

Learn to problem solve

People do a better job of solving problems when they know exactly what they want, and what barriers they will have to overcome along the way. This worksheet will help you carefully consider a problem you are currently having, and create a realistic plan for solving it.

Step 1: Define the problem

I. Identify the problem type

Here is a list of problems that people often have. Are you experiencing any of them? If so, select the problem you would like to work on. If your problem doesn't fall into any of these categories, select *Other* and write a description of your problem in the space provided:

- Family or relationship issues
- Financial problems
- Medical/health problems
- Issues related to military service or combat
- Emotional difficulties
- Spiritual/religious concerns
- Substance abuse
- Work or school related stress
- Difficulty managing stressful situations
- Issues with living situation
- Other _____

II. Define the problem and what to change

A) Briefly describe your specific problem (Think about the who, what, where, why, and how of your problem):

B) What would you like to be different about the situation? What would you like to change?:

Step 2: Identify the barriers

Identify the Barriers

Take a moment now to think about what's standing in your way or making things more difficult for you. List at least 3 barriers below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Step 3: Think of solutions

Brainstorm solutions

Now that you've identified what you want and what's standing in your way, the next step is to think of solutions. Try to think of as many ideas as you can to solve your problem.

List your solutions

Enter at least 3 ideas to solve the problem or improve the situation. List more if you can. We've given you room for up to 10. For now, be brief when entering each idea. We will work more on the best ones later:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Thinking of lots of different ideas is important because it:

- Improves your chances of coming up with a great one!
- Helps you feel more hopeful
- Might keep you from acting on impulse

Sometimes a problem can't be solved right now or can't be solved quickly. Some problems are too big to be solved by one person. It feels bad to be unable to solve a problem. But, we can't control everything. Even so, there may be ways to improve your situation.

Thinking of ideas to improve your situation is important because it:

- Makes a tough situation better
- Helps you have a sense of control
- Makes it easier to wait until a time when the problem is more easily solved

Step 4: Make a Decision

Now it's time to evaluate your solution ideas. Select the most promising of your ideas and enter the pros and cons for each. We've given you room to evaluate 3 ideas. If you would like to evaluate more, you can make photocopies of this sheet.

I. Evaluate the possible solutions

Write your first problem solving idea here:

List the pros of this solution:

List the cons of this solution:

Write your second problem solving idea here:

List the pros of this solution:

List the cons of this solution:

Write your third problem solving idea here:

List the pros of this solution:

List the cons of this solution:

II. Make a decision

Review your solutions now, then select the one you want to carry out:

Step 5: Success Plan

I. Define action steps

Problems can sometimes seem too big to overcome. So, it's important to break your plan down into a series of steps that are small enough to accomplish one at a time.

List at least 3 steps you need to take to carry out your solution. These should be small steps that you know you can take.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____

II. How to know your plan worked

Briefly describe below how you will know that your plan worked:

