

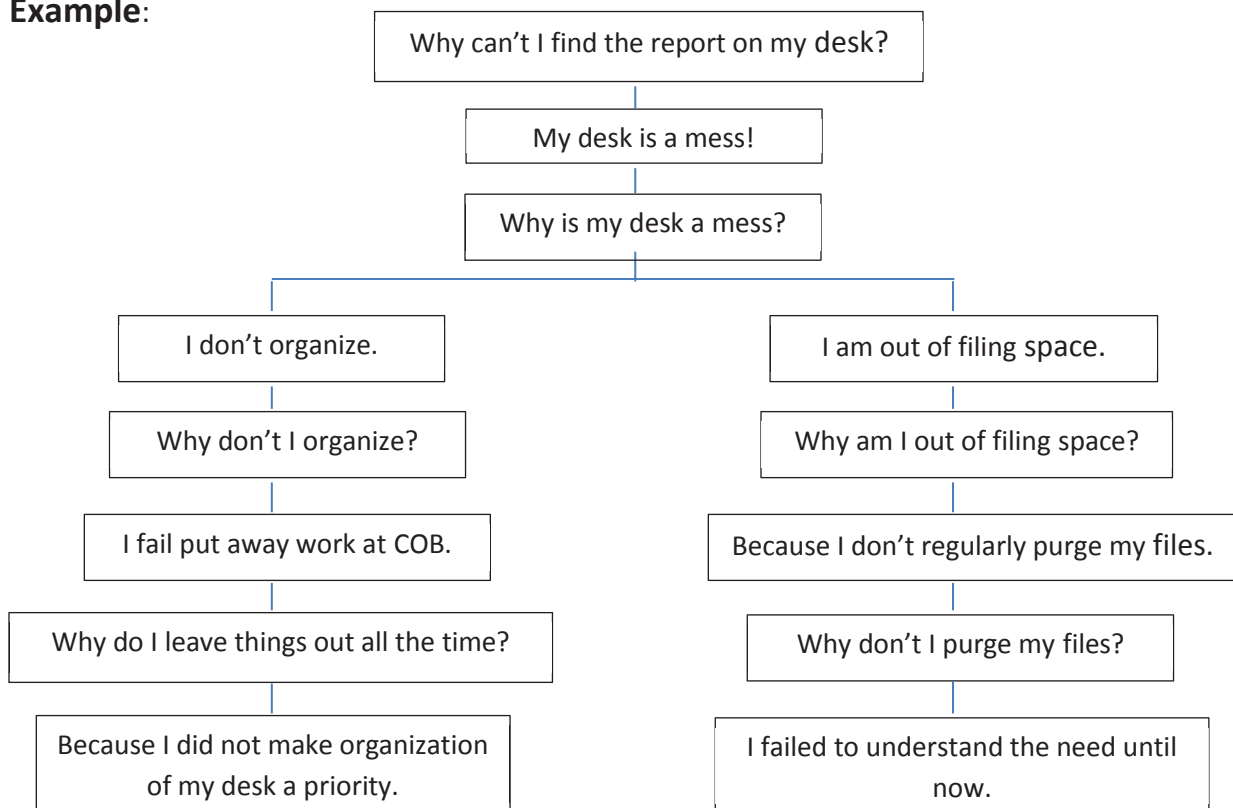
# Root Cause Analysis: The 5 Why's

The “5 Why's” refer to the practice of asking, five times, why the situation has occurred in order to get to the root cause(s) of the problem. It illustrates the importance of digging down beneath the most obvious cause of the problem. Failure to determine the root cause assures that you will be treating the symptoms of the problem instead of its cause, in which case, the waste/issue will return, and you will continue to experience the same problems over and over again.

*Remember:*

1. The actual number of why's is not important so long as you get to the root cause
2. There can be more than one cause to a problem.

**Example:**



Remember that a 5 Why's Tree can be used to explore multiple “Why's”. There could be numerous pathways to explore the reasons why a problem occurred and multiple causes to a problem; this tool can help visualize these multiple root causes.

## 5 Why's – Washington Monument Example

*Problem Statement:* The Washington Monument is disintegrating

1. **Why** is the Monument disintegrating?  
- Because of the use of harsh chemicals
2. **Why** are harsh chemicals being used?  
- To clean pigeon poop
3. **Why** are there so many pigeons?  
- They eat spiders and there are a lot of spiders at the monument
4. **Why** so many spiders?  
- They eat gnats and there are lots of gnats at the monument
5. **Why** so many gnats?  
- They are attracted to the light at dusk.



**Solution:** Turn on the lights at a later time.

## Practice Root Cause Analysis

Problem Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Why? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Why? (Cause) \_\_\_\_\_

Solution: \_\_\_\_\_