

# **PST-GWI Workbook**

**COLLABORATIVE SPECIALTY CARE  
FOR VETERANS WITH GULF WAR ILLNESS:**

## **Problem-Solving Treatment Veteran Workbook**

Updated 12-14-2022

## THINGS TO KNOW

### **Workbook**

This workbook was designed especially for Gulf War Veterans. In this workbook, you will find contact information and meeting content. We will use this workbook during every meeting, so please make sure to have it available for each meeting.

### **Structure of Meetings:**

This treatment is being conducted at the VA in East Orange, NJ. It consists of 12 meetings to take place through video telehealth. Meetings will last around 60 minutes.

### **If You Need to Reschedule:**

If you need to reschedule a meeting, please call your individual provider directly. Contact numbers can be found on the Contact Sheet on page 3.

### **Confidentiality:**

Conversations are confidential. They will not be shared with your friends, family or other people not involved with your treatment. A note will be added to your VA electronic medical record, however, which will be available to your VA providers. There are exceptions to confidentiality when the law mandates us to do so. Under the following circumstance we are required to break confidentiality and contact someone outside the VA and the treatment team:

- If you are at risk of harming yourself or someone else;
- If a child, elder, or dependent adult is at risk of harm or abuse

If you are having thoughts of harming yourself and/or someone else, please access help right away, either by going to your local emergency room, calling 911, or contacting the numbers listed on the local and national emergency Contact Sheet, found on the next page. Please also talk with your provider about this. Your safety is important to us and will be continually assessed as part of our practice of standard clinical care.

\* \* \*

*This work is supported by an Award # HX002835-01A1 from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs Health Services Research and Development Program. It is also supported by the VA NJ War Related Illness and Injury Study Center.*

## CONTACT SHEET

Contacts & National Hotlines: Below please find a list of contacts that are available to call during normal working hours (8:30am-4:30pm). We also have included a list of national hotlines that can be reached at any hour.

### Contacts

If you need to contact your provider or want to reschedule a meeting, please call your provider during normal working hours.

- Your provider is:

\_\_\_\_\_  
973-676-1000, ext.

- The supervising psychologists are:

\_\_\_\_\_  
973-676-1000, ext.

\_\_\_\_\_  
973-676-1000, ext.

### Additional Numbers

- Research Coordinators
  - [Name] 973-676-1000, ext. [ext]
  - [Name] 973-676-1000, ext. [ext]
  - [Name] 973-676-1000, ext. [ext]
- War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC) .....1-800-248-8005
- East Orange, NJ VA after hours Emergency Room..... 973-395-7236

### Getting Help/Hotlines

#### VA NJHCS:

#### Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPC):

- [Name] 973-676-1000, ext. [ext]
- [Name] 973-676-1000, ext. [ext]
- [Name] 973-676-1000, ext. [ext]

#### Veterans Crisis Line: 988, Press 1

Call the toll-free National Suicide Prevention hotline and indicate you are a Veteran (press 1; Veterans Crisis Line). You'll be immediately connected to VA suicide prevention and mental health professionals.

Call if you are experiencing emotional distress and need to talk to a professional trained to work with Veterans – 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also text the Veterans Crisis Line at 838255 or via confidential chat at VeteransCrisisLine.net

#### Crisis Text Line : Text HOME to 741741

#### National Sexual Assault Hotline:

800-656-4673

<http://www.rainn.org/ohl-bridge.php>

#### National Child Abuse Hotline:

800-424-4453

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# **PST for GWI**

## **Session 1:**

### **Getting to Know You**

## **MEETING 1**

### **Getting to Know You**

#### **Objectives:**

- Check-in
- What is Gulf War Illness & what is it like for you
- GWI and “brain fog”
- Why PST for GWI?
- Health Goals & Positive Activities
- Choosing a home assignment

#### **Handouts:**

- List of Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
- Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

## MEETING 1: Getting to Know You

### Check-in

This is the time we will ask about any potential health or mood changes you may have had in the past week. In addition, the provider may do a safety check-in, if needed. This is also a good time to bring up any questions you may have.

### Today's Focus

Today we will discuss Gulf War Illness, *brain fog*, and Problem-Solving Treatment.

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## Meeting 1 Content:

### What is Gulf War Illness (GWI)?

At the end of the Gulf War, many Gulf War Veterans reported wide-spread symptoms. These symptoms can include fatigue, headaches, joint pain, indigestion, insomnia, dizziness and memory problems. Collectively, these symptoms are known as GWI. GWI affects Veterans differently. Some Gulf War Veterans have many symptoms; others have only a few symptoms. Some Gulf War Veterans have severe symptoms; others have milder forms of GWI.

*What is GWI like for you? What types of symptoms do you have?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Symptoms of GWI can create problems that often prevent Veterans from living their lives to the fullest. For example, some Gulf War Veterans tell us that they can no longer work, or that the fatigue keeps them from spending time with their family, or that they can't be physically active like they used to. GWI can also impact relationships with family members because they don't understand what you have to go through with GWI.

*What do you wish you could do if you didn't have these symptoms?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

### Why Problem-Solving Treatment (PST) for GWI?

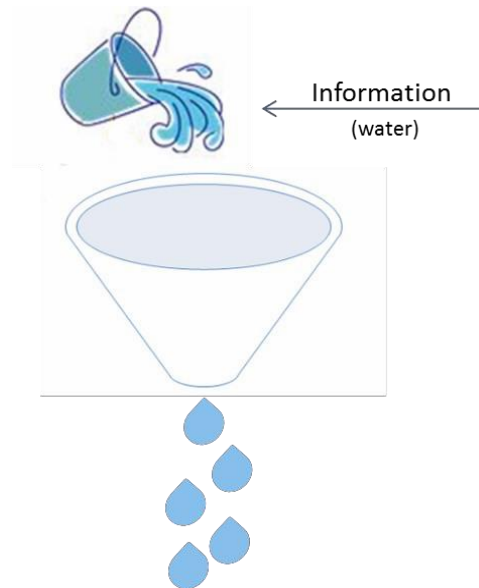
GWI can cause slowed thinking and something called brain fog. Brain fog makes taking in, organizing, and acting on information more difficult. This can slow down everything from making little decisions to performing activities of daily living. Our attention,



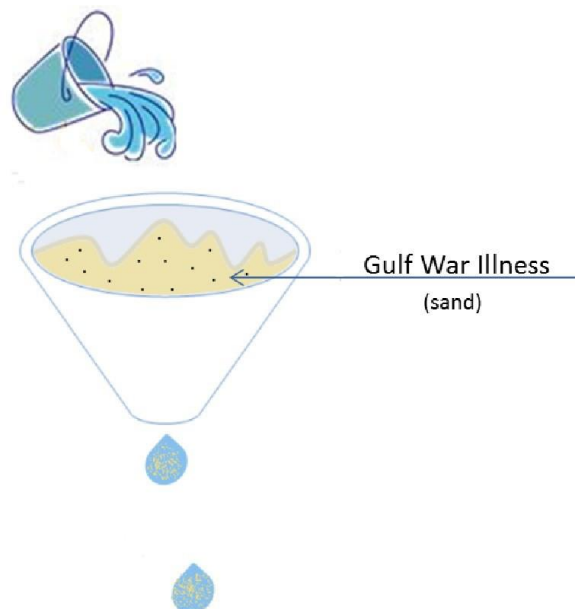
concentration and memory can all be affected. This can make it hard to make decisions. Brain fog impacts everything! Often people do not understand why it takes people with brain fog longer to accomplish tasks or why sometimes they may give up. This can lead to frustration and disappointment.

