# CETA Solving Problems
# Achieving Your Goals

## Rationale

- Problems can feel big, impossible to solve, and can lead to feelings of depression, anxiety, or both.
- Learning problem solving steps can help reduce feelings of anxiety and depression.
- Solving problems helps clients feel that they have some control over their environment and increases self-esteem.

## Goals

- Learn problem solving steps.
- Practice solving a problem or reaching a goal.
- Client feels better by solving a problem, taking steps towards solving a problem, or working towards a goal.
- Client can apply this skill with problems in their life.

▪ **Explain the What and Why**

What

> "Today you will learn a new way to solve problems."

Why

> "We all have problems. Learning ways to solve problems can help us feel better, like things are not so overwhelming, and possibly fix problems that we have."

***For the following steps, use the Solving Problems Worksheet.***

▪ **Identify a Problem the client wants to change.**
   ▪ The client may have already told you problems they have, or you may need to help the client identify a problem.
      - Examples of problems clients may have:
         o Getting into many fights with friends or spouse.
         o Not having any friends or family in town.
         o Lack of accessing standard education.
         o Unemployment or unstable employment.
         o Being treated badly or unfairly by boss or supervisor.
   ▪ Problems should be something the <u>client</u> can work on and change. They should not be problems that are out of the client's control (e.g., rape, torture, being undocumented, losing home or land in Burma).

- Problems also have to be things a person can see or hear.  They should not be problems such as "low self-esteem" or "feeling sad".

- **Identify a goal or what the client wants to accomplish by solving the problem.**
  - The goal should be specific, realistic, and achievable. If the client comes up with two differing goals, help the client to chose <u>one</u>, so that solutions can be tailored to one specific goal.

- **Get a list of ALL possible solutions to solve the identified problem.**

  - Ask the client to tell you ALL possible solutions for this problem. How does the client think they could solve the problem?
  - Ideally, all the solutions should come from the client but the counselor can give some ideas (even silly ideas) if the client is having a hard time.
  - <u>**Do not judge**</u> any of the options even if they seem like bad or unrealistic options.
  - <u>The list will probably include some bad options, but that is okay, we want a long list of possible solutions.</u>

> "I want you to tell me every single idea you have for a solution or an option to solve this problem. Tell me all kinds of ideas even if you think they are silly or will not work. After we get a long list, THEN we can talk about what you think about them. For now, just give me every possible solution you can think of so we can have a long list of solutions to discuss."

  - You want at least 3-4 possible solutions on the list.

- **Evaluate the solutions with the client**

Get a list of good things about each solution.
> "What is a unique good thing about this option? What makes it a good option? What else makes it a good option?"

Get a list of bad things about each solution.

> "What are some bad things about this option? How much time would it take? How much effort? Would it cost something? How much? Do you have control over this option or does someone else? How would you feel if you did this option?"

- **Choose a solution with the client**
  - Pick one solution with the client that the client would like to work on this week. This should be the solution the client thinks will work best and that the client has the most control over.

- **Break the solution you choose into activities**
  - Sometimes multiple, smaller activities are needed to solve a problem. Solutions often involve A LOT of activities.
  - Making a list of different activities within the solution if needed: Work with the client to identify small activities within the solution that was chosen. The first few steps should be VERY EASY for the client to do so that the client can be successful.

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⭐ **EXAMPLE** ⭐

**Problem**: Need money to support family.
**Goal:** Make more money.
**Solution**: Find a higher paying job.
**Activities**:
1. Ask friends and neighbors about any available jobs.
2. Read newspaper for job advertisements.
3. Write and prepare CV.
4. Learn more about jobs.
5. Apply for job.
6. Interview for job.
7. Seek contacts.

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- **Evaluate the activities/solution:**
  - Activities should meet these 5 rules:
  1. **Realistic/Achievable**: The client has some control over accomplishing the goal
     a. Ex: Client has control over seeing friends, NOT over being exploited by boss or supervisor.
  2. **Stated very specifically**: Anyone can understand the goal/problem if you told them about it and it includes a specific timeline.
     a. Ex: Specific Goal: Have tea with a friend on Tuesday.
     b. Ex: Non-specific goal: Feel better about myself.
  3. **Desirable**: Client values and wants to reach the goal, others would think that reaching the goal would be a healthy/positive choice.
     a. Ex: Drinking with friends every day is something others would not consider healthy or positive.
  4. **Measurable**: We can "see" or "hear" if the goal was achieved.
     a. Applying for a job is something we can "see". "Feeling better" is not.
  5. **Timely**: Client can do some of the activities in one week.

- **Identify and Anticipate Obstacles and Barriers to Solving the Problem**
  - Talk with the client about possible barriers that the client might encounter in doing the activities.
  - There are both INSIDE and OUTSIDE barriers. Ask about both.

- <u>INSIDE YOURSELF BARRIERS (client 's feelings)</u>: not motivated, talked self out of it, distracted by other things.

> Example Questions:
> "Are there some feelings you might have that would make it hard to work on solving the problem/achieving your goal this week?"
> "I know you sometimes worry, do you think that will get in the way here?"

- <u>OUTSIDE OF YOU BARRIERS</u>: Things in the environment that the client does not control.
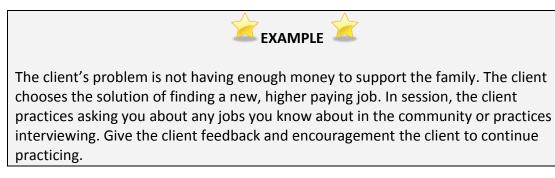
> Example questions:
> "You said that you might not have a way to get to your friends house, do you think that might be a problem with your goal?"
> "If it rained all day outside, would that make your goal difficult?"
> "What other things might be barriers or things that would make it difficult for you to accomplish this plan?"

