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Critical thinking and problem solving skills definition

Image: Jose Luis Pelaez Inc / DigitalVision / Getty Images When something goes awry in your home, what is your first instinct? Do you make a call and pay an expert to come fix it? Or do you move to the self-sufficient response — asking what it would take to do it yourself? If you have a self-sufficient mindset, it doesn’t matter whether you already know how to fix something. You just know that you have the capacity to figure it out, and you break the task down into manageable steps and take them in stride. When you get a sky-high water bill, for instance, how do you react? You might first call the water company for advice. When they tell you that the problem is definitely on your end and not a leak on the street side, you’ll need to figure out how to find the leak. Start by checking any appliances for leaking. Eventually, you look up the blueprint for your water pipes outside the house and dig until you uncover the culprit soaking in a pool underground. The DIY mindset means that, over time, you’ll acquire a wide range of skills and the ability to take on any challenge that comes your way. How far along are you in that process? Tackle these problems and find out how self-sufficient you really are! TRIVIA Can You Solve These Logic Problems? 7 Minute Quiz 7 Min TRIVIA Can You Solve These Basic Word Problems from Elementary School? 7 Minute Quiz 7 Min TRIVIA Can You Solve These Auto Problems? 7 Minute Quiz 7 Min TRIVIA Can You Identify All of These Calligraphy Letters? 6 Minute Quiz 6 Min TRIVIA HARD Only a Genius Can Solve These Simple Math Problems in Less Than Eight Minutes. Can You? 6 Minute Quiz 6 Min TRIVIA Show Off Your Knowledge With This Common Phrases Quiz! 6 Minute Quiz 6 Min TRIVIA Do You Know These Common Millennial Phrases? 6 Minute Quiz 6 Min TRIVIA Can You Pass This Common Phrases Test? 7 Minute Quiz 7 Min TRIVIA Can You Identify More Than 11 of These Common Phrases? 6 Minute Quiz 6 Min TRIVIA Do You Know Enough to Complete All of These Common Phrases? 6 Minute Quiz 6 Min How much do you know about dinosaurs? What is an octane rating? And how do you use a proper noun? Lucky for you, HowStuffWorks Play is here to help. Our award-winning website offers reliable, easy-to-understand explanations about how the world works. From fun quizzes that bring joy to your day, to compelling photography and fascinating lists, HowStuffWorks Play offers something for everyone. Sometimes we explain how stuff works, other times, we ask you, but we’re always exploring in the name of fun! Because learning is fun, so stick with us! Playing quizzes is free! We send trivia questions and personality tests every week to your inbox. By clicking "Sign Up" you are agreeing to our privacy policy and confirming that you are 13 years old or over. Copyright © 2021 InfoSpace Holdings, LLC, a System1 Company What do you do when you encounter a problem? This self-paced career development course will help you think critically and creatively to solve problems and design solutions. These skills will set you apart from peers and make you a sought-after leader and teammate. This is the third course in Fullbridge’s four-part Career Development XSeries, designed to prepare you to succeed in the modern workplace. How to frame problems using a systematic, repeatable process How to develop and test solutions using the 80/20 rule How to identify user needs and develop solutions to meet them How to use design thinking to generate ideas and discover creative solutions How to plan and execute primary and secondary research How to design and build effective surveys This is a self-paced course and can be completed according to your own schedule. Our recommendation is to complete the course over four weeks, with one to two hours of time spent working through the course per week. After the Course Introduction, each section should take approximately one to two hours to complete. Section 0: Course Introduction Review course logistics, including the course overview, schedule, components, grading, and support. Section 1: Problem Solving Learn strategies and techniques that will enable you to effectively problem solve using a systematic, repeatable process. Section 2: Design Thinking Familiarize yourself with the design thinking process and learn how to develop innovative, game-changing ideas. Section 3: Research Methods Master how to plan and execute effective research, including how to design effective surveys and user tests. Section 4: Final Assessment and Course Recap Demonstrate your mastery of the course content in the final assessment. Whether it's asking what you'll eat for lunch or how you'll win back a high-profile client, making decisions is something we have to do every day. Making those decisions -- and facing adversity head-on -- is what makes us successful in life.Decision-making often seems like it should be easier than it is. After all, how do you know an option will pan out until you try it?You have to improve your problem-solving skills. By identifying the problem you need to solve and thinking through the ways you could tackle it, decisions become much easier to make. You know what's important, and that's crucial for saving time as you make your way to a solution.Here are six techniques you can scale to solve any difficult situation.Psychologists and researchers have developed a systematic approach for discovering a sustainable solution to any problem. This technique, commonly referred to as the problem-solving cycle, starts with identifying the problem. After all, there could be multiple issues within one situation, and you could be focusing on the wrong one. Separate the symptoms from the cause.After defining the problem, form a strategy. This will vary depending on the situation and your