**GWI doesn't impact your intelligence or how smart you are!**

Think of it like a funnel. If you pour water into it – the water will go straight through.



However, if you fill the funnel with some sand, the water will go through slowly. With enough sand, the water will pass **very** slowly and when it finally does get through, it won't be so clear.



## Double Whammy

Veterans with GWI might not only experience brain fog, but also often have chronic pain, fatigue and other physical symptoms. Chronic physical symptoms can create problems that make it very hard to do the things you want or need to do. Brain fog makes it hard to tackle the problems that prevent you from doing what you want and need to do.

Here is an example from a Gulf War Veteran:

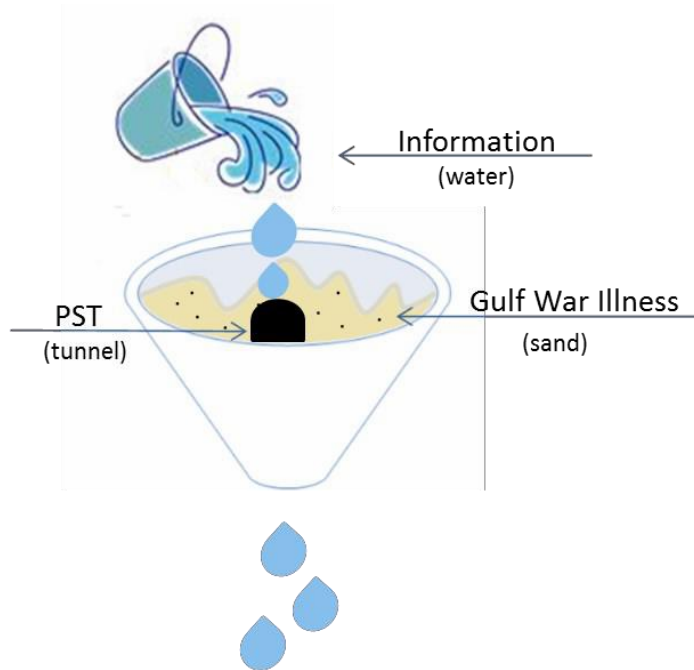
*"I attended a meeting on GWI in Washington, DC. I had to rest for two days before the meeting. I also had to make sure my hotel room was in the same building as the meeting so I could quickly go back to rest and use the bathroom. I called the hotel kitchen before I left to make sure that there were food options that wouldn't make me sick. When I came home I was wiped out for a week. But I am glad I was able to go."*

In this example, the Veteran had to do a lot of planning to attend the conference. Extra planning is necessary with chronic physical symptoms, but brain fog can make it difficult to do.

## Problem-Solving Treatment (PST)

Fortunately, there is a treatment that can help called "Cognitive Rehabilitation." Problem-Solving Treatment is a type of cognitive rehabilitation. In this study you will work with a cognitive rehabilitation expert (study provider) to learn to break down problems into smaller pieces to meet your goals, like spending more time with your family or volunteering for a Veterans Organization. This treatment won't get rid of brain fog, but will help solve problems despite it.

If we think of our example of the sand in the funnel, PST can help you "dig" some tunnels so the water can get through despite there being sand. By the end of treatment you will have learned the skills to better cope with daily problems you may encounter in your life. This might help you improve the quality of your life



### Life Values

The purpose of this study is to improve Gulf War Veterans' overall well-being by helping you have more effective problem-solving skills to attain your life values. What life values do you have for yourself? Some Gulf War Veterans tell us that their life values are to have a better relationship with their family or to be able to work or to become healthier by being more physically active.

*What are your life values?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## Areas for Improvement

Often, we have areas of our lives that we want to change. Some examples could be: relationships, maintaining good health, stress management, work etc. Please look at the list of domains below and checkmark any area(s) that you would like to improve.

- ☐ Relationship with partner/spouse
- ☐ Relationships with children, parents, siblings, and other family members
- ☐ Relationships with friends
- ☐ Engaging in behaviors, activities, or hobbies you find enjoyable
- ☐ Spirituality
- ☐ Work
- ☐ Money
- ☐ Housing
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Legal issues
- ☐ Alcohol and drugs
- ☐ Other

## Goals and Activities

At the end of each of our sessions, we will ask you to identify **health goals** and/or **positive activities** to accomplish before our next meeting.

**Health Goals:** These could be goals you have identified with your health coach.

**Positive Activities:** These could be activities you used to enjoy doing but have not done in a long time. This is a way to reintroduce some of these back into your weekly routine. The activities do not need a major time commitment.

## Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities

### **Goals & Activities** that may be worth adding to your day

## GOALS FROM HEALTH COACHING

- Meditating
- Yoga
- Eating a good, healthy meal
- Exercising
- Taking a walk or going hiking
- Connecting with a friend
- Drink more water
- Stretching exercises
- Learn about tai chi – (YouTube)
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Keep food log for Mediterranean diet
- Walk around block after dinner
- Replace chips with celery and carrots
- Use stairs instead of elevator
- Home exercise: squats, hand weights, wall pushups
- Challenge negative thoughts daily
- Reward self with massage
- Use consistent bed time
- Add berries to breakfast
- Use stationery bike
- Spend time socializing with Veterans
- Take warm bath before bed
- Pick a class to take
- Cook at home at least 5 nights
- Practice 2 new relaxation techniques

## POSITIVE ACTIVITIES

- Playing a musical instrument
- Playing with children or grandchildren
- Working on machines (cars, bikes, etc.)
- Riding a bike or motorcycle
- Going out for coffee
- Taking a picture
- Eating out
- Doing a favor for someone
- Bird watching
- Watching a sunrise or sunset
- Going to a religious service/ceremony
- Spending time with friends
- Listening to the sounds of nature
- Volunteering
- Golfing
- Going to the beach
- Doing art work
- Studying religious or spiritual readings
- Painting, woodworking, or other craft
- Going to a sports event
- Listening to music
- Boating/fishing
- Giving a compliment
- Camping
- Solving a problem, crossword, etc.
- Going on a picnic
- Walking a dog
- Going to a party
- Cooking or baking
- Taking a trip
- Visiting others
- Bowling
- Gardening or yard work
- Going on a date
- Sitting in the sun
- 
-

## Home Assignment: Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

Goal or Activity	When did you do it?	Achieved (If yes, ✓)	If not achieved, what got in the way?
1.			
2.			
3.			

