

The Problem Solving Workbook

Everyone experiences problems. Some of us have more to contend with than others, yet often it's not the size of the problem that gets us down, but the way we deal with it.

Structured Problem Solving (SPS) is a learned skill that helps you to step back and evaluate your problems, big or small, in a clearer, more structured way.

It's a "thinking skill" commonly used in life coaching and has proven to be helpful in managing mild to moderate depression.


STRATEGIC LIFE COACHING

Structured Problem Solving is a great skill for anyone to learn and because it's an easy to follow 4-step process, this workbook will be more than enough to help you get started TODAY.

Structured Problem Solving

Structured Problem Solving

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THE STEPS THE ACTIONS

Workbook Step 1	Identifying your Problems
Workbook Step 2	Generating Solutions
Workbook Step 3	Making an Action Plan
Workbook Step 4	Reviewing your Progress

STRUCTURED PROBLEM SOLVING IS A GREAT SKILL FOR ANYONE TO LEARN AND BECAUSE IT'S AN EASY TO FOLLOW 4-STEP PROCESS, THIS WORKBOOK WILL BE MORE THAN ENOUGH TO HELP YOU GET STARTED TODAY.

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IDENTIFYING YOUR PROBLEMS

STEP 1: Use this page to write a list of the problems you're currently facing.

1) List as many or as few as you like. You don't have to go into too much detail and on the right hand side of the page there is a checklist of common problems to help you know where to start.

Problem 1:

Problem 2:

Problem 3:

Problem 4:

Problem 5:

Problem 6:

Problem 7:

Problem 8:

Problem 9:

Problem 10:

Problem 11:

Problem 12:

Problem 13:

USE THIS CHECKLIST OF COMMON PROBLEMS TO HELP YOU:

Personal or Professional Relationships

Loss or Death of a Loved One

Isolation or loneliness

Work Related stress

Study Stress

Divorce or Separation

Unemployment

Current Employment

Harassment or bullying

Accommodation

Financial Concerns

Legal Issues

Alcohol or Drugs

Physical or Mental illness

Low self-esteem or Low confidence

IDENTIFYING YOUR PROBLEMS

STEP 1: Parts 2, 3 & 4

2. CHOOSE A PROBLEM FROM YOUR LIST THAT YOU WANT TO START WORKING ON RIGHT AWAY:

Choose one problem from your list on the previous page, write it below and work your way down the page to help define the problem.

3. DEFINE THE PROBLEM BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

- a) Why is the problem a problem?
- b) What effect does this problem have on your life?
- c) What is the problem?
- d) When does the problem occur?
- e) Where does the problem not occur?
- f) Who is involved in the problem?

4. WRITE OUT A CLEAR 'PROBLEM STATEMENT'

Using the answers above, write a single sentence that sums up the problem. This makes it easier to focus on the real issue.

e.g. I don't know how to ask my manager for help so that I can be more productive.

COMMON FACTORS THAT CAN INFLUENCE FEELINGS OF DEPRESSION:

- Personal or Professional Relationships
- Loss or Death of a Loved One
- Isolation or loneliness
- Work Related stress
- Study Stress
- Divorce or Separation
- Unemployment
- Current Employment
- Harassment or bullying
- Accommodation
- Financial Concerns
- Legal Issues
- Alcohol or Drugs
- Physical or Mental illness
- Low self-esteem or Low confidence

ASK YOURSELF: DO YOU HAVE CONTROL OVER THIS PROBLEM?

If you don't then resolving it might be difficult - in this case, it might be better for you to choose another problem from your list.

GENERATING SOLUTIONS

STEP 2: List Your Ideas

1. Use this page to list a range of potential solutions for the problem you have selected. Don't worry if the solutions are good, bad or impractical, just write everything down.

IDEA 1)

IDEA 2)

IDEA 3)

IDEA 4)

IDEA 5)

IDEA 6)

IDEA 7)

IDEA 8)

IDEA 9)

IDEA 10)

HERE'S SOME
PRACTICAL TIP'S TO GET
YOUR IDEA'S FLOWING:

- 1) Don't just think about the ideas, just write them all down.
- 2) Write down every one, no matter how silly it sounds.
- 3) Don't think about how you will solve them yet.



Don't feel that you have to stop at just 10 solutions ... just keep going until you run out of ideas!

GENERATING SOLUTIONS

STEP 2: Parts 2 & 3

2. EVALUATE YOUR LIST

Give yourself a few extra minutes on this page as you try to sort out which of all your great solution ideas might actually work.

Eliminate those ideas that are too hard or involve things you can't control and look for duplicates that could be grouped under a single solution.

To give you the best chance of success, use this page to evaluate your most promising idea. Then write a solution statement to summarise it.

