

# Exercise

Professional Version | US English

# Problem Solving



---

## Description

---

*Problem Solving* is a helpful intervention whenever clients present with difficulties, dilemmas, and conundrums, or when they experience repetitive thought such as rumination or worry. Effective problem solving is an essential life skill and this *Problem Solving* worksheet is designed to guide children and adolescents through steps which will help them to generate solutions to 'stuck' situations in their lives. It follows the qualities of effective problem solving outlined by Nezu, Nezu & D'Zurilla (2013), namely: clearly defining a problem; generation of alternative solutions; deliberative decision making; and the implementation of the chosen solution.

The therapist's stance during problem solving should be one of collaborative curiosity. It is not for the therapist to pass judgment or to impose their preferred solution. Instead it is the clinician's role to sit alongside clients and to help them examine the advantages and disadvantages of their options and, if the client is 'stuck' in rumination or worry, to help motivate them to take action to become unstuck – constructive rumination asks "How can I...?" questions instead of "Why...?" questions. In their description of problem solving therapy Nezu, Nezu & D'Zurilla (2013) describe how it is helpful to elicit a positive orientation toward the problem which involves: being willing to appraise problems as challenges; remain optimistic that problems are solvable; remember that successful problem solving involves time and effort.

---

# Instructions

---

1. The first step in problem solving is to help the client to identify a problem, difficulty, or dilemma which is bothering them, or about which they have been ruminating or worrying. This may involve defining the nature of the problem, identifying the individual's goals, and identifying obstacles which prevent the individual from reaching their goals.
2. The next step is to help the client to generate a range of possible approaches to solving their problem, ideally solutions which are designed to overcome the obstacles that have already been identified. It is helpful to remind clients that at this stage their job is to think of as many potential approaches as possible, it does not matter how outlandish or unworkable they may be. Recommend that the client generate at least three potential solutions. Helpful prompts include:
  - "Can you think of any ways that you could make this problem not be a problem any more?"
  - "What's keeping this problem as a problem? What could you do to target that part of the problem?"
  - "If your friend was bothered by a problem like this what might be something that you recommend they try?"
  - "What would be some of the worst ways of solving a problem like this? And the best?"
  - "How would Batman solve a problem like this?"
3. Once a selection of potential strategies have been identified, the client can be helped to consider potential advantages and disadvantages for each strategy, and likely outcomes of each strategy.
  - Consider short term and long-term implications of each strategy.
  - Implications may relate to: emotional well-being, choices & opportunities, relationships, self-growth.
4. The next step is to encourage the client to consider which of the available options is the best solution. If clients do not feel positive about any solutions clinicians can frame this choice as "Which is the least-worst?" and may remind the client that "even not-making-a-choice is a form of choice".
5. The last step of problem solving is putting a plan into action. Rumination, worry, and being in the horns of a dilemma are 'stuck' states which require a behavioral 'nudge' to become unstuck. Once a plan has been implemented it is important to monitor the outcome and to evaluate whether the actual outcome was consistent with the anticipated outcome.

---

## References

---




Beck, A.T., Rush, A.J., Shaw, B.F., & Emery, G. (1979). *Cognitive therapy of depression*. New York: Guilford.

Nezu, A. M., Nezu, C. M., D'Zurilla, T. J. (2013). *Problem-solving therapy: a treatment manual*. New York: Springer.

# Problem Solving

What problem is bothering you?






Think of 3 (or more) possible solutions to your problem. 	What are the advantages of this solution? 	What are the disadvantages of this solution?	Which is the best solution?	What do you need to do to make this happen? 
1.			<input type="checkbox"/>	
2.			<input type="checkbox"/>	
3.			<input type="checkbox"/>	

# Problem Solving

What problem is bothering you?

My friends are pressuring me to shoplift with them.



Think of 3 (or more) possible solutions to your problem. 	What are the advantages of this solution? 	What are the disadvantages of this solution?	Which is the best solution?	What do you need to do to make this happen? 
1.  Do it.	Fit in. Part of the group. Get their approval.	Might regret it. Could get caught. Don't really want to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2.  Get new friends who accept me.	I can be myself. Less pressure.	Have to find new friends :( Feel sad about losing old friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3.  Be assertive and proud of who I am.	Feel proud of self. Don't get in trouble. Friends might respect me more.	Friends might not accept me. Might have to ignore teasing.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Practice standing up for myself. Remind self of who I really am.




Downloaded by Paul Green on 2023-11-07 at 14:01:13. Customer ID cus\_0q8EDzpNq12edn

# Problem Solving

What problem is bothering you?

I can't do my school project because it's too hard.



Think of 3 (or more) possible solutions to your problem. 	What are the advantages of this solution? 	What are the disadvantages of this solution?	Which is the best solution?	What do you need to do to make this happen? 
1. Give up. Don't do anything. Play computer games instead.	I'd feel better right now.	Teacher will tell me off. I won't pass. Parents angry.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Tell parents.	They might help me with it so I can do it.	They might not have time to help. They're having a hard time right now.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Pick a time when they don't look so tired and tell them.
3. Tell my teacher.	He can help me get started or help with the difficult bits.	He's quite hard on me and might think I'm even more stupid.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Stay after class to talk to him. Practice what I need to say.

Psychology Tools develops and publishes evidence-based psychotherapy resources. We support mental health professionals to deliver effective therapy, whatever their theoretical orientation or level of experience.

Our digital library encompasses information handouts, worksheets, workbooks, exercises, guides, and audio skills-development resources.

Our tools are flexible enough to be used both in-session and between-session, and during all stages of assessment, formulation, and intervention. Written by highly qualified clinicians and academics, materials are available in digital and printable formats across a wide range of languages.



## Resource details

Title: Problem Solving (CYP)

Type: Exercises

Language: English (US)

Translated title: Problem Solving (CYP)

URL: <https://www.psychologytools.com/resource/problem-solving-cyp>

Resource format: Professional

Version: 20230721

Last updated by: JP

## Terms & conditions

This resource may be used by licensed members of Psychology Tools and their clients. Resources must be used in accordance with our terms and conditions which can be found at: <https://www.psychologytools.com/terms-and-conditions/>

## Disclaimer

Your use of this resource is not intended to be, and should not be relied on, as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. If you are suffering from any mental health issues we recommend that you seek formal medical advice before using these resources. We make no warranties that this information is correct, complete, reliable or suitable for any purpose. As a professional user, you should work within the bounds of your own competencies, using your own skill and knowledge, and therefore the resources should be used to support good practice, not to replace it.

## Copyright

Unless otherwise stated, this resource is Copyright © 2023 Psychology Tools Limited. All rights reserved.