### Meeting 1 Summary:

- A problem of GWI is brain fog, which makes taking in information slower.
- Veterans with GWI also experience physical symptoms like chronic pain or fatigue and that makes it very hard to do the things they want or need to do. Extra planning is often required to manage the problems created by these symptoms.
- Brain fog makes it difficult to do that extra planning.
- PST teaches skills to help you better solve problems by breaking them down into smaller pieces.
- This may help you achieve some of your life values.

### Home Assignment:

- On the following page is a list of “Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities.” Each week we will ask you to pick 3 activities to do that week. They can be health coaching goals, or just pleasant activities you’d like to make room for in your week. Please write them down on the “Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities”, and the next time you meet with the provider, you will review how it went.

### Plan for Next Week:

- Next meeting to take place on (date & time): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# **PST for GWI**

## **Session 2:**

### **Problem Orientation: Introduction**



## MEETING 2

### Introducing Problem Orientation

#### Objectives:

- Check-in
- Identify the 3 categories of problems
- Introduce the Problem-Solving Treatment model
- Introduce ***problem orientation***
- How does ***GW*** ***affect*** problem orientation?
- Weekly Goals & Activities

#### Handouts:

- Problem Orientation Management I
- List of Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
- Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

## **MEETING 2: Introducing Problem Orientation**

### **Check-in**

This is the time we will ask about any potential health or mood changes you may have had in the past week. In addition, the provider may do a safety check-in, if needed. This is also a good time to bring up any questions you may have.

### **Review of Last Week**

Last week we talked about:

- The ways in which Gulf War Illness – and the secondary problems that GWI brings – typically make problem-solving skills more difficult.
- We also introduced Problem-Solving Treatment as a way to address the “brain fog” of GWI which makes taking in information slower.

### **Today’s Focus**

The focus of today’s meeting will be to introduce the first component of PST:  
PROBLEM ORIENTATION.

### **Reviewing Home Practice**

Remember the practice exercises are in place to help you learn these new skills. It takes practice and time to learn any new skill. This is time to review what this process was like for you. It is not just about whether you were able to do or not do something. It is about helping you break down the steps of the practice exercise and address any difficulties you may have had.

#### **1. Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities**

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## Meeting 2 Content

Today, let's start by asking: you how would you define the term "problem."

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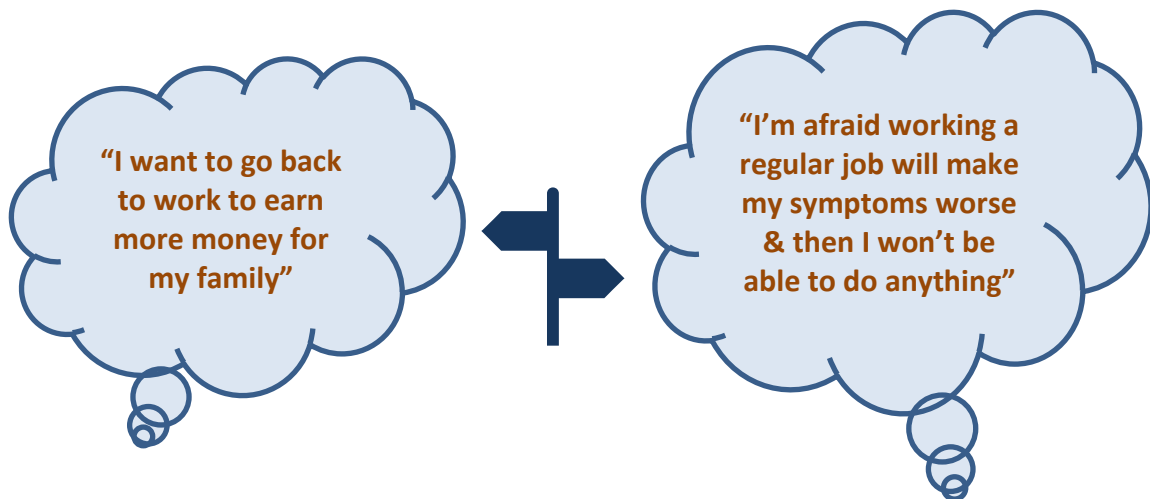
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### How we are using the term "problem"

In any given day we come across a lot of problems. Problems can be big or small, new or familiar. There are 3 types of problems we will talk about:

**(1) Some problems are conflicts between 2 of our own goals**



**(2) Some problems are conflicts between our goal and someone else's**



### (3) Some problems are when our original plan is blocked, and we can't think of any other options



#### **Problem-Solving Treatment (PST)**

PST was designed to help people become more successful in solving problems. This could be particularly helpful to people with chronic pain because the GWI-related brain fog and related stressors make problem-solving that much more difficult .

PST is made up of two main components:

1. Problem Orientation – this component focuses on the person's thoughts and feelings when in a problem situation. We'll talk about tools that can be used to adjust these kinds of reactions to improve problem-solving success.
2. Using a Planful Problem-Solving Style – this component focuses on the logical and analytical breaking down of problems into 5 manageable steps.

The next three meetings will be focused on the first component, Problem Orientation. In meeting 4, we will begin the second component.

#### **Problem Orientation**

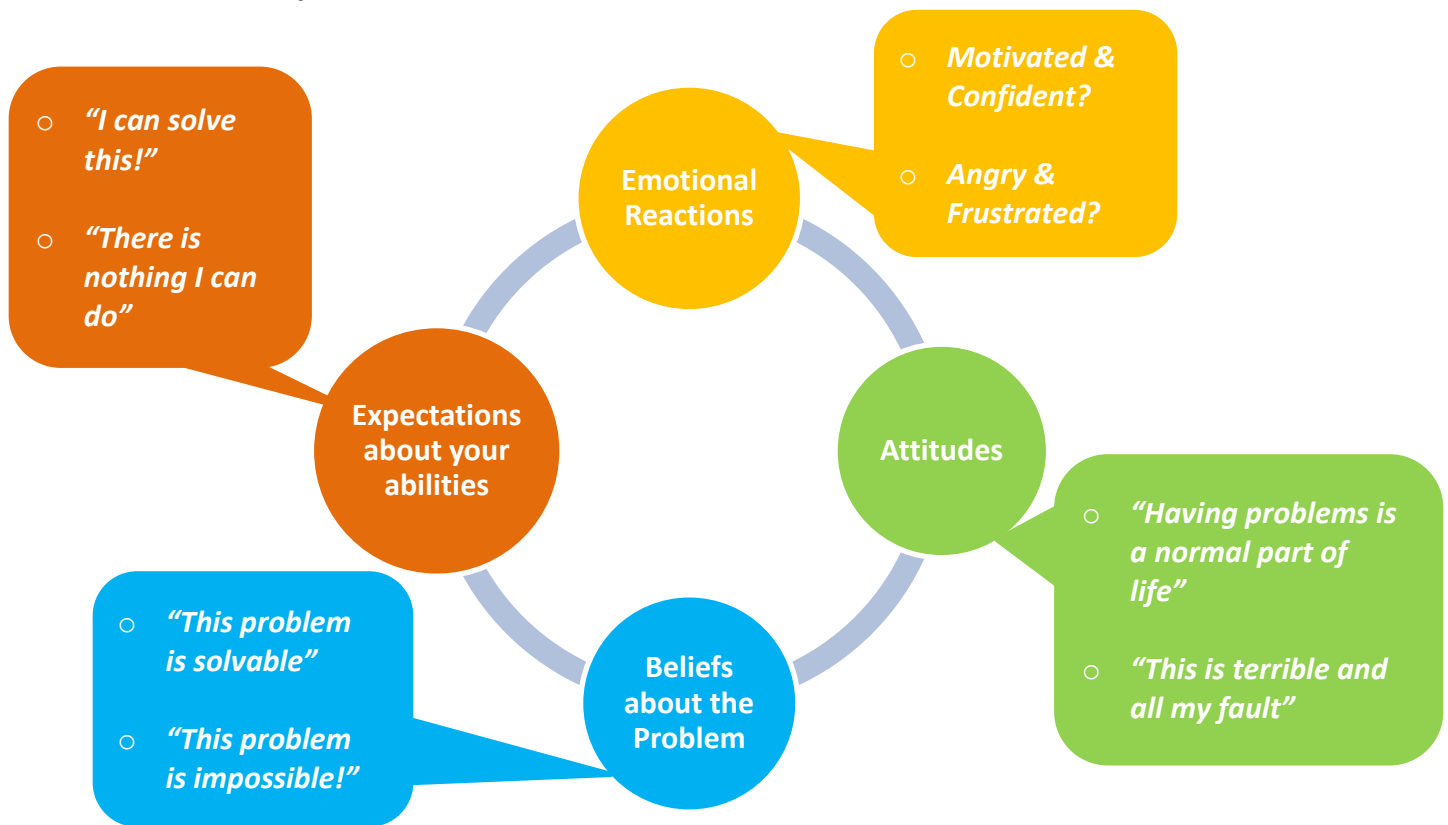
Problem orientation refers to a person's attitudes, beliefs and expectations around a problem situation.

