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# Principle 4: Root Cause Problem Solving



# Introduction

At the heart of waste elimination is root cause problem solving. This means that when we try to solve a problem, we focus on the disease and not the symptoms.

This is because addressing symptoms is like taking only paracetamol for malaria.

The evident part of a problem is usually the effect. We need to trace the effects to the cause and address it. That is how we know that we have actually solved a problem.

We want to treat malaria, not just the headache.

# Conducting RCAs

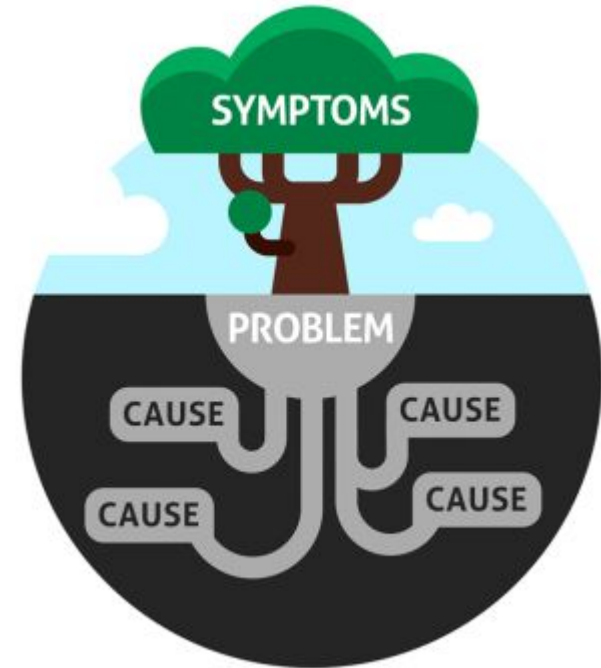
Remember that a root cause analysis or (RCA) can not be done based on assumption.

We need information in the form of data and/or eye-witness testimony.

We don't treat malaria just because we feel it is malaria, we use the tests to diagnose it.

There are some tools that can help one find the root cause of a problem. They include the “5 why” and “Fishbone”.

These tools could also be used as part of an A3.



