

# **STRUCTURED PROBLEM SOLVING**

**Please use the 7 steps below to help you clarify the problem/s you are facing and find the best solution to meet your needs. It is generally best to just focus on one problem at a time.**

**Most people find that their understanding of the problem grows as they work on it.**

**Each time you go through the steps your ability to deal with problems will increase.**

**1. DEFINE THE CURRENT SITUATION OR PROBLEM:** Be specific. Focus on one problem at a time. Try to focus on either the key underlying problem or the one which will make the greatest difference to you.

**2. DESIRED OUTCOME/GOALS:** What do you really want to achieve? (Identify what you want, not what you don't want). How will life be when the problem is no longer there? State this in the positive. *Focus on achieving this desired state or goal, Don't focus on the problem!*

**3. FACTORS PREVENTING REALISATION OF GOAL:** List external and internal factors involved.

**4. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:** List all possible solutions - Don't evaluate or exclude any as you go! (N.B. Your job is to brainstorm as many creative solutions as possible. How would others who you admire approach this problem?)

**5. EVALUATE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AS MEANS OF ACHIEVING YOUR GOAL**

(Consider the advantages & disadvantages of each of the options & then either give an overall rating between 0 -10, or rate their effectiveness in achieving your goal in 2 above. Give each possible solution a score)

**6. PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION:** Write down precisely how you will implement the solution/s (Indicate precisely what, when & how you will do this). How will you cope with anticipated obstacles & consequences including those listed in 3 above?

**7. FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION:** Did it achieve your goal/s & solve the problem? If problems remain repeat the process from the top and continue in this manner until you have achieved each goal in turn.

## **STRUCTURED PROBLEM SOLVING** **(Example)**

Please use the steps below to help you clarify the problem/s you are facing and find the best solution to meet your needs. Be sure to define your goals in a positive achievable manner.

**1. DEFINE THE PROBLEM:** Be specific. Is it your problem? Focus on one problem at a time

*Help husband limit his impulsiveness & recognise its effects on family members*

**2. DESIRED OUTCOME/GOALS:** What do you really want to achieve? (Identify what you want, not what you don't want). *Focus on this, not the problem!*

*Stay calm & not get angry when husband acts impulsively or without regard to others  
Help husband see the consequences of his actions upon family & others*

**3. FACTORS PREVENTING REALISATION OF GOALS:** List external and internal factors involved.

*Getting unreasonably angry with husband which distracts from the real issue  
Not waiting for the right moment - attacking him in front of children & others humiliates him*

**4. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:** List all possible solutions - Don't evaluate or exclude any as you go!

- 1      *Stay calm (10)*
- 3      *Remind myself of my husbands qualities (7)*
- 2      *Set a time to talk about the problem (8)*  
*Distract or divert him (6)*
- 4      *Ask him to state the advantages of his intended action (10)*
- 5      *Ask him to state the consequences for himself & others (10)*
- 6      *Ask him how he thinks she will respond & why (10)*
- 7      *Is this the best & fairest solution (8)*
- 8      *Is there a better solution? (8)*

**5. EVALUATE POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AGAINST CRITERIA**

(Consider the advantages & disadvantages of each of the options & then either give an overall rating between 0 -10, or rate them against your goal in 2 above. Give each possible solution a score)

*See above ratings from 0 to 10*

**6. PLANNING & IMPLEMENTATION:** Write down precisely how you will implement the solution/s (Indicate precisely what, when & how you will do this). How will you cope with anticipated obstacles & consequences including those listed in 3 above?

*See preferred order of action in front of each possible action/solution  
Write down action plan on a pocket card this PM  
Review on Sunday at end of each week*

**7. FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION:** Did it solve the problem? If problems remain repeat the process from the top and continue in this manner until you have achieved each goal in turn.