



FACT SHEET

Brain Injury & Problem-Solving/Decision-Making

*Do you
have
trouble
making
decisions
since
your
brain
injury?*

What does this mean?

The term “problem solving” is often used to describe how we deal with everyday difficulties. Yet, we do not often think about what the term means. What is problem solving? Problem solving means applying a set of rules to everyday problems to solve them more quickly and make decisions successfully. It involves several steps, including:

- ◆ Define the problem: identify the problem in a clear and definite manner.
- ◆ Brainstorming: generate lists of ideas for solving the problem, including the pros and cons of each possible solution.
- ◆ Try out solution: pick the solution with the most “pros” and fewest “cons” and try it out.
- ◆ Evaluate the outcome: determine if the solution worked to solve the problem; if not, try another solution.

How might a brain injury affect problem-solving ability?

- ◆ It is common to have problems with reasoning, problem-solving and judgment.
- ◆ There may be difficulty recognizing when there is a problem.
- ◆ There may be trouble analyzing information or changing the way they are thinking (being flexible or “thinking outside the box”).
- ◆ There may be difficulty deciding the best solution to a problem, or may get stuck on one solution and not consider other, better options.
- ◆ Quick decisions may be made without considering the consequences, or the best judgment may not be used (e.g. impulsivity).

Recommended strategies:

- ◆ A speech therapist or psychologist experienced in cognitive rehabilitation can teach an organized approach for daily problem-solving.

Work through a step-by-step problem-solving strategy in writing:

- Define the problem
 - Brainstorm possible solutions
 - List the pros and cons of each solution
 - Pick a solution to try
 - Evaluate the success of the solution
 - Try another solution if the first one doesn’t work
- ◆ Ask a support person to help you with these steps if you have difficulty.