji: Hmm... Not exactly, but, you always have to unlearn to learn. As I told you Pinku earlier also that every problem is unique and always old techniques that you are aware of from your past experience may not help you fully. You may not change your behavior however, you might definitely seek a change in the way you see a problem. Hope it makes sense to you Pinku.



Attitude Turns

Problems into Blessings

Pinku: Yes! It does make sense to me Dadaji. I have a problem that I am unable to prioritize things. What should I do?

Dadaji: Well! You know that sinking feeling you have when there's too much on your plate Isn't it Pinku? When you try to tackle your tasks by priority, but it feels like everything's important, don't get overwhelmed; it's a problem that everyone faces at some point or another, and while it's difficult to skillfully juggle multiple priorities and competing responsibilities, it's not impossible. Even if everything on your plate is supposed to be equally important, you still need a way to break down which ones you spend your time on, and how you slice up your time. If you're prioritizing tasks that involve other people, like your family, friends or teachers talk to them. Find out from them the deliver time of each task that you have in hand. You can also ask someone if they can lend a hand. Set expectations with others for when you'll get your work done for them, and set expectations with yourself for when you'll have time to work on your own tasks.

Pinku: How attitude plays an important role in facing problems Dadaji.



Change your attitude to solve a problem

Dadaji: I read this message in "What's app". One of my friends forwarded this to me and I liked it. I want to share this with you as well Pinku. Here it goes:

If A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V
W X Y Z
is equal to 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17
18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26.

Then,

H+A+R+D+W+O+R+K =
8+1+18+4+23+15+18+11= 98%
K+N+O+W+L+E+D+G+E =
11+14+15+23+12+5+4+7+5= 96%
L+U+C+K = 12+21+3+11 = 47%
(None of them makes 100%)...

Is it Money? ...

...No!!!!

13+15+14+5+25 = 72%

Leadership? ...

...NO!!!!

12+5+1+4+5+18+19+8+9+16 = 89%

Every problem has a solution, only if we perhaps change our

"All birds find shelter during a rain. But the eagle avoids rain by flying above the clouds. Problems are common, but attitude makes the difference."

Problems are not in our
Control, but Solutions are...

"ATTITUDE"

1+20+20+9+20+21+4+5 = 100%

Pinku: Uh! That was a great message that your friend forwarded to you.

Dadaji you are aware that everything that that happens in our life is beyond our control then, how can we solve the problems if nothing is in our control?

Dadaji: That's an exceptional question Pinku. It's true that we cannot always control everything that happens to us in this life, but we can control how we respond to each of the problem that we encounter.

Pinku: Correct Dadaji at least response is in our control. In the above example you have shown that leadership is 89%. If that is correct then how leadership is solving problems.

Dadaji: Well! Leadership is solving problems as rightly said by you Pinku. If you are a class monitor and the day your co-students stop bringing you their problem is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help or concluded you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership.



Listening a problem 1/2 ends it

Pinku: Understood Dadaji. When I was monitor, I even realized that it's easy to solve problems as I listen to the co-students problems carefully.

Dadaji: Ah! That's called empathy Pinku. It has four steps

1. Deep Listening
2. Probing/Questioning
3. Take a standpoint and
4. Agreement.

Deep listening is a way of listening where we are fully present without trying to immediately control or judge a situation.

Probing/Questioning is about asking questions to understand what happened so that you can arrive at a workable solution.

Take a standpoint is fully understand each other perspectives/opinions.

Agreement is a closure of problem by mutually agreeing to actions that are required to be taken.



Mutual Agreement is the closure of all Problems

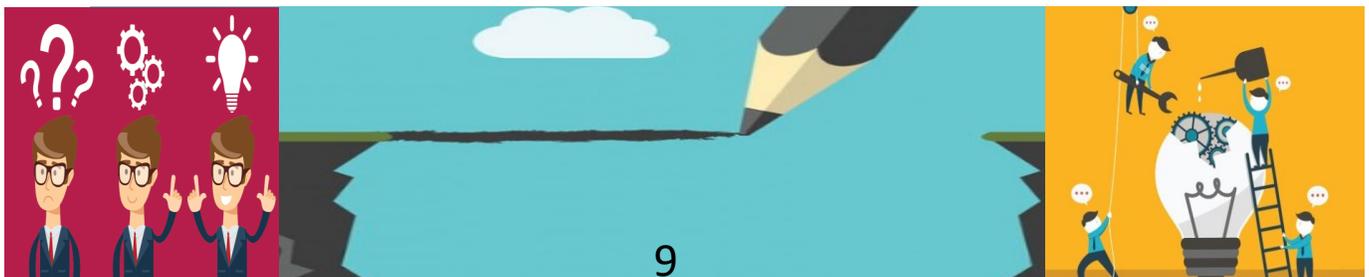
Pinku: Ah! Empathy... That reminds me of another doubt I have Dadaji. If I have skillset of pleasing everyone isn't that the end of all problems?

