

# Problem solving questions

Tom Rochette <tom.rochette@coreteks.org>

August 30, 2025 — 861fb9d0

## 0.1 Context

## 0.2 Learned in this study

## 0.3 Things to explore

## 1 Overview

- 5 whys (ask “why” five times in a row)
- What seems to be the trouble?
- What concerns you the most about \_\_\_\_\_?
- What is holding you back from \_\_\_\_\_?
- What seems to be your main obstacle to \_\_\_\_\_?
- Ask customer service: What makes customers angry enough to contact you?
- Ask sales people: What is contributing to lost deals?
- Ask product management: What do you make of \_\_\_\_\_?
- Ask the channel: How do you feel about our company’s pricing for \_\_\_\_\_?
- Ask customers: What would make this product more appealing?
- What do you mean by \_\_\_\_\_?
- Tell me more about \_\_\_\_\_.
- What else?
- What other ways did you try so far?
- What will you have to do to get the job done?
- Is there something I should have asked that you need me to know?
- How do you want \_\_\_\_\_ to turn out?
- What do you want?
- What is your desired outcome?
- What benefits would you like to get out of X?
- What do you propose?
- What is your plan?
- If you do this, how will it affect \_\_\_\_\_?
- What else do you need to consider?

Source: <http://pragmaticmarketing.com/resources/problem-solving-its-all-about-smarter-questions>

1. Did you play any part in creating this problem?
2. Are you doing anything now that might be making things worse?
3. Does a part of you want to hold onto the problem, maybe because it feels familiar or because there’s some pay off in keeping things as they are?
4. Are you waiting for someone else to step in and fix things for you?
5. Are you blaming someone else in a way that limits the action you can take?

6. On a scale of one to ten—ten being the biggest hardship you’ve ever faced in your life—where does this problem fall?
7. Will this issue be relevant to you in one year?One month?One week?
8. Think about the major areas of your life—work, family, and hobbies, for example. How many areas does this one problem impact?
9. How much of your stress comes from the problem itself, and how much of it has to do with how (and how often) you’re thinking about it?
10. If the worst that could possibly happen happened, could you get through it, and maybe even benefit in some way?
11. If you’re getting caught up in “what if” scenarios, can you remember other times when you imagined all the horrible things that could happen and none of them did?
12. If you’re feeling overwhelmed, can you break the problem into smaller, more manageable parts?
13. If you’re feeling defeated, can you see this is a test of your strength and impress yourself by rising to the occasion?
14. If you’re feeling guilty, can you express your remorse and begin forgiving yourself—and if not, what would it take to do that?
15. Can you make some time for deep breathing, meditation, or yoga to create some mental stillness?
16. Have you successfully addressed similar problems in the past?
17. Have other people overcome similar challenges, and can you learn anything about what they did?
18. If a friend came to you with this problem, would you reassure that person that he or she could get past this, and how would you envision that happening?
19. Could you do this if you had help?Who can you ask for help?
20. Can you visualize yourself getting through this (realistically, not through magical thinking)?If you can visualize it, you can do it!
21. If you accepted your fear and acted in spite of it, what would that entail?
22. When you create stillness and listen to your gut instinct, what do you learn?
23. What are your three strongest coping skills (creativity, strength, and resourcefulness, for example), and how can use them in this situation?
24. If other people have given you advice, what part of it resonates with you and why?
25. If you stopped making excuses and started taking action, what’s the first thing you would do?  
Source: <http://tinybuddha.com/blog/25-questions-to-help-solve-problems-that-seem-insurmountable/>
26. How would I prioritize the problems I face today?
27. In a single sentence, what is the problem?
28. Am I emotionally or physically fatigued?
29. What are the facts related to this problem?
30. Why does the problem exist?
31. What are the 3 greatest resources I can bring to bear on this problem?
32. Who can help me solve this problem?
33. Should I spend more money to reduce the time needed to solve this problem?

34. Of all the potential solutions to this problem, which one has the greatest potential to be right? And which one involves the lowest risk?
35. What policy would keep this problem from recurring?  
Source: <http://timewiser.com/blog/10-questions-to-ask-when-solving-problems/>
36. What are the obstacles?
37. What one change could I make that would make the biggest impact?
38. Which obstacles can be easily removed?
39. What needs to happen for this problem to disappear?
40. Where are the sticking points?
41. How can I improve this process?
42. Am I the problem? How?
43. Are there other paths to the end I'm looking for?
44. Can I change any of the variables?
45. Who has done this before?
46. Does this really matter?
47. What would I do if I didn't think this were a problem?
48. What information do I need? What information am I missing?
49. How would \_\_\_\_\_ solve this?
50. How would I solve this if I had to take an opposite-brained approach?
51. How many solutions can I come up with?
52. What new habits could I create that would help me overcome this?
53. How could \_\_\_\_\_ relate to my problem?  
Source: <http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2010/10/14/18-problem-solving-questions>

## 2 See also

## 3 References