

would be driving her car to get to your place. Putting all this information together, you conclude that, more than likely, she's caught in traffic. Psychologists use the term *reasoning* to describe these and other cognitive processes “that [transform] given information (called the set of **premises**) in order to reach conclusions” (Galotti, 1989, p. 333). You make a decision to sit tight and wait another half hour before doing anything else.

The terms *reasoning* and *decision making* are often used interchangeably with the term *thinking*, and therefore you may notice a great deal of overlap between the topics covered in this chapter and those covered in Chapter 11 (“Thinking and Problem

Solving”). Psychologists who do make distinctions among these terms see the first two as special cases of the third. Specifically, when cognitive psychologists speak of *reasoning*, they mean a specific kind of thinking: the kind done to solve certain kinds of puzzles or mysteries. Reasoning often involves the use of certain principles of logic. At other times, the term *reasoning* is used more broadly to cover instances of thinking in which people take certain information as input and, by making various inferences, either create new information or make implicit information explicit. Cognitive psychologists use the term *decision making* to refer to the mental activities that take place when one chooses among alternatives. We will look at each of these cognitive processes in turn.