How we view our **relationship** with having a problem contributes a lot to how successful we will be in solving it. Sometimes we might feel threatened by the problem (a negative problem orientation), but other times we might see it as challenge that we are up to meet (a positive problem orientation).

By discussing problem-orientation, you will be able to better monitor your problem orientation and use strategies to nudge it away from the negative and towards the positive.

## Identifying a Person's Problem Orientation

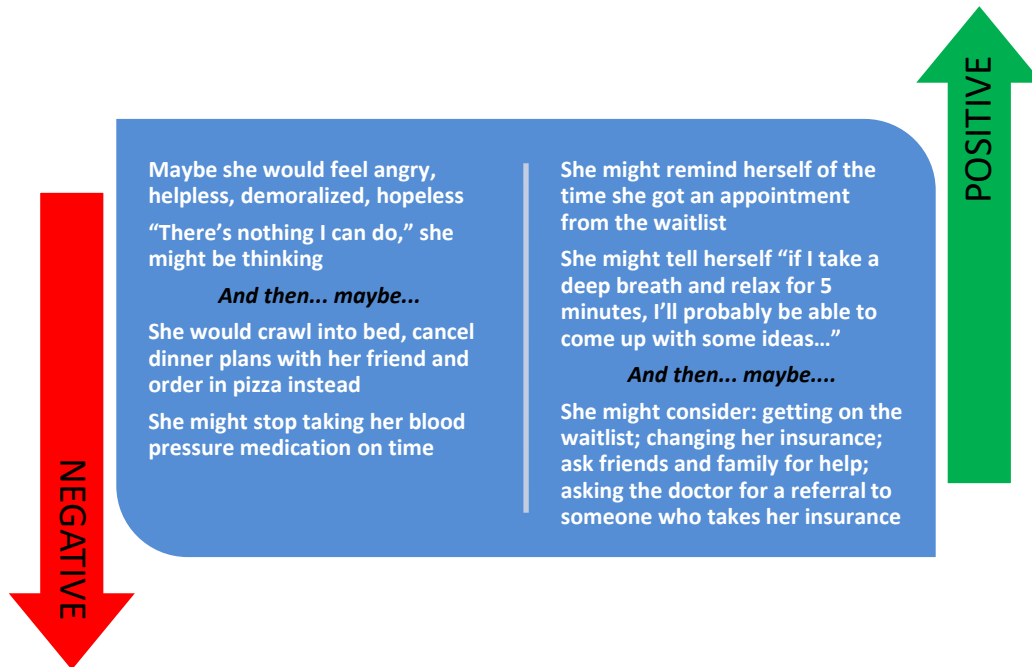
When faced with a problem, the way someone typically responds is called their "Problem Orientation" is made up of a person's **Emotional Reactions, Attitudes, Beliefs and Expectations**.



*Let's take Jane as an example.*

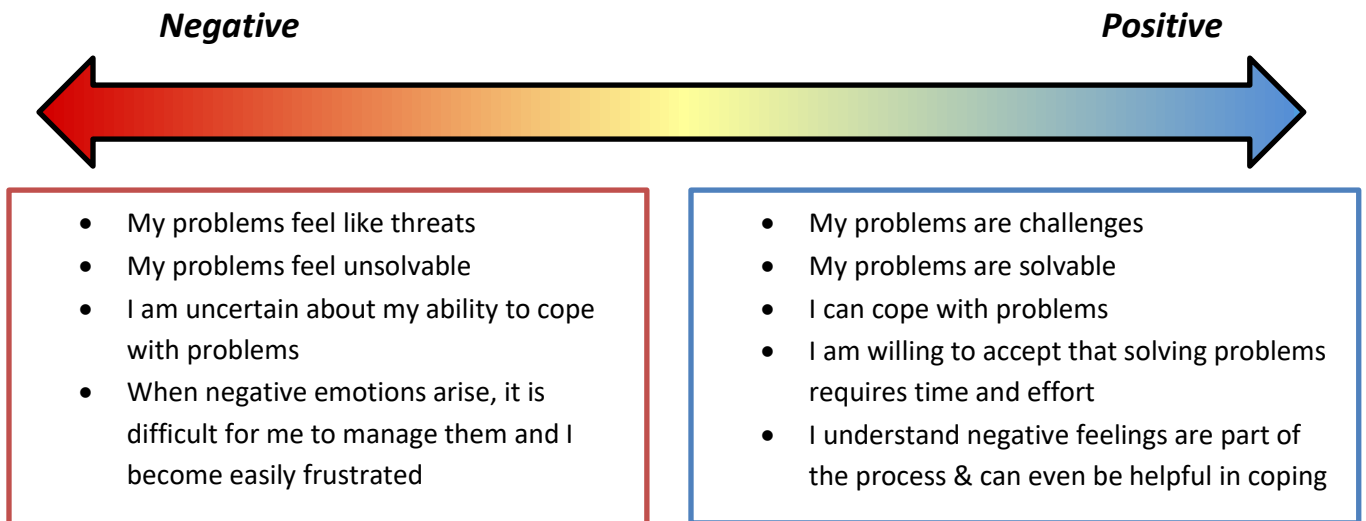
*Jane is feeling hopeful because she heard about a pain management doctor who successfully treats people like her, but it turns out the doctor doesn't have an opening for 9 months and doesn't take her insurance.*

- If her problem orientation was negative how do you think she would respond?
- If her problem orientation was positive, how might things be different?

