Dynamic leaders know how to solve problems. They face up to challenges and identify effective solutions. To solve problems in families, careers, and communities, they develop skills in:

- Leadership visioning
- Goal setting
- Priority setting
- Creative thinking
- Critical thinking
- Consensus building
- Decision making.

**Remember:** Use any of the FCCLA national programs to practice your Dynamic Leadership skills!

Leadership Achievement

*Problem Solvers to the Rescue*

You may have heard the saying, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade!" Lemons are like the "sour" problems of life. Dynamic leaders use problem-solving skills to turn those lemons into sweet success; like lemonade!

All individuals and groups come across problems. Some are minor and some are very serious. Most problems can be solved in a way that is good for everyone involved. Sometimes the solution is not perfect, but it's still better than the problem.

Here are some ways people deal with problems. Which do you think is most successful?

- Ignore the problem.
- Try to get someone else to solve the problem by acting helpless.
- Procrastinate. Delay making a decision.
- Blame others for the problem.
- Get angry and do foolish things without really thinking about the consequences.
- Make a joke of the situation.
- Let someone else decide. Give in to group pressure.
- Think about the problem, consider information and choices, talk to others involved, and solve the problem.*

*Here's a hint: problems don't go away on their own. Take a positive approach and "come to the rescue" to solve problems! Problem solving is settling the difference between the way things are and they way they ought to be.*

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**Problem Solving Steps**

D  Define the problem  
E  Examine alternatives  
C  Consider how choices relate to goals  
I  Identify acceptable choices  
D  Decide on one choice  
E  Evaluate results  


The FCCLA Planning Process is an excellent tool to use whenever you need to tackle a problem. It provides you with a good format to follow in any problem-solving situation.

**Solve Problems for Leadership Achievement**

You can be a dynamic leader who solves problems for yourself and in groups. You can learn to define a problem, develop creative alternatives, analyze choices, and make good decisions.

Find out more about problem solving skills by completing Creative Critics. Then, discover even more ways to become a problem solver through FCCLA. Learn to solve problems and be a dynamic leader in families, careers, and communities.

**Creative Critics**

Two kinds of thinking are used to solve problems:

- *Creative thinking* is finding all possible ideas and making up new ones.  
- *Critical thinking* is analyzing and evaluating ideas to see if they will work for the current situation.

Both kinds of thinking are important and help solve problems.

Can you identify creative and critical thinking? Each sentence below describes something people might do to solve a problem. Go to the Creative Critics Activity (Attachment 3) and mark a "star" next to creative thinking activities. Put a "check mark" next to critical thinking activities. When you
have finished, think of ways to use the same activities to solve a real-life problem for yourself or your FCCLA chapter.

- Compare each choice to other possible choices.
- Forget about what others think is stupid or silly.
- Think about short-term and long-term consequences.
- List all ideas.
- Follow a step-by-step process.
- Link ideas to available resources.
- Don't judge.
- Decide what information is fact and what is opinion.
- Connect old ideas in new ways.
- Question everything.
- Allow thoughts to go in many different directions.
- Come up with as many ideas as possible.
- Make decisions based on priorities and goals.
- Be ridiculous!

**Problem Solving Projects for Leadership Achievement**

Here are 10 things you can do to practice setting goals and making decisions. See how many you can complete. Ask your adviser about earning recognition for your problem solving activities.

- Teach elementary children to solve problems and make good decisions. Determine creative ways to plan and present the lesson. *Optional:* Turn this activity into a STAR Event.
- Create a skit about a teen who has trouble making an important decision because two personal values are in conflict. Make up three possible endings, each based on a different way to make the decision. Recruit fellow FCCLA members to present the skit at a chapter meeting. Have the group choose the best ending.
- Set a goal to hold an FCCLA office or leadership role. Develop a plan for reaching your goal. Share it with your FCCLA adviser.
- Become a business leader! Think about a business you could start now. Make a business plan that completely describes the business. Present your plan to your FCCLA adviser and explain how you made decisions about your business. *Optional:* Improve your plan and enter it in STAR Events.
- Collect newspaper, newsletter, and magazine articles that discuss how food choices and dietary supplements affect health (and therefore leadership energy!) Put on your "critical thinking cap" to analyze the articles. Do they all agree? Does the information come from reliable sources? What should a person your age do as a result of the information? Create a display that shows young people how to eat for health and optimal leadership. *Optional:* Expand this activity into a Student Body project.

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Follow a problem-solving process to investigate four careers that interest you. Narrow your list to two careers that might work for you. Report on the careers to fellow students. **Optional:** Expand this activity into a Career Connection "SIGN ON to the Career Connection" project.

Participate in an FCCLA meeting when the chapter or class decides on a project or activity. Write a report about how ideas were generated and how decisions were made.

Decide what items you would buy if you had $100 to spend on a baby shower for a needy family or nonprofit day care center. List possibilities. Identify advantages and disadvantages of each purchase. Choose the best options. Explain your choices to fellow FCCLA members. **Optional:** Use the FCCLA Planning Process to plan a project for raising funds and holding a real baby shower.

Lead a brainstorming session to find creative ideas for a class or chapter project. First, learn about brainstorming from a leadership book. Try to observe a brainstorming session led by someone else. Then, take the lead. See how many project ideas members can create.

