

CRITICAL THINKING & PROBLEM SOLVING

Critical Thinking and Problem Solving are essential life skills that help young people understand situations clearly, make informed choices, overcome challenges, and respond effectively to everyday problems. In a rapidly changing world filled with information, technology, social pressures, and complex decisions, young people need more than academic knowledge—they need the ability to **think independently, question intelligently, analyse situations, and find practical solutions.**

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to examine information objectively before accepting it as true. It involves asking questions, identifying facts and assumptions, considering different perspectives, analysing evidence, and reaching logical conclusions. For young people, critical thinking helps them distinguish facts from opinions, recognise misinformation, evaluate social media content, and avoid making decisions based solely on peer pressure or emotions.

A critical thinker does not simply ask, “*What should I think?*” but also asks, “*Why should I think this?*” and “*What evidence supports it?*” This encourages curiosity, open-mindedness, independent thinking, and responsible decision-making.

Problem Solving

Problem solving is the ability to identify a challenge, understand its causes, explore possible solutions, evaluate alternatives, and take appropriate action. Problems may range from academic difficulties and conflicts with friends to managing time, handling stress, making career choices, or responding to difficult situations.

Effective problem solving teaches young people that challenges are not necessarily failures. They can be opportunities to learn, adapt, and grow. A structured approach—**Identify the Problem → Understand the Cause → Generate Options → Evaluate Solutions → Take Action → Review the Result**—helps young people approach difficulties with confidence rather than fear or frustration.

Relevance for Young People

Critical thinking and problem solving are particularly relevant during adolescence and young adulthood, when individuals begin making increasingly independent choices. These skills help young people:

- Make thoughtful and responsible decisions.
- Resist negative peer pressure and impulsive choices.
- Evaluate information and misinformation critically.
- Handle conflicts and interpersonal challenges constructively.

- Develop confidence and independence.
- Adapt to changing academic, social, and professional environments.
- Think creatively when conventional solutions do not work.
- Take responsibility for their choices and learn from mistakes.
- Approach challenges with resilience and a growth mindset.
- Become responsible citizens and future leaders.

Suggested Outcomes

At the end of the program, one should be able to:

1. **Understand** the meaning and importance of critical thinking and problem solving.
2. **Identify** facts, assumptions, opinions, biases, and misinformation.
3. **Ask relevant and meaningful questions** before reaching conclusions.
4. **Analyse problems systematically** and identify their root causes.
5. **Generate multiple possible solutions** to a given situation.
6. **Evaluate alternatives** based on consequences, evidence, and practicality.
7. **Make informed and responsible decisions** with greater confidence.
8. **Apply creative thinking** to challenging real-life situations.
9. **Handle conflicts and everyday challenges** more constructively.
10. **Reflect on outcomes**, learn from mistakes, and improve future responses.

Ultimately, critical thinking and problem solving empower young people to become **independent thinkers, confident decision-makers, effective problem solvers, and adaptable individuals** who are better prepared to navigate life, education, relationships, work, and the challenges of an ever-changing world.