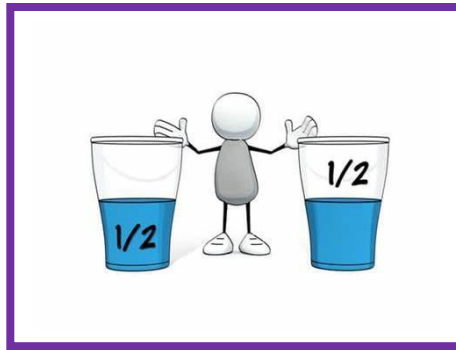


## The Continuum

We talk about a “negative” or “positive” problem orientation, but it actually exists on a continuum. A problem orientation can be extremely positive, very positive, or just a little positive. The same is true for a negative problem orientation.



## What does your Problem Orientation look like?



The statements below all describe a pretty positive problem orientation. Rate how much you agree/disagree with each one using a 1-10 scale.

Rate your Problem Orientation		Disagree	Agree
Please circle the number that represents how much you agree with the statements below.			
		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
1	I view problems as challenges or opportunities for positive change.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2	When faced with a problem, I remind myself of past successes in dealing with similar problems.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3	I am willing to commit myself to solving problems when they occur.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4	I have confidence in my ability to solve most problems.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5	I believe if I put in the necessary time and effort, I can make some improvement to the problem situation.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6	The first thing I usually do when I have to deal with a problem is take a deep breath to relax.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7	I believe most problems have a solution, (although it may not always be easy to find!).	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
8	I make sure to use encouraging self-talk when working on a difficult problem.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9	Problems are a normal part of life; so when I have a problem it is just a sign that I am human – <b>not</b> that I messed up.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
10	My instinct is not to avoid problems or make impulsive decisions about them, but to use a methodical approach.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		

## Problem Orientation Can Change

A person's problem orientation can also change over time.

It is also true that someone's problem orientation can be very positive in one life area, and negative in another.

A negative problem orientation can keep us from finding a solution to the problem. It can also create secondary problems.

### ***For example:***

*Victor had an appointment at the pain management clinic. The appointment had been scheduled and then rescheduled for a later time. When the appointment finally came, he had to wait for an hour. By the time he was called back to see the doctor, he was frustrated at the long wait and even worse, his back was aching from sitting so long. He was so angry that he gave the nurse a piece of his mind. When the doctor came in, it was hard to concentrate on the visit, Victor was still so angry. Later, he was embarrassed that he was not able to stay calm. **He also realized that he forgot to ask important questions because he was in pain and fed up.***

## What happens when **you** encounter a problem?

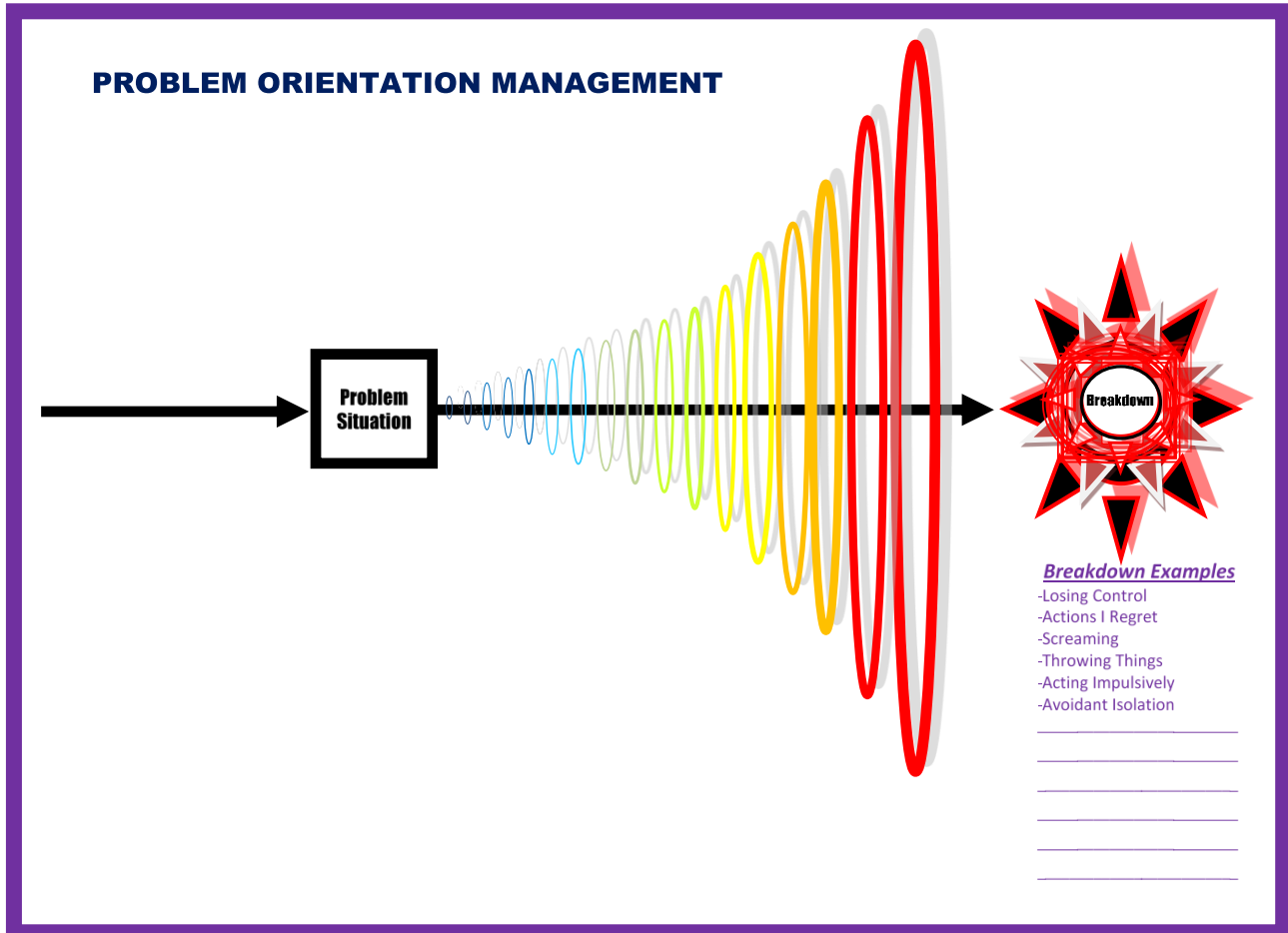
Problem situations can destabilize us. If we aren't able to reconnect with our problem-solving confidence, things can spin out of control. It becomes difficult both to focus and to be flexible. We wind up making decisions that are more of a **reaction** than a planned **response**.

In the end, we feel like the bus is driving us, instead of us driving the bus.



