

# Problem Solving and Reasoning



Problem solving and reasoning are very complex skills. A person must think about many things at one time.

For example, there are many things that need to be done while making a left turn on a busy street.

You need to pay attention to traffic, look out for people walking and notice the color of the traffic light all at the same time before deciding that it is safe to make a left turn. You may even be talking with another person in the car.

Without knowing, you are receiving information and making a decision (with many distractions taking place), sequencing tasks and reasoning in a matter of seconds.

Problem solving requires many skills, including memory, concentration and perception. If there are other problems with cognition, then problem solving and reasoning abilities will also be affected.

A person with a brain injury may have problems in some or all of the areas listed above. Problem areas may also range from minor to severe. This will depend on the person's type, location and extent of injury. Because thinking affects all aspects of life from getting dressed to balancing a checkbook, many of the issues facing persons with brain injury stem from problems in this area. Therefore, much of the recovery process focuses on ways to improve cognition.

## Ways to Help

Start with small problems first.

Accept help from others. Maybe you can do pretend "problem games" with a loved one. For example, have a friend ask you, "What would you do if \_\_\_\_\_ happened?" Together the two of you could practice making good decisions.

Keep as much structure in your day as possible. This way, if a problem does arise, you will have the mental energy to look at it carefully since the rest of the day is fairly well planned.

Tackle a problem one step at a time. Ask for help if you are not sure.

**Step 1:** Identify the problem.

**Step 2:** Decide what you need to know about it to make a good decision.

**Step 3:** Gather the necessary information.

**Step 4:** Weigh your options.

**Step 5:** Decide on the best solution.

**Step 6:** Evaluate how it turned out.

Always consider safety first.