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Strategies for Enhancing Complex Problem Solving

Definition:

Complex problem solving and executive skills are frequently necessary to successfully solve challenges in daily activities. The following is a detailed list of things you can do to improve your ability to manage deficits associated with problem solving, organizing, and assimilation.

1. Preparation:

- a. Assemble necessary articles (i.e. paper and pencil)
- b. Be sure you have had good rest and nutrition
- c. Decrease or remove distractions
- d. Increase focus and attention
- e. Simplicity – Keep things simple!
- f. Formulate Question . . . what is the purpose of what I am doing?
- g. Set Task objective
- h. Rehearsal – Rehearse task steps or review the process you are going to make
- i. DO NOT alter task steps once established
- j. Self – Monitoring – place reminders and focus placards along the way. Create overview or chart diagram of the process if this will help
- k. Apply good cognition and mental health strategies (i.e. positive outlook, no use of catastrophic thinking)
- l. Be solution focused NOT problem focused

2. Decipher:

- a. Identify problem set
- b. Obtain necessary data you think might be involved
- c. Weed out extraneous information
- d. Be selective, not overly inclusive

3. Sort, Assimilate, & Group Ideas/ Aspects – look for the following :

- a. Commonalities
- b. Differences
- c. Collate
- d. Break task down into simpler, bite sized bits.

4. Mental Operations – apply the necessary operation or adapt problem solving skills:

- a. Deductive Reasoning
- b. Methodical application of known operations
- c. Apply thought and consideration

5. Conclusion:

- a. Formulate thought
- b. Express thoughts slowly and methodically
- c. Use paper and pencil or other aids
- d. Rehearse your answer out loud, alone in a room before telling others. Listen to what it sounds like. Does it sound right?

6. Confirmation:

- a. Check & double check
- b. Retrace steps
- c. Check with authoritative resource
- d. Confer with a trusted ally/ coworker

7. Expression/ Revelation:

- a. Communicate ideas in slow and simple terms
- b. Listen to your words & ideas
- c. Have confidence in your ability and conclusions
- d. DO NOT use negative self-talk or other problematic cognitive strategies (i.e. catastrophic thinking, all-or-nothing, absolutes, etc.)

8. Repeat & Improve mastery:

- a. Review and repeat as often as necessary
- b. Increase mastery with repetition