The graphic below illustrates a common occurrence:

1. You're going along and everything is okay.
2. All of a sudden, you hit a problem situation. Something isn't working out the way you were expecting and you're not sure how to fix this problem.
3. Maybe an emotion takes over. You don't respond, but you react.
4. If you can't regain control over the situation you might be headed for a problem-solving breakdown.



**Are you an *innie* or an *outie*?**

When people experience a problem-solving breakdown, for some people that breakdown is turned inwards; for others it is directed outwards.

How about for you? When you get frustrated by a problem, do you turn the negativity inwards or outwards?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What coping strategies work best for you?

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### What's next?

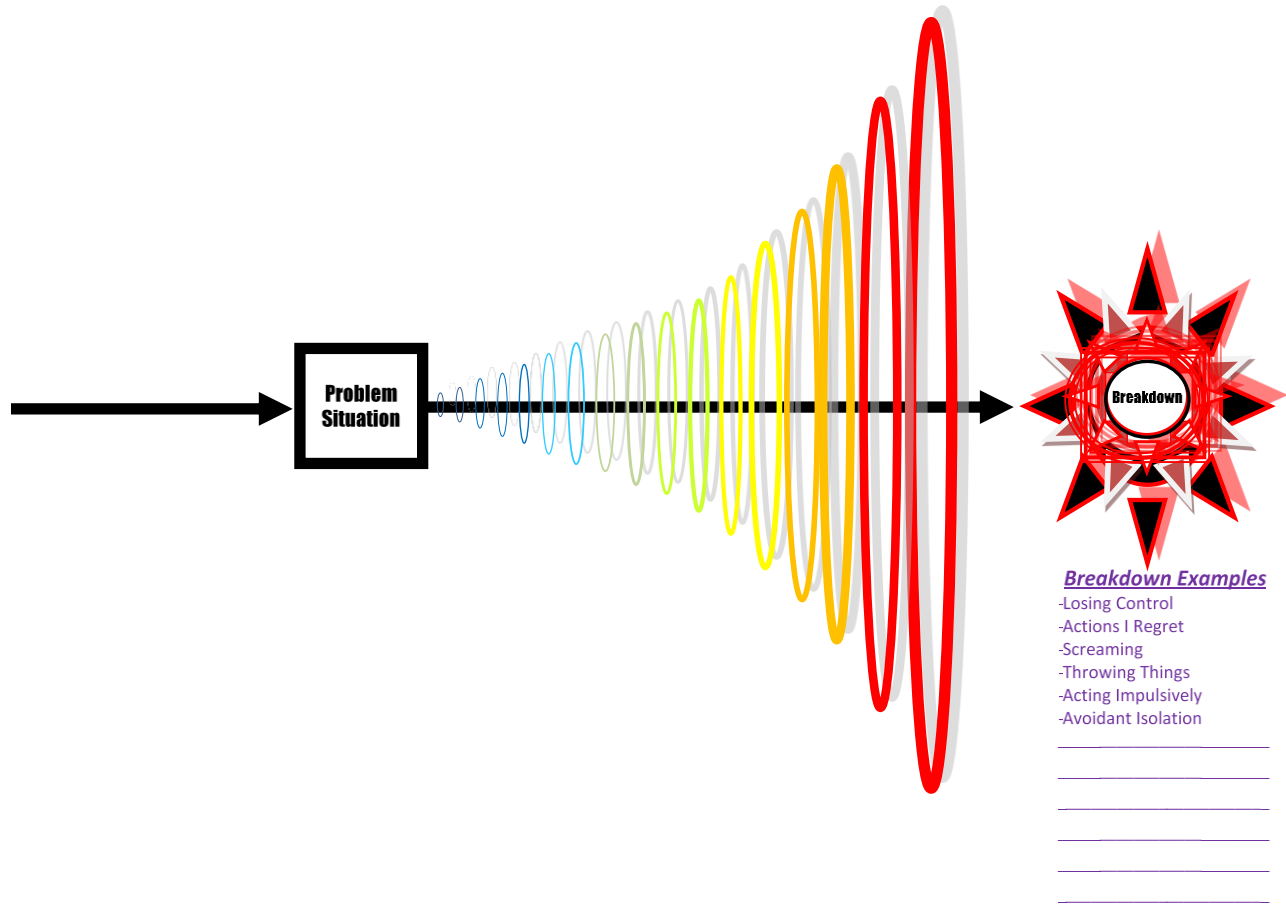
Over the next few weeks, you will learn more about:

- How to recognize the signs that your problem orientation is turning negative, and how to bring it back to the positive side.
- The logical steps used to **S-O-L-V-E** problems in a planful way.
- How to prevent a problem-solving breakdown and/or respond when there is one.

### Practice

On the next page is a home exercise titled "Monitoring Problem Orientation I." It is designed to help people become more aware of the ways in which they respond to problems. Please do this at home and we will discuss it next week.

## Home Assignment: Monitoring Problem Orientation I



### Monitoring Problem Orientation I:

What was the problem: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

When did it happen: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What was my emotional reaction: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Was my problem orientation positive, negative, in between: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities

**Goals & Activities** that may be worth adding to your day

## GOALS FROM HEALTH COACHING

- Meditating
- Yoga
- Eating a good, healthy meal
- Exercising
- Taking a walk or going hiking
- Connecting with a friend
- Drink more water
- Stretching exercises
- Learn about tai chi – (YouTube)
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Keep food log for Mediterranean diet
- Walk around block after dinner
- Replace chips with celery and carrots
- Use stairs instead of elevator
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- Challenge negative thoughts daily
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- Spend time socializing with Veterans
- Take warm bath before bed
- Pick a class to take
- Cook at home at least 5 nights
- Practice 2 new relaxation techniques

## POSITIVE ACTIVITIES

- Playing a musical instrument
- Playing with children or grandchildren
- Working on machines (cars, bikes, etc.)
- Riding a bike or motorcycle
- Going out for coffee
- Taking a picture
- Eating out
- Doing a favor for someone
- Bird watching
- Watching a sunrise or sunset
- Going to a religious service/ceremony
- Spending time with friends
- Listening to the sounds of nature
- Volunteering
- Golfing
- Going to the beach
- Doing art work
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- Painting, woodworking, or other craft
- Going to a sports event
- Listening to music
- Boating/fishing
- Giving a compliment
- Camping
- Solving a problem, crossword, etc.
- Going on a picnic
- Walking a dog
- Going to a party
- Cooking or baking
- Taking a trip
- Visiting others
- Bowling
- Gardening or yard work
- Going on a date
- Sitting in the sun
- 
-

## Home Assignment: Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

Activity	When did you do the activity?	Achieved (If yes, ✓)	If not achieved, what got in the way?
1.			
2.			
3.			

### **Meeting 2 Summary:**

- Identified three categories of problems.
- Discussed “problem orientation,” or one’s thoughts and feelings in a problem situation.
- Discussed that problem orientation exists on a continuum from positive to negative and is often affected by GWI.
- Positive problem orientation is a key component to effective problem solving.

