

Five Steps to Problem-solving

You will face problems all your life. Some of them will be small day-to-day problems like what to eat for breakfast, or where to find your house keys. Other problems that arise can be much more significant and complex, like disagreements with friends, or trying to decide what to do when you finish school.

Regardless of whether the problem you face is small, medium, or large, there are five steps you can take that can help you deal with it. This five-step model is not a guarantee that you'll come up with the ideal solution, but it does encourage you to consider lots of options and outcomes. By doing this, you'll know you've given this problem your best shot, and that should make you feel good no matter how things turn out.

STEP 1 Ask: What is the problem?

This is a really important step - sometimes, even just identifying what the problem is can prove half the battle!



Ben doesn't know what he wants for breakfast.

STEP 2 Ask: What are the options/ possible solutions?

This is a very important step, because you have to make yourself think about all your options, not just the obvious ones. Open your mind, and think objectively and creatively.



Ben considers every food option in the house.

STEP 3 Ask: What are the pros, cons, and consequences of each option?

Here is where you imagine what is likely to happen if you proceed with each of your possible solutions. What will be the upside? What might be the downside? Some options will have two sets of consequences: short-term and long-term. Some options will have outcomes that affect not just you, but other people, too. Complex, isn't it? But this step is incredibly important.



Ben knows that cereal is quick to prepare (pro) but won't be as tasty as he might like (con).



Ben thinks bacon and eggs would be the tastiest option (pro), but also one that leaves his kitchen in a mess and the house smelling like fried bacon (con) - consequences that might affect other people.

STEP 4 Make a decision

Ultimately, you have to make a choice. Problems that are left to fix themselves very rarely do. Remember, nobody can read the future, so you just have to make a decision based on your clear thinking about options and their consequences.



Ben decides that yoghurt is today's best breakfast choice.

STEP 5 Do and Review

There! You've chosen one course of action and gone through with it. Did it work? Maybe it did, maybe it didn't. Regardless, you should feel good about it, because you thought clearly and carefully before you acted, and did the best you could. If things didn't turn out, well, that's life. We all make mistakes - mistakes are how we learn, so don't make yourself feel bad!

Ben eats the yoghurt and thinks it is tastier than the cereal and less tasty than the bacon and eggs (but probably better for him) and, the clean up is a breeze. Good choice!

