

How confirmation
bias and fixation
interfere with effective
problem solving?
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Confirmation bias refers to a type of selective thinking where one tends to notice and to look for what confirms one's beliefs. It can be difficult to encounter something or someone without having a preconceived opinion. You only see one way to approach a problem or idea, and that's your way. As a result, this bias can often result in faulty decision making, because one-sided information tends to leave you without a complete picture of the situation. Any kind of bias that you may have will impede your creativity when solving problems. For example, if you believe that during a full moon there is an increase in admissions to the emergency room where you work, you will take notice of admissions during a full moon, but be inattentive to the moon when admissions occur during other nights of the month.

A tendency to do this over time unjustifiably strengthens your belief in the relationship between the full moon and accidents and other lunar effects. Another obstacle to problem solving is fixation. When you encounter this you will hinder yourself from discovering any new or more appropriate interpretations. It will be like hitting a brick wall; you will be at an impasse and not know what to do next. Mental set is a form of fixation, which is our way of approaching situations in a certain way because that method worked in the past. An example of mental set would be if James flashlight hasn't worked in the past, he's just shaken it to get it to work again. One day when it doesn't come on, he shakes it, but it still doesn't work. He keeps doing this instead of checking to see if it needs new batteries.