

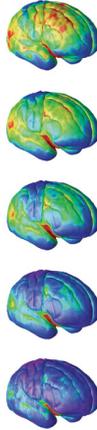


Problem Solving & Decision-Making Definitions & Discussion Questions

Definitions

Critical Thinking: Deliberately analyzing information so that you can make better judgments and decisions using logic, reasoning, and creativity to draw conclusions and generally understand things better. Critically thinking is:

- the opposite of impulsive reacting
- an intentional process
- asking questions instead of jumping to conclusions
- a purposeful evaluation of what you know and how you know it



Higher Level Skills, including problem solving and decision-making skills, grow as the Frontal Lobe develops, especially during the second phase of brain development from age 11/12 to around 25. These skills give young people the ability to think more critically using logic, reasoning, and creativity.

PROBLEM SOLVING: Brainstorming multiple possible solutions; analyzing the pros and cons of each potential option to determine the best solution to a problem.

DECISION-MAKING: The act or process of making choices; brainstorming possible choices; choosing with the best outcomes in mind.

Barriers to Critical Thinking

COGNITIVE BIAS: A tendency to think a certain way without conscious awareness.

STATUS QUO BIAS: A tendency to stick with what you know because new or different alternatives are risky.

ANCHORING BIAS: Relying too heavily on the first thing you hear without considering more objective factors or additional information.

CHOICE OVERLOAD: The stress caused by becoming overwhelmed by too many options.

DECISION FATIGUE: Feeling worn down by having to make a large number of decisions over a prolonged period of time.

Reflections

- Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 (10 being the highest) on your critical thinking skills? What does your rating mean about how you think?
- What obstacles do you face when solving problems or making decisions? How does choice overload or decision fatigue affect you?

Application

Decision-Making Strategies

Young people face difficult problems and need to make decisions on a regular basis, especially about how to stay safe from risky behavior. Use the following strategies when faced with multiple options.

COMPARISON. Comparing options is a good starting strategy. List all the factors involved in order of importance to you.

ASSIGN POINTS. Giving points to each factor creates a point system that can be used in comparing options.

PROS & CONS. Write a list of the positives and negatives for each option.

PREDICT THE OUTCOMES. Imagine all possible short- and long-term consequences of each option.

ASK FOR HELP. Ask others for their opinions to gain different perspectives and generate new ideas.

DISTRACTION. Do something different to give yourself a brain break, then return to decision-making afresh.