



Exploring Problem-Solving Skills for Caregivers: How to Feel Better and Get Things Done Handout

We all have different thought processes and styles of problem solving, some of which are effective and others that are not. By learning about these five steps and consciously using them, you will develop the skills needed to manage problem solving with less stress and better results.

These problem-solving steps may seem cumbersome at first, but as you use them, you will find that you are making more effective, deliberate, and rewarding decisions about how to solve your problems.

1. Notice, feel, and recognize your discomfort.

- Observe and identify that you are feeling uncomfortable. You may be feeling tired, sad, angry, frustrated, lonely, embarrassed, hurt, discouraged, afraid, jealous, worried, or anxious. It is important to understand that these feelings are signaling a problem, they are not the problem. The problem is what is creating these feelings. The feelings will lead you down the path to find the underlying cause or situation that has created your distress.

2. Explore the situation and define the problem

- Examine what it is that causes you to feel uncomfortable, describe the situation, and the urgency needed to address it. In this step, learn as much as you can about what is behind the feelings you have observed in yourself and the situation that has prompted them. It is important in this part to be thorough in observing and analyzing the situation. It can help to try looking at the problem from a different perspective, that of an outsider.

3. Brainstorm potential solutions from all perspectives

- Brainstorm as many potential possible solutions as you can. You note all of the ideas that pop into your brain. Don't take time during this phase to determine whether it is a good idea or a bad idea, or if they are feasible or not. Just note the ideas without judgment. Be creative. Your goal is to generate as many different possible options to choose from that may provide some resolution.



4. Decision-making and developing an action plan

- Review all the potential options or remedies that you discovered while brainstorming. You want to evaluate the alternative solutions weighing the pros and cons, and the feasibility of each option under consideration. Once you have identified the options you have chosen you can develop your action plan or steps that you will take to achieve resolution or achieve your goal.

5. Implement a solution and evaluate its success

- Implement the action plan that you have identified. Once you have implemented a solution plan, you will need to look evaluate its effectiveness. Observe and monitor the actual outcome of your solution plan. Was your solution plan successful, partially successful, or unsuccessful? If the solution you chose did not completely address your problem, you can return to earlier stages of problem solving to identify further what has interfered or impeded success.

These problem-solving skills may seem cumbersome at first, but as you use them, you will find that you are making more effective, deliberate, and rewarding decisions about how to solve your problems. For those who tend to move quickly and attack problems without much forethought, following these five steps for problem-solving can help you slow down, examine and evaluate your options, making fewer rushed decisions that you may later regret. For those who tend to overthink or procrastinate about making decisions, these skills are an effective way to focus your thoughts and ideas, and come up with a solution that is thorough and deliberate

If you are stuck, contact the Social Workers at the Caregiver Support Line for support, guidance, brainstorming, and help.

We are here to support you!