Dadaji: Well! Pleasing doesn't achieve what you think it does. You may hope that by winning the favor of others, they will take care of you. Unfortunately, you've found the opposite is true. All it does is make you completely dependent on their goodwill. People view pleaser as more of a problem than as someone who is useful and truly helpful. Moreover, you are not being your authentic self.

When you are overly focused on pleasing others, your behavior becomes insincere. In trying to make others happy, you lose yourself entirely. So take it off from your mind that pleasing brings in solutions to problems. No! It's you who has to take stride and solve problems yourself.

Pinku: Is finding alternatives a good solution to problems?

Dadaji: Hmm...! Well noting of alternatives no matter how silly, is an excellent discovery process. Once you have listed alternatives, be open to their possibilities. Make notes on those that:



Rest can solve problems

- Need more information
- Are new solutions
- Can be combined or eliminated
- Will meet opposition
- Seem promising or exciting

That will lead you to a solution. I would say finding alternatives is one another strategy to solve problems but not the ultimate one.

Pinku: How true! Dadaji tell me one thing does resting or relaxing can help resolve a problem?

- ⇒ Rest gives more energy
- ⇒ Relaxation gives better sleep
- ⇒ Rest helps increase concentration
- ⇒ Rest gives better problem-solving abilities
- ⇒ Rest and relaxation gives greater efficiency
- ⇒ Rest and relaxation ensures smoother emotions — less anger, crying, anxiety, frustration
- ⇒ Rest results in less headaches and pain
- ⇒ Relaxation and sleep gives the heart a rest by slowing the heart rate
- ⇒ Rest reduces blood pressure
- ⇒ Rest and sleep slows the rate of breathing,



Find the Alternatives Choose the Right Alternatives and Solve the Problems

which reduces the need for oxygen

⇒ Rest increases blood flow to the muscles

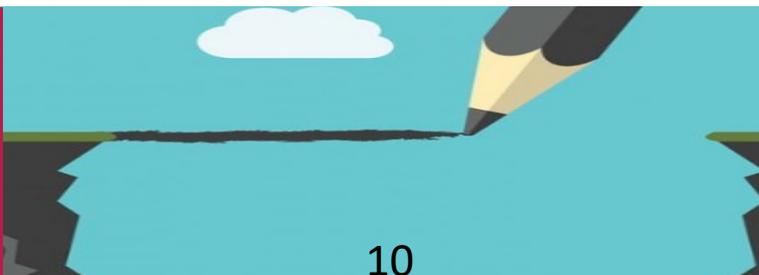
⇒ Rest decreases muscle tension

Pinku: Hmm... that was useful information Dadaji. What are your thoughts on curiosity and optimism? Are they good tools for problem solving?

Dadaji: Pinku my favorite words are curiosity and optimism. I think if you are curious, you create opportunities, and then you open the doors to creativity which creates possibilities. The possibilities lead to optimism and optimism will lead to right direction in planning and planning reduces most of the inherent risks and hence you are on track. If you are on track, problems rarely occur.

Pinku: Hmm... so you are trying to say Dadaji, curiosity leads to optimism, optimism leads to planning and planning leads to right direction which if I may say is the path to success.

Dadaji: Uh! Great thoughts... Good job Pinku.



Effective thinking solve problems

Dadaji: Yes Pinku these are called effective questioning method. There are number of rigid psychological steps involved in problem solving, which is also referred as problem-solving cycle. The steps may not be in sequential order but are effective.

Step 1 When: At what time and date did the problem occurred. This is the first step to start the analysis.

Step 2 Who: Who were the people involved when the problem had actually occurred?

Step 3 How: How was the issue identified?

Step 4 What: What was the cause of the problem?

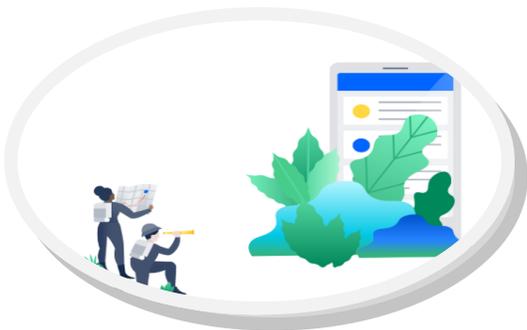
Step 5 Why: Why did the incident happen?

Step 6 What if: What if; if someone else was also involved?

Step 7 Where: Where did the incident occur?