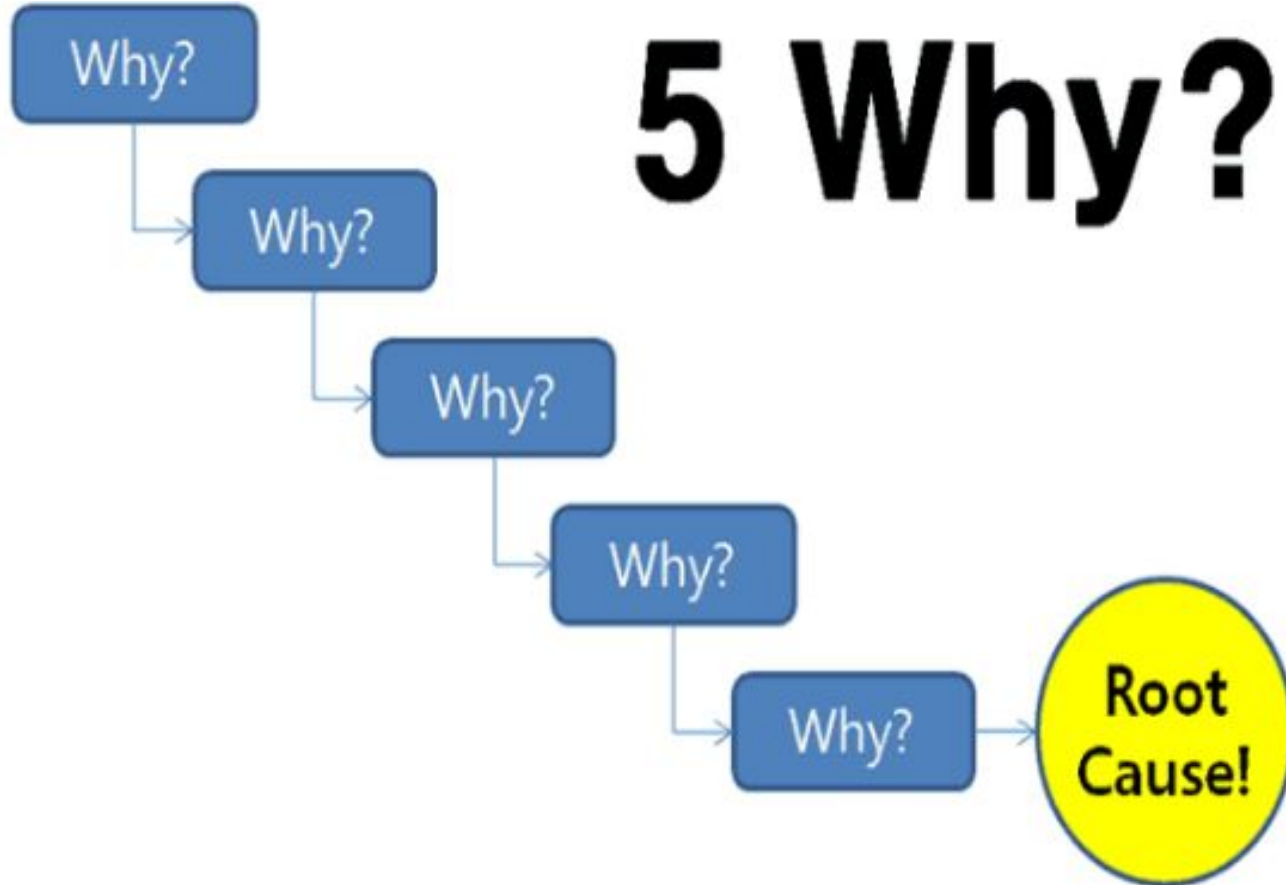
# 5 WHY

The 5 why is simply a process where we ask “why” continuously till we get to the root cause of a problem. We may ask why more or less than 5 times to get to the root cause.

Follow these steps to conduct an RCA using 5 why:

1. Gather background/supporting information
2. Get the people involved together
3. State the problem
4. Ask why
5. Know when to stop asking why
6. Take corrective action
7. Monitor and audit corrective actions

# 5 Why?



# 5 WHY

For example, you are feeling hungry at work this morning. Let us conduct a 5-Why to get to the root cause.

Effect- Feeling hungry at work. Why?

Did not eat breakfast this morning. Why?

Planned to eat tea and bread but could not make it this morning. Why?

Did not have milk. Why?

Roommate finished the milk yesterday, planned to tell you but forgot about it before you got home - Root cause

# 5 WHY



In this scenario, if we had said I am feeling hungry, let me just eat, or milk has finished, let me buy more, there is a good chance that this problem will happen again because the roommate can still forget to tell you, the next time milk finishes at home.

A better approach would be to put a grocery list on the refrigerator with a pen to write reminders or grocery lists, or to put empty containers on the counter as a reminder to get replacement, or even to send updates via text whenever something gets finished.

This way, the next time your roommate finishes the milk, you are reminded to get another, or change plans accordingly. This will translate to you not being hungry at work.

# 5 WHY - are you doing it right

Use the “therefore” tip to help determine if you are conducting a 5why the right way.

Let’s say that A happened because of B, B happened because of C, and C happened because of D.

Our 5why will look like this

A - why?

B - why?

C - why?

D : Root cause

The “therefore” will be read like this

D happened, therefore C happened,  
therefore B happened, therefore A  
happened

If it does not make sense then you might be doing something wrong. Go to next slide for an example that will help you understand this better



# 5 WHY :Example of the therefore tip



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Let's try the “therefore” tip with our hunger example.

Roommate forgot to tell you that milk finished yesterday, **therefore**, you did not have milk, **therefore**, you could not make tea and bread, **therefore**, you did not eat breakfast, **therefore**, you feel hungry at work.

*Get it?*



# 5 WHY

Sometimes you can have two answers or reasons after asking why. Explore them. Ask why for both of them and find their root causes.

This practice should be applied to your work.

Whenever something goes wrong, remember to ask why; treat the disease and not just the symptom

*why?*  
**why?**  
**why?**  
*why?*  
*why?*