- If possible, role play some of the steps or part of the solution with the client to give them confidence and make them more likely to try the activity/solution during the week.

> ⭐ **EXAMPLE** ⭐
>
> The client's problem is not having enough money to support the family. The client chooses the solution of finding a new, higher paying job. In session, the client practices asking you about any jobs you know about in the community or practices interviewing. Give the client feedback and encouragement the client to continue practicing.

- **Set up a homework plan**

Decide on what the client will do this week to work towards solving the problem. Sometimes the client can do several activities, and sometimes they can do just one.

> "You did a great job listing possible solutions and picking one to try. Now we can talk about what you will do this week to start solving your problem. Let us look at the solution you picked and make a plan together."

REMEMBER HOMEWORK: WHAT, WHEN, HOW, REMINDER, RATE FEELINGS BEFORE AND AFTER.

**Next Session: Review what the client did during the week. Continue working on solving the first problem or start working on a second problem if needed.** (Your supervisor will help you determine if you should work on another problem.) If the client was not able to do any of the steps, normalize difficulty in getting started and spend time planning for taking the same steps the next week, or for choosing another solution to try.

"How difficult was it for you to take steps towards your goal?"
"What made it easy for you to do some of steps?"
"Did you notice any change in your mood or feelings as you were taking the steps?"
"If you did not notice a change in your mood, was there any sense of accomplishment or relief in completing some of the steps?"
"What can we do to plan for next week?"

# Problem Solving Steps

### 1. What

"Today you will learn a new way to solve problems."

### 2. Why

"We all have problems. Learning ways to solve problems can help us feel good better, like things are not so overwhelming, and possibly fix problems that we have."

**\*\*\*For the following steps, use the Solving Problems Worksheet.\*\*\***

### 3. Identify a problem the client wants to change.

"What is a problem you are having that you would like help solving? The problem should be something you have control over so you can change the situation."

Give some examples of problems in a person's control and not in a person's control (ADD EXAMPLES).

### 4. Identify a goal

"What do you hope to accomplish? What would you like to achieve by solving this problem?"

### 5. Get a list of ALL possible solutions to the identified problem

"I want you to tell me every single idea you have for a solution or an option to solve this problem. Tell me all kinds of ideas even if you think they are silly, will not work, or are expensive or time-consuming. After we get a long list, THEN we can talk about what you think about them. For now, just give me every possible solution you can think of so we can have a long list of solutions to discuss."

### 6. Evaluate each solution with the client.

- Get a list of good things about each solution.

"What makes it a good option? What else makes it a good option?"

- Get a list of bad things about each solution.

"What are some bad things about this option? How much time would it take? How much effort? Would it cost something? How much? Do you have control over this option or does someone else? How would you feel if you did this option?"

**7. Review good and bad things about each solution. Encourage the client to choose a solution.**

> "What solution do you think will work best to solve your problem? What solution would you like to try?"

**8. Break the solution into smaller activities.**

> "Now that you have chosen a solution, let's break this solution into smaller activities so that it is easier for you to start solving the problem this week. What is the first thing you would need to do to solve this problem? And the second thing? Then what do you need to do next?"

**9. Evaluate the list of smaller activities.**
- Discuss the smaller steps with the clients and make sure the smaller activities meet these 5 rules:
    a. <u>Realistic/Achievable</u>: The client has some control over accomplishing the goal
    b. <u>Stated very specifically</u>: Anyone can understand the goal/problem if you told them about it and it includes a specific timeline.
    c. <u>Desirable</u>: Client values and wants to reach the goal, others would think that reaching the goal would be a healthy/positive choice.
    d. <u>Measurable</u>: We can "see" or "hear" if the goal was achieved.
    e. <u>Timely</u>: Client can do some of the activities in one week.

**10. Identify and Anticipate Obstacles and Barriers to Solving the Problem.**
- <u>Discuss INSIDE YOURSELF BARRIERS or client 's feelings that may make it difficult to solve the problem.</u>

> "Are there some feelings you might have that would make it difficult for you to work on solving the problem or achieving your goal this week?"
>
> EXAMPLE: "I know you sometimes worry, do you think that will get in the way of you solving this problem?"

- Discuss OUTSIDE of you BARRIERS or things in the environment that the client does not control that may make it difficult to solve the problem.

> "What other things might be barriers or things that would make it difficult for you to accomplish this plan?"
>
> "You said that you might not have a way to _____, do you think that might be a problem with your goal?"

**11. Role-play some of the steps with the client (if possible).**

- If possible, role play some of the steps or part of the solution with the client to build the client's confidence and makes the client more likely to try the activity/solution during the week.

**12. Create a homework plan.**

> "You did a great job listing possible solutions and picking one to try. Now we can talk about what you will do this week to start solving your problem. Let's look at the solution you picked and make a plan together."

REMEMBER HOMEWORK: WHAT, WHEN, HOW, REMINDER, RATE FEELINGS BEFORE AND AFTER.

**Next Session: Review what the client did during the week. Continue working on solving the first problem or start working on a second problem if needed.** (Your supervisor will help you determine if you should work on another problem.)

If the client did not complete the homework, normalize this. Then discuss how to take these steps in the next week OR talk about choosing a different solution (if the client now does not feel as positively towards the solution chosen last week).

> "How difficult was it for you to take steps towards your goal?"
> "What made it easy for you to do some of steps?"
> "Did you notice any change in your mood or feelings as you were taking the steps?"
> "If you did not notice a change in your mood, was there any sense of accomplishment or relief in completing some of the steps?"