### **Home Assignment:**

- Complete Monitoring Problem Orientation I exercise.
- Choose 3 Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities; keep track of them on the “Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities.”

### **Plan for Next Week:**

- Next meeting to take place on (date & time): \_\_\_\_\_

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# **PST for GWI**

## **Session 3:**

### **Problem Orientation: Red Flags**

## MEETING 3

### Problem Orientation – Red Flags

#### Objectives:

- Check-in
- Review Home Practice
- Early identification leads to early intervention
- **Red flags** give us an opportunity to stop  
3 types of red flags to remind us to STOP:
  - *Personal style pitfalls*
  - *Problematic contexts*
  - *Early warning signs*
- Weekly Activities & Goals



#### Handouts:

- Problem Orientation Management II
- List of Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
- Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities



## **MEETING 3: Problem Orientation – Red Flags**

### **Check-in**

#### **Review of Last Week**

Last week we introduced the term “Problem Orientation.” This refers to someone’s mindset when they are in a problem situation. This includes their emotional reactions, how much confidence they have in their abilities to deal with the situation, their expectations that the problem is fixable, and their understanding that solutions take a commitment of time and effort to be successful.

#### **Today’s Focus**

The focus of today’s meeting will be to identify “Red Flags” which are warning signs that our problem orientation needs an adjustment.

#### **Reviewing Home Practice**

- 1. Monitoring Problem Orientation I**
  - 2. Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities**
-

## Meeting 3 Content

### Red Flags

Keeping a positive problem-orientation takes effort for all of us. To keep a positive problem-orientation, one must be aware of “**red flags**.” Red flags indicate a need to use strategies to maintain a positive problem-orientation – or to reverse a negative problem orientation.

**Red flags** can indicate that there is a problem coming up that we should prepare to avoid or prepare to address.

Red flags tell us that we need to  so we can think about what to do next.

It is an opportunity for us to prepare. For us to respond rather than to react.

**Red flags** can also signal that you have encountered a problem and are starting to lose control.

What types of “breakdowns” have you ever experienced?

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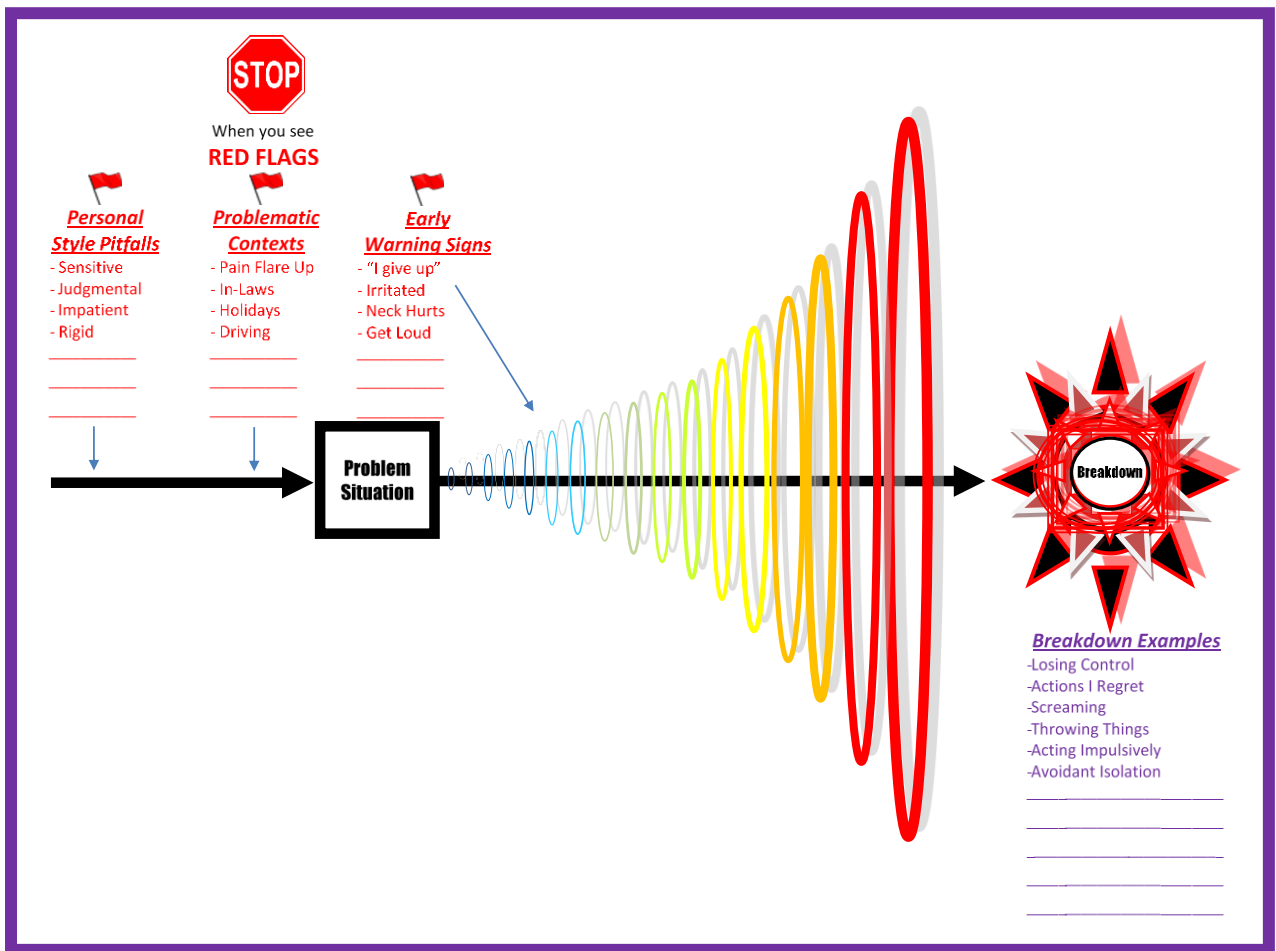
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## Red Flags

There are 3 types of red flags and each occurs at a different point in time. The **first one** happens earliest – way before the problem even emerges; the **second one** is closer to the problem onset – when we know from past experience that a problem *could be happening* soon; and the **third one** occurs right after the problem happens – this is when we are in the blue/green zone .

- 1) **Personal Style Pitfalls:** These **red flags** are those aspects of personality that we carry with us. They are inside us whether or not we are experiencing a problem. We call them “pitfalls” because sometimes even a good part of our personality can become unhelpful.

