

## Chapter Four: Problem Solving Guidelines

Problems in our lives can cause stress and anxiety. Even when we think we know how problems will resolve, there are often surprises along the way. It is important to remember that every problem has many possible solutions. In many situations, it often seems easier to ignore and avoid problems. But when problems are ignored, they often pile up or get worse. Then it seems even more difficult to find solutions. Learning to solve problems is an important skill. In this section we provide some guidelines to help you cope with and solve some of your problems. Mr. Jones did this exercise too. You can see his example on p. 39.

1. ✍ Identify and define the problem. Be as specific as you can. Write down what it is, as well as when, where, why and how it happens.

	Problem #1	Problem #2
What:	_____	_____
Where:	_____	_____
When:	_____	_____
Why:	_____	_____
How:	_____	_____

2. Choose one problem to work on solving. Think about different “solutions” to the problem and list them below. At this step, don’t worry about how well your “solutions” might work. Let your imagination fly.

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3. Choose two of the possible solutions you identified above in Step #2. ✍ For each “solution”, try to think of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Solution 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Advantages

Disadvantages

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Solution 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Advantages

Disadvantages

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4. Look over the advantages and disadvantages you listed in Step #3. For each possible solution, ask yourself, “Do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages?” Choose the solution that seems most advantageous.
5. Develop a plan of action. Identify the reasons you will need and how you can implement the solution.
6. Decide how long you will try the solution by setting a “trial period.” Many solutions take time and work to succeed. By setting a “trial period” you give your idea a good chance to be tested, rather than stopping when it becomes difficult. ✍ Some people find it helpful to make a “contract” with themselves, promising to try the solution for a specific trial period. If the plan is not working after the trial period, you can always go back to Steps #2 and #3. You may have more information after the trial period that will allow you to think of new solutions.

✍ The solution I am going to try is \_\_\_\_\_.

I will try this solution for \_\_\_\_\_ weeks. On \_\_\_\_\_ I will evaluate  
Number Date  
the solution and revise it if necessary.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## Summary

1. Problems can contribute to a depressed mood.
2. Ignoring problems can worsen them.
3. Defining a problem and considering possible solutions can help.
4. Once you have identified a solution you want to try, test the solution for a specific trial period. Don't abandon the plan at the first complication. Time and adjustments can make it successful. Re-evaluate at the end of the time period.

# Problem Solving Worksheet

1. Identify and define the problem. Be as specific as you can (what, where, when how, why).

I feel low energy after lunch most days.

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2. Think about different "solutions" to the problem and list them below.

Eat less for lunch

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Get fresh air and exercise after lunch

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Plan an activity with someone in the afternoon

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3. Choose two of the possible solutions you identified above in Step #2. ? For each "solution" think of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Solution Eat less for lunch

Advantages	Disadvantages
<u>Less indigestion</u>	<u>Might still be hungry</u>
<u>May lose weight</u>	<u>Will eat more snacks</u>
	<u>May still feel low energy</u>

Solution Get fresh air and exercise

Advantages	Disadvantages
<u>Keep me awake</u>	<u>May get tired</u>
<u>Get out of the house</u>	<u>Shortness of breath</u>
<u>Feel revived</u>	<u>Difficult during bad weather</u>

4. Choose the solution that seems most advantageous.

The solution I am going to try is Getting fresh air and exercise after lunch.

Solution

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I will try this solution for 2 weeks. On April 20 I will

Number

Date

evaluate the solution and revise it if necessary.

Henry Jones

Signature

## Problem Solving Worksheet

1. Identify and define the problem. Be as specific as you can (what, where, when how, why).

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2. Think about different “solutions” to the problem and list them below.

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3. Choose two of the possible solutions you identified above in Step #2. ✍ For each “solution” think of the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Solution \_\_\_\_\_

Advantages

Disadvantages

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Solution \_\_\_\_\_

Advantages

Disadvantages

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4. Choose the solution that seems most advantageous.

The solution I am going to try is \_\_\_\_\_  
Solution

I will try this solution for \_\_\_\_\_ weeks. On \_\_\_\_\_ I will  
Number Date

evaluate the solution and revise it if necessary.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature