STRUCTURED PROBLEM SOLVING

Problem-solving is different from worrying or ruminating. Worrying and ruminating are passive, unhelpful processes where we shift from one thought to the next without fully processing our worries. We don't come up with a solution or a plan for action. In contrast, problem solving is when we spend some time thinking about what we can do to solve (or partially solve) a specific problem.

Structured Problem Solving can help you focus on **what you can do to make things better,** rather than worrying. It's a useful way of defining problems, identifying potential solutions, and figuring out how you can achieve these solutions.

THE SIX STEPS OF PROBLEM SOLVING

1	***Define the problem*** ○ Identify one specific problem that's causing you stress or worry. ○ Clearly define the problem, as specifically as possible. ○ Consider one problem at a time. If other problems arise, set them aside for a problem-solving session in the future. ○ Don't try to solve the problem at this stage.
2	***Brainstorm as many solutions as you can*** ○ List any solutions you can think of. ○ List ideas even if they seem useless or absurd. ○ Even if a solution seems ridiculous at first, the idea may help you think of better solutions that aren't immediately obvious. ○ At this stage, don't evaluate solutions, just list them.
3	***Evaluate the solutions*** ○ Briefly consider the advantages and disadvantages of each solution. ○ No solution will be ideal, as every good solution will have some drawbacks. ○ Don't pick a solution yet. Just consider the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

4	***Choose the best solution(s)*** ○ Pick a solution or a combination of solutions. ○ It can be helpful to choose a solution you can implement quickly, so you can get started straight away. ○ Choose a solution that is doable and not overly ambitious. ○ Your solution(s) might only begin to solve the problem, and that's okay!
5	***Make a detailed action plan*** ○ If you make a detailed plan for how you will carry out your solutions, then you will be more like to take action (and therefore, solve your problem). ○ Consider **what** steps you will need to take, **how** and **when** you will do these steps, **whose help** and what **resources** you might need, what **obstacles** you might come across, and how you will **overcome** these.
6	***Review your progress*** ○ Often, problems are not completely solved after the first round of structured problem solving. ○ So, once you've tried your solution, reflect on what you've achieved, what you've learned, and what still needs to be done. ○ If you need to, you can start the structured problem-solving process again.

STRUCTURED PROBLEM SOLVING WORKSHEET

STEP 1: Define the Problem. The more narrowly you can define it, the better.

STEP 2: Brainstorm as many solutions as you can find.

STEP 3: Briefly evaluate the pros and cons of each solution.

STEP 4: Choose the best or most practical solution(s).

STEP 5: Create a detailed plan for how to carry out this solution.

STEP 6: Review your progress.

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