preferences, but develop wide-ranging ideas while taking into consideration your resources. Are the solutions feasible? Come up with multiple ideas to have options.Organize your information: What do you know -- or not know -- about the problem? By collecting as much information as possible, you increase your chances of achieving a positive outcome.Once you settle on a solution, monitor its progress. The solution you developed should be measurable so you can assess whether it's reaching its destination. If not, you may need to implement an alternative strategy.Evaluate the end result. How did the solution measure against your goals? Were you able to stay within budget? If so, the solution was a success. If not, try a different approach next time.There's no question that asking questions is an important part of our daily lives. But are you asking the right questions?Let's say you need more customers. Rather than ask, "Why can't I get more customers?" ask solution-oriented questions like "What three things can I do differently than my competitors?" or "What would I have to do in the next month to get 10 new customers?"When you view a problem as burdensome, you avoid it. Who actually wants to deal with something that's frustrating, overwhelming, or seemingly impossible?However, if you change your mindset to view challenges as a way to grow, you'll be less stressed about finding a solution. What's more, your mind will break down and analyze the problem more easily, you'll be more flexible, and you'll be better suited to take care of future issues.While changing your mindset to start viewing problems as opportunities doesn't occur overnight, it helps to first realize that problems are inevitable. The sooner you come to terms with this, the better you'll be able to approach any dilemma with open-mindedness.Secondly, avoid lingering on negative first impressions. For instance, if your car doesn't start in the morning, your first thought may revolve around how much it will cost to repair or how late you'll be late for a meeting. Instead, focus on the actual problem: "The car won't start."Create a mental list of the actual negative consequences -- the worst-case scenarios. We have a tendency to think a minor setback is the end of the world. By thinking objectively about the real-world implications of the problem, you may realize it's not as bad as it seems.Finally, focus on improvements. Resist against knee-jerk reactions: "My car won't start, and I'll have to get it repaired." Instead, consider your current and future situation: "My car won't start. I should leave 10 minutes earlier to catch the train in case this happens again." Look at other options, too: "My car won't start. This is the perfect time to look at working remotely couple days per week" or "Maybe I should see if Joe would like to start a carpool." According to former Detroit Lions wide receiver and astronaut Leland Melvin, experiential learning with our hands, like playing with LEGO's, can wire our brains for problem-solving at a young age."I[When we let [kids] build and create and it's meaningful and it helps them solve a problem, that gets them thinking about how they can be change makers themselves and how they can be scientists and engineers," says Melvin.Adults can improve their problem-solving skills by playing chess or Sudoku or manipulating a Rubik's cube. You could also play board games with friends or family. I play King of Tokyo with my daughter to help us both become more strategic.Put your ego aside, and ask others for help. Even if you could solve the problem on your own, working with others can bring fresh ideas and vantage points you would never have developed by yourself.But who should you turn to for assistance? Friends and family are great places to start because they can provide support and encouragement. Colleagues can offer insightful feedback. You could also delegate some work to your team to give a specific problem your complete attention. You can ask mentors, coaches, or people you admire how they handle a similar predicament and model their behavior.Has your vehicle ever gotten stuck in mud or snow? If you keep hitting the gas pedal, you're only going to dig yourself deeper. The same is true when solving a problem.If you keep going full-throttle, you'll burn yourself out. Instead, walk away to clear your head. Exercise, meditate, read a book, or call a friend. The idea is to do something you enjoy so you can loosen up and come back to the problem with a positive attitude.Additionally, you need to make the time to celebrate your accomplishments. It's a simple way to reinforce the belief that you have what it takes to triumph over any difficult situation. It also gives you a self-esteem push so you'll have the confidence to tackle problems head-on rather than avoid them.Regardless of the size of the issue at hand, developing a problem-solving process doesn't just give you a hand in making more informed decisions. It will also help you prioritize your time so you can get back to what really matters. In every business, especially new ones, quick and effective problem solving is a critical skill.The problems you face are more complex and moving faster than ever before, and the consequences of a poor or incomplete solution can be costly to your business, and well as to your community, human health, and the environment. What we learn in school hasn't kept up with the demands.For example, there is no question that Theranos and Elizabeth Holmes faced a host of complex problems in their drive to offer a comprehensive blood test from just a finger stick and a single drop of blood.Yet few would have believed that problems could have brought down such a promising solution, as well as the reputation of the founder, despite a \$9 billion valuation.I found some real insights into today's problem solving challenge