Step 8 Whom: With whom might be the evidence available

Pinku: I know these questions but never knew that these questions were so effective in problem solving. Great Dadaji... appreciate it.



Effective Questioning Leads To Resolving Problems

Dadaji: Not only that Pinku... Psychology has types of thinking involved which help resolve problems. A few of them are:

1. Creative Thinking: Creativity is central to solving complex problems, developing new strategies, facilitating innovation, and driving change. Creative problem solving is a way of solving problems or identifying opportunities when conventional thinking has failed. It encourages you to find fresh perspectives and come up with innovative solutions, so that you can formulate a plan to overcome obstacles and reach your goals.

2. Critical Thinking: Critical thinking is the disciplined process skillfully conceptualizing, applying analyzing, interpreting, reflecting, evaluating, inference, explain, and to decide the due course of action to resolve a problem.

3. Selective Thinking: The process whereby one selects favorable evidence and ignore un-favorable evidence that may not be helpful during investigation of a problem.

4. Analytical Thinking: An analytical approach is the use of an appropriate process to break a problem down into the elements necessary to solve it.



Commonsense solve most problems

Each element becomes a smaller and easier problem to solve.

5. Non-Judgmental Thinking: The non-judgmental thinking is to be mindful of each aspect and evidence during problem solving. Everybody in the arena of problem is treated equally and final decision is taken based on evidences, facts and figures.

Pinku: uh! That was a great teaching Dadaji... Dadaji I also heard something called out of box thinking. Will that help resolve problems?

Dadaji: Yes Pinku I missed that in my list. To understand out of the box thinking you should first know inside the box thinking. Inside the box thinking is gained through experience trial and tested versions that you are already aware of or you are comfortable with those quick win solutions. Out of the box thinking requires you to unlearn everything that you have learnt in past, wear a new thinking hat, see every situation as being opportunity to solve a problem and choose a solution that probably nobody would think in normal course of action.

Pinku: Oh! Can I call them as unconventional thinking processes?



Helping Each Other Resolve the Problems

Dadaji: Yes certainly and rightly said Pinku. It is also referred to as lateral thinking looking at things from a new perspective. It generally means creative thinking.

Pinku: How about using common sense to solve problems.

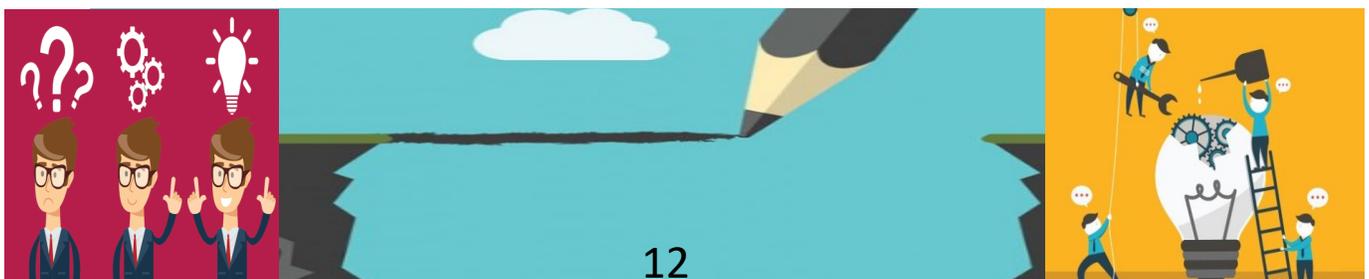
Dadaji: To be very frank Pinku, most of the problems get resolved using normal intelligence also called as common sense. Common sense is nothing but if a problem is given to 100 people, nearly 90 people will come back with the same solution or similar thinking.

Generally in order to resolve a problem quickly, we often ignore common sense or normal intelligence which every human naturally have. We see the problem very big and start thinking innovatively and out of the box. Not required, having normal thinking resolves 90% of the problems.

Pinku: Hmm... so your common sense to resolve a problem first and then if it is not getting result, go for out of the box thinking.

Dadaji: Exactly. Every problem does not require out of the box thinking.

Pinku: Is it easy to resolve every problem?



Problems cannot be solved without struggle

Dadaji: Every problem has its own degree of struggle. You should always remember Pinku that problems are not stop signs, they are guidelines and all problems become smaller when you confront them instead of duck/hide them. Sometimes problems don't require a solution to solve them; instead they require maturity to outgrow them. Lastly, there is no problem outside of you that is superior to the power within you.

Pinku: Those were really great teaching Dadaji. I will remember each of the points that we discussed and make my life better. Thank you as every time again and again for all your guidance Dadaji. I Love YOU...

Discussions help
Resolve the Problems

Problems are easy
to solve; it only
requires the right
approach

Thank
You.