**Leadership Excellence**

"Nothing is more difficult, and therefore more precious, than to be able to decide." –Napoleon I

Dynamic leaders know how to deal with problems, on their own and in a group. They see problems as challenges that can and should be addressed. They lead others through a step-by-step process to:

- Define the challenge
- Gather related information
- Inventory useful resources
- Generate ideas for addressing the challenge
- Identify obstacles
- Make decisions
- Take action.

**Solving Problems with Vision**

Dynamic leaders solve problems in ways that move a group forward. They know where they want to go. They have a vision for what their organization can achieve. They inspire others to work toward the same vision.

Dynamic leaders help groups create goals that are stepping stones toward the vision. They generate creative ideas for reaching goals and solving problems. They analyze how choices fit with the vision and goals. They make effective decisions.
Key Elements of Problem Solving

- Awareness. As a leader, you may need to help the group realize there is a problem. Guide the group to compare its vision of the ideal situation with the realities of the current situation. Motivate them to care about the problem and take steps toward the vision.
- Clear Definition. Write out an exact statement of the problem. Take plenty of time to sort through members' ideas and emotions related to the problem. Write down symptoms that point to the problem, factors that contribute to or relieve the problem, and possible causes. Make sure every member understands what the problem is...and what it is not.
- Vision. Work with the group to agree on a vision of what the situation will be like when the problem is solved.
- Alternatives. Lead members to generate as many ideas as possible for solving the problem. Encourage creativity and "outside the box" thinking.
- Analysis. Give each alternative fair consideration. Identify positives and negatives for each choice. Agree as a group on what is most important in a solution. See if you can combine the best parts of two or more alternatives to create a workable solution.
- Decision Making. Together, choose the best available solution to the problem. Use a decision-making process (like voting, consensus, chance, etc.) that fits the group and the situation.
- Action. Use the FCCLA Planning Process to carry out your decision.

Use this sample Problem Solving Worksheet (Attachment 4) to work through the steps involved in solving a problem.

Master Problem Solving for Leadership Excellence

You can be a dynamic leader who excels in finding solutions to problems. Effective problem solving leads to stronger group harmony, increased respect for your leadership abilities, and improved results in families, careers, and communities.

Use the FCCLA Planning Process to undertake a Dynamic Leadership project to build problem-solving skills for leadership excellence. Your project should show that you can:

- Form a vision for leadership
- Set goals
- Choose priorities
- Gather and analyze information
- Generate creative ideas
- Analyze possible solutions
- Build consensus
- Make effective decisions
- Use a problem-solving process.

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Try one of the following ideas, or create your own:

- **Toward New Horizons** Clarify the vision of your local FCCLA chapter. First, read in leadership books about how to create a great vision. Then, chair a task force that explores your chapter's vision. What is the ideal situation members want to bring about? How does it fit with the FCCLA vision? Write a chapter vision statement. Promote it to chapter members. (Use the *Set Sail for Success (Attachment 5)* handout to help members understand vision.) During chapter planning, remind members that goals and projects should move the chapter toward its vision. Use this experience for a Power of One "Take the Lead" project.

- **Problem Solving Power** Become an expert in problem solving. Find information in leadership books and observe strong problem solvers in action. Learn techniques for helping groups generate creative ideas, analyze solutions, and make decisions. Teach Family and Consumer Sciences students how to solve a problem related to a topic they are studying in class.

- **Make Connections** Connect with students from other schools in your area, state, or at the national level to find out how they solve problems. You might do this through the Internet or by connecting with FCCLA members at state, regional, or national events. Ask them how they solve problems that arise in situations like:
  - Having a job and going to school at the same time
  - Peer pressure
  - Communicating with parents, friends, siblings
  - Leading their FCCLA chapter
  - Organizing or planning service activities.
  - Keep a journal of the problem solving ideas you gather and share it with your FCCLA adviser and chapter members.

- **Conclusions by Consensus** Take charge of an FCCLA committee or chapter meeting at which the group needs to reach a decision. Before the meeting, learn about consensus decision making. Lead the group to make its decision by consensus. Compare the consensus process to other ways of making a decision. Use the FCCLA Planning Process to turn the group’s decision into action.

- **Create a Solution** Identify a school or community problem and create a chapter project to solve it. Recruit chapter members to help you address it. Learn about the issue. Evaluate what you learn. Use the FCCLA Planning Process to plan and carry out a related project. Teach other members to use the planning process.

- **Problem Solving in Families** Research the problem-solving process and how it works in families. Teach other young people to use problem-solving skills at home by presenting related information in a Family and Consumer Sciences class. Lead peers through role-playing exercises. Ask the FCCLA chapter to host a Families First night. Have members and parents practice problem solving skills. (You might explain the *Set Sail for Success (Attachment 5)* handout and send it home with families as a reminder to use vision and goals to solve problems.)

- **The Career Dilemma** Apply problem solving know-how to your own future. Decide on your vision of career success. Create goals to move toward that vision. Investigate careers through which you might reach your goals. Generate ideas for getting into those careers, check resources, and identify possible obstacles and how to overcome them. Create a concrete plan for deciding on and pursuing a career. Share it with family members and your FCCLA adviser.