3. CHOOSE THE BEST LOOKING IDEA AND MAKE IT INTO AN 'IDEA STATEMENT':

A THOUGHT ABOUT COPING WITH DEPRESSION:

It's the Catch-22 of depression recovery: The things that help the most are often the things we find most difficult to do.

There's a difference, however, between something that's difficult and something that's impossible!

Choose the best idea that you've come up with and write out an 'IDEA STATEMENT' in the space provided.



GENERATING SOLUTIONS

STEP 2: Parts 4 & 5

4. EVALUATE THE IDEA:

Test the possible solution by weighing the advantages against the disadvantages.

Ask yourself the following questions:

How will this solution affect my own wellbeing?
(physical, emotional, psychological)

How much time and effort will it require?

Are there any financial costs or benefits?

How does it fit in with my other goals and commitments?

How will it affect the wellbeing of the people who are close to me?

Is the solution feasible?

5. DETERMINE THE ADVANTAGES AND THE DISADVANTAGES OF THIS 'IDEA' or SOLUTION:

ADVANTAGES

DISADVANTAGES



SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT

If someone else was to speak to you in the same way that you speak to yourself - would you be their friend?

Allow yourself to be less than perfect. Many depressed people are perfectionists, holding themselves to impossibly high standards and then beat themselves up when they fail to meet them.

Keep a "negative thought log." Whenever you experience a negative thought, jot down the thought and what triggered it in a notebook.

Review your log when you're in a good mood. Consider if the negativity was truly warranted. Ask yourself if there's another way to view the situation.

For example, say your partner was short with you and you automatically assumed that the relationship was in trouble. It's possible, though, that this other person's just having a bad day.

GENERATING SOLUTIONS

STEP 2: Part 5

6. WRITE A SOLUTION STATEMENT

If your idea shows promise write a summary of it below. If it doesn't score well, try evaluating one of your other ideas and compare them to see which has the most potential.

MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Everyone experiences problems. Some of us have more to contend with than others, yet often it's not the size of the problem that gets us down, but the way we deal with it.

DONT FOCUS ON
PROBLEMS,
ONLY EVER FOCUS ON
SOLUTIONS!

CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

STEP 3: Parts 1 & 2

GETTING ACTION FOCUSED

This page is all about clearly defining the steps involved with making your solution work, then getting yourself started.

1. Write A Description of Your Plan For Fulfilling Your Idea

2. Check That Your Plan Is A SMART Plan!

SPECIFIC: Identify what key things you will need to do

MEASURABLE: Decide how you will tell if you have succeeded

ACHIEVABLE: Identify any particularly difficult tasks and decide now how you will tackle them (eg: practice, get help or training)

RELEVANT: Check how the solution will address the original problem

TIMELY: Set a start & finish date and any important dates along the way

THE PERSON WHO FAILS TO PLAN, PLANS TO FAIL!

The clearer you make this action plan, the more likely you are to succeed and the SMART test is a great way to maintain structure and help keep you on track.

S.M.A.R.T. GOALS (Are Your Goals)

SPECIFIC?

MEASURABLE?

ACHIEVABLE?

RELEVANT?

TIMELY?

CREATE AN ACTION PLAN

STEP 3: Parts 3

3: GETTING FOCUSED ON SOLUTIONS

Take a moment to summarise the problem you are tackling, along with your chosen solution. Then write a step-by-step plan for putting things into action. This will make it a lot easier to tackle the problem – you just need to take it one step at a time.

MY PROBLEM IS:

MY SOLUTION IS:

THE FIRST STEPS I'M GOING TO TAKE ARE:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)
- 6)
- 7)
- 8)

**THE PERSON WHO
FAILS TO PLAN,
PLANS TO FAIL!**



PROBLEM



SOLUTION



STEP 1



STEP 2



STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6



STEP 7

STEP 8

SELF ASSESSMENT TIME

STEP 4: Review Progress

1: REVIEW YOUR PROGRESS

Reviewing your progress is an important part of mastering Structured Problem Solving.

With a Problem/Solution/Action plan clearly spelled out, it's much easier to stand back and assess how you're doing. You'll learn as much from your mistakes as you will from your successes and before long, tackling problems in this structured way will become second nature.

Q1) What worked well?

Q2) What didn't work as planned?

Q3) What would I change about my plan?

2: REWARD YOURSELF!!!

Now... If you feel you've sorted out the first problem, move on to the next one on your list and use the same approach.

Just keep it simple while you're still learning how the process works. If you haven't managed to address the problem, don't worry, it can sometimes take a few attempts.

Try reviewing your first plan, decide if you should change it slightly, then have another go. Or, if the problem is too hard, simply choose another simpler one – remember you have to choose problems you have control over.

If you've worked your way through each step in the workbook, give yourself either a pat or a slap on the back!

Whatever the result are that you've achieved so far (either good or bad), you've taken the first step towards tackling the problems that get you down.