in a new book, "Bulletproof Problem Solving," by Charles Conn and Robert McLean. These authors have more than thirty years of experience in complex problem solving, including solution approaches, in McKinsey & Company, start-up companies, and many social and environmental organizations.Based on my own thirty years of experience in large and small business, and advisory roles with new businesses, I support their summary of the common pitfalls that many business leaders experience in facing the problem solving challenges in the marketplace today.Rushing into analysis with a vague problem statement is a clear formula for long hours and frustrated customers.You need clarity around the decision-making criteria and constraints, the time frame required, and an indication of action that will occur when the problem is solved, or not solved.Asserting any solution without proper validation in this complex world is a recipe for disaster. No matter what your conviction or experience ("I've seen this before"), the stakes are too high to try to force an answer.In this age of instant and total communication, you can't fool customers.Only by first finding all the cleaving points that allow you to dissect the problem, will you likely find the most serious crux of the issue.Elizabeth Holmes never focused on how many false positive blood tests were sending people to the hospital, or she might not have minimized the problem.Grouphink amongst a team of managers with similar backgrounds and traditional hierarchy makes it hard for anyone to see the real alternatives clearly.Every leader needs to make sure and listen to people with a diversity of experiences, who are open-minded, and have no ulterior motives.Some issues can be resolved with "back of the envelope" calculations, while complex modern issues may demand more time and sophisticated new tools. For example, sometimes you need regression analysis is a substitute for a well-designed real world experiment with "big data" analysis.Analytically oriented teams often say, "We're done" when a solution is found, but don't follow-through with a plan to communicate complex concepts to diverse audiences, and sell their action plan to stakeholders. Effective solutions capture the total audience with compelling actions.Rarely is a problem solved totally the first time. Complex problems have a messiness about them that takes you back and forth between hypotheses, analysis, and conclusions, each time deepening your understanding.Expect your problem solving to be iterative and a learning process.Every leader needs to adopt a systematic approach to problem solving and continually hone their skills. The authors present a seven-step approach that works for them, and has been proven across multiple business arenas.I recommend that you do your homework to find a system that works for you and avoids the pitfalls outlined here. The longevity of your business today totally depends on it. Last Updated on July 20, 2021 You're standing behind the curtain, just about to make your way on stage to face the many faces half-shrouded in darkness in front of you. As you move towards the spotlight, your body starts to feel heavier with each step. A familiar thump echoes throughout your body - your heartbeat has gone off the charts.Don't worry, you're not the only one with glossophobia(also known as speech anxiety or the fear of speaking to large crowds). Sometimes, the anxiety happens long before you even stand on stage.Your body's defence mechanism responds by causing a part of your brain to release adrenaline into your blood - the same chemical that gets released as if you were being chased by a lion.Here's a step-by-step guide to help you overcome your fear of public speaking:1. Prepare yourself mentally and physicallyAccording to experts, we're built to display anxiety and to recognize it in others. If your body and mind are anxious, your audience will notice. Hence, it's important to prepare yourself before the big show so that you arrive on stage confident, collected and ready. "Your outside world is a reflection of your inside world. What goes on in the inside, shows on the outside." - Bob ProctorExercising lightly before a presentation helps get your blood circulating and sends oxygen to the brain. Mental exercises, on the other hand, can help calm the mind and nerves. Here are some useful ways to calm your racing heart when you start to feel the butterflies in your stomach:Warming upIf you're nervous, chances are your body will feel the same way. Your body gets tense, your muscles feel tight or you're breaking in cold sweat. The audience will notice you are nervous.If you observe that this is exactly what is happening to you minutes before a speech, do a couple of stretches to loosen and relax your body. It's better to warm up before every speech as it helps to increase the functional potential of the body as a whole. Not only that, it increases muscle efficiency, improves reaction time and your movements.Here are some exercises to loosen up your body before show time: Neck and shoulder rolls - This helps relieve upper body muscle tension and pressure as the rolls focus on rotating the head and shoulders, loosening the muscle. Stress and anxiety can make us rigid within this area which can make you feel agitated, especially when standing. Arm stretches - We often use this part of our muscles during a speech or presentation through our hand gestures and movements. Stretching these muscles can reduce arm fatigue, loosen you up and improve your body language range. Waist twists - Place your hands on your hips and rotate your waist in a circular motion. This exercise focuses on loosening the abdominal and lower back regions which is essential as it can cause discomfort and pain, further amplifying any anxieties you may experience. Stay hydratedEver felt parched seconds before speaking? And then coming up on stage sounding raspy and scratchy in front of the audience? This happens because the adrenaline from stage fright causes your mouth to feel dried out.To prevent all that, it's essential we stay adequately hydrated before a speech. A sip of water will do the trick. However, do drink in moderation so that you won't need to go to the bathroom constantly.Try to avoid sugary beverages and caffeine, since it's a diuretic - meaning you'll feel thirstier. It will also amplify your anxiety which prevents you from speaking smoothly.MeditateMeditation is well-known as a powerful tool to calm the mind. ABC's Dan Harris, co-anchor of Nightline and Good Morning America weekend and author of the book titled10% Happier, recommends that meditation can help individuals to feel significantly calmer, faster. Meditation is like a workout for your mind. It gives you the strength and focus to filter out the negativity and distractions with words of encouragement, confidence and strength.Mindfulness meditation, in particular, is a popular method to calm yourself before going up on the big stage. The practice involves sitting comfortably, focusing on your breathing and then bringing your mind's attention to the present without drifting into concerns about the past or future - which likely includes floundering on stage.Here's a nice example of guided meditation before public speaking:2. Focus on your goalOne thing people with a fear of public speaking have in common is focusing too much on themselves and the possibility of failure.Do I look funny? What if I can't remember what to say? Do I look stupid? Will people listen to me? Does anyone care about what I'm talking about?Instead of thinking this way, shift your attention to your one true purpose - contributing something of value to your audience. Decide on the progress you'd like your audience to make after your presentation. Notice their movements and expressions to adapt your speech to ensure that they are having a good time to leave the room as better people.If your own focus isn't beneficial and what it should be when you're speaking, then shift it to what does. This is also key to establishing trust during your presentation as the audience can clearly see that you have their interests at heart.3. Convert negativity to positivityThere are two sides constantly battling inside of us - one is filled with strength and courage while the other is doubt and insecurities. Which one will you feed?What if I mess up this speech? What if I'm not funny enough? What if I forget what to say?It's no wonder why many of us are uncomfortable giving a presentation. All we do is bring ourselves down before we got a chance to prove ourselves. This is also known as a self-fulfilling prophecy - a belief that comes true because we are acting as if it already is. If you think you're incompetent, then it will eventually become true.Motivational coaches tout that positive mantras and affirmations tend to speak in front of an audience. Many people fear public speaking because they fear others will judge them for showing their true, vulnerable self. However, vulnerability can sometimes help you come across as more authentic and relatable as a speaker. Drop the pretence of trying to act or speak like someone else and you'll find that it's worth the risk. You become more genuine, flexible and spontaneous, which makes it easier to handle unpredictable situations - whether it's getting tough questions from the crowd or experiencing an unexpected technical difficulty.To find out your authentic style of speaking is easy. Just pick a topic or issue you are passionate about and discuss this like you normally would with a close family or friend. It is like having a conversation with someone in a personal one-to-one setting. A great way to do this on stage is to select a random audience member(with a hopefully calming face) and speak to a single person at a time during your speech. You'll find that it's easier trying to connect to one person at a time than a whole room.With that said, being comfortable enough to be yourself in front of others may take a little time and some experience, depending how comfortable you are with being yourself in front of others. But once you embrace it, stage fright will not be as intimidating as you initially thought.Presenters like Barack Obama are a prime example of a genuine and passionate speaker:7. Post speech evaluationLast but not the least, if you've done public speaking and have been scarred from a bad experience, try seeing it as a lesson learned to improve yourself as a speaker.Don't beat yourself up after a presentationWe are the hardest on ourselves and it's good to be. But when you finish delivering your speech or presentation, give yourself some recognition and a pat on the back.You managed to finish whatever you had to do and did not give up. You did not let your fears and insecurities get to you. Take a little more pride in your work and believe in yourself.Improve your next speechAs mentioned before, practice does make perfect. If you want to improve your public speaking skills, try asking someone to film you during a speech or presentation. Afterwards, watch and observe what you can do to improve yourself next time.Here are some questions you can ask yourself after every speech: How did I do? Are there any areas for improvement? Did I sound or look stressed? Did I stumble on my words? Why? Was I saying "um" too often? How was the flow of the speech? Write everything you observed down and keep practicing and improving. In time, you'll be able to better manage your fears of public speaking and appear more confident when it counts.If you want even more tips about public speaking or delivering a great presentation, check out these articles too:

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