When we know our personal style pitfalls we are able to **de-escalate**. “*Maybe he wasn’t meaning to be rude, maybe the issue is that I’m impatient – let me just stop and breathe.*” **STOP**

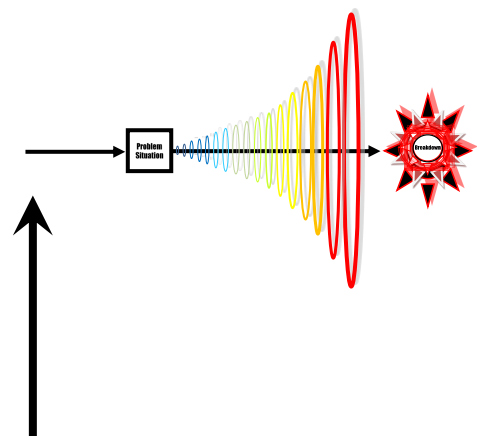
***For example:***

Let's say Pete knows 2 of his personal style pitfalls are that he is both **short-tempered** and **perfectionistic**. He is at the pharmacy to pick up medication, but they can't find his medicine. He can see that they have a very inefficient system which he finds very unprofessional. "*I can teach them how to organize things much better,*" he thinks. He lets out a sigh. When he catches sight of the pharmacist rolling his eyes, Pete just about loses it. He thinks, "*You're criticizing me for sighing?! You guys are the bozos. Learn to do your job!!*" He was just about to say out loud what he had been thinking when he remembered his personal style pitfall red flags. He has learned to hold his horses when he finds himself critical of others whom he sees as not up to his standard of **perfect**. "*This could be on me,*" he thinks, "*I haven't really been waiting that long. I need to be more flexible & just breathe. I'll count to 10 before I do anything else.*"

By knowing his personal style pitfalls, he was able to avoid creating a new problem – getting into an argument with the pharmacist. Also, he was able to calm himself down which made waiting for his meds a lot easier.

Examples of **personal style pitfalls** include:

- **Perfectionism**
- **Being judgmental**
- **Short tempered**
- **Competitive**
- **Overly generous**
- **Impatient**
- **Impulsive**
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



These red flags are the ones we are able to notice first, because they are always with us. They are furthest away from the problem. What are your Personal Style

Pitfalls?

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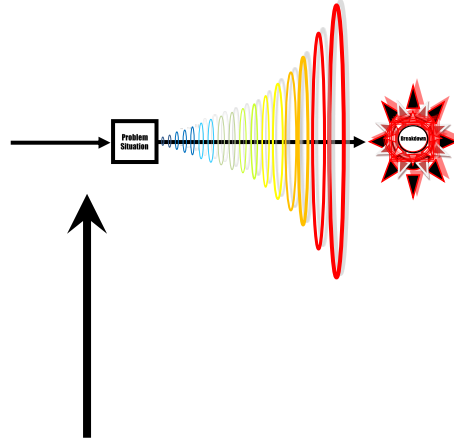
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- 2) **Problematic Contexts:** These **red flags** occur next. Notice the arrow is closer to the “problem situation.” These are situations, people, places or things that you know from experience can develop into problems.

These types of red flags can be seen closer to the problem, but still **before** the problem actually happens. Problematic contexts alert us that a problem **could** happen soon.

Forewarned is forearmed.



So, prepare your strategies when you recognize a problematic context!

Examples of **problematic contexts** include:

- Loss, sadness
- When symptoms flare up
- PTSD triggers (e.g., crowds)
- Driving, traffic
- A particular person who gets under your skin
- Financial stress
- Holiday time
- Under a deadline
- Medical appointments
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

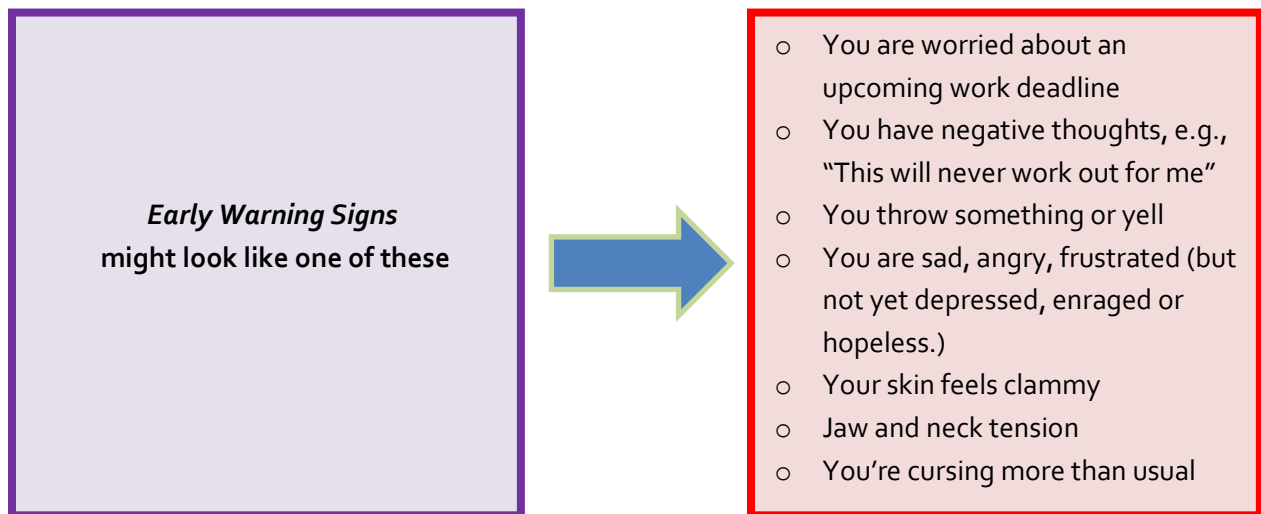
What are some problematic contexts that you know from experience can predict a possible problem?

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- 3) **Early Warning Signs:** These **red flags** are the last to emerge. If we miss the personal style pitfall and problematic context red flags, don't worry, there is still time to take control of our reaction. Enter the "**Early Warning Signs!**" These early warning signs take place **after** the problem situation happens.

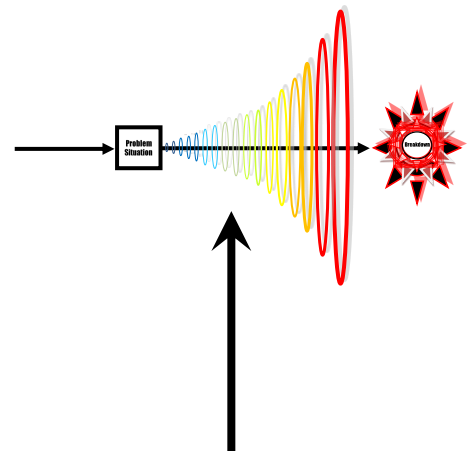


These early warning signs indicate that you might be headed for the red zone, but you are *not there yet*. You are still in the blue/green zone. There is still time to take a step back, take control over your thoughts, actions and feelings. The sooner we notice the early warning signs and do something to remain calm, the better!

In general, early warning signs come in four flavors:

1. **Things I might say:**

- "I can't handle this"
- "Things never go right for me"
- \_\_\_\_\_



**2. Behaviors I might do:**

- Fidget, raise my voice, curse
- Stay in bed all day
- \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Early emotions I might have:**

- Irritated (not yet enraged)
- Sad (not yet depressed)
- \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Sensations I might experience:**

- Pain, muscle tension, sweating
- Lightheadedness, face flushes
- \_\_\_\_\_

What early warning signs have you noticed that you have? Are you able to notice them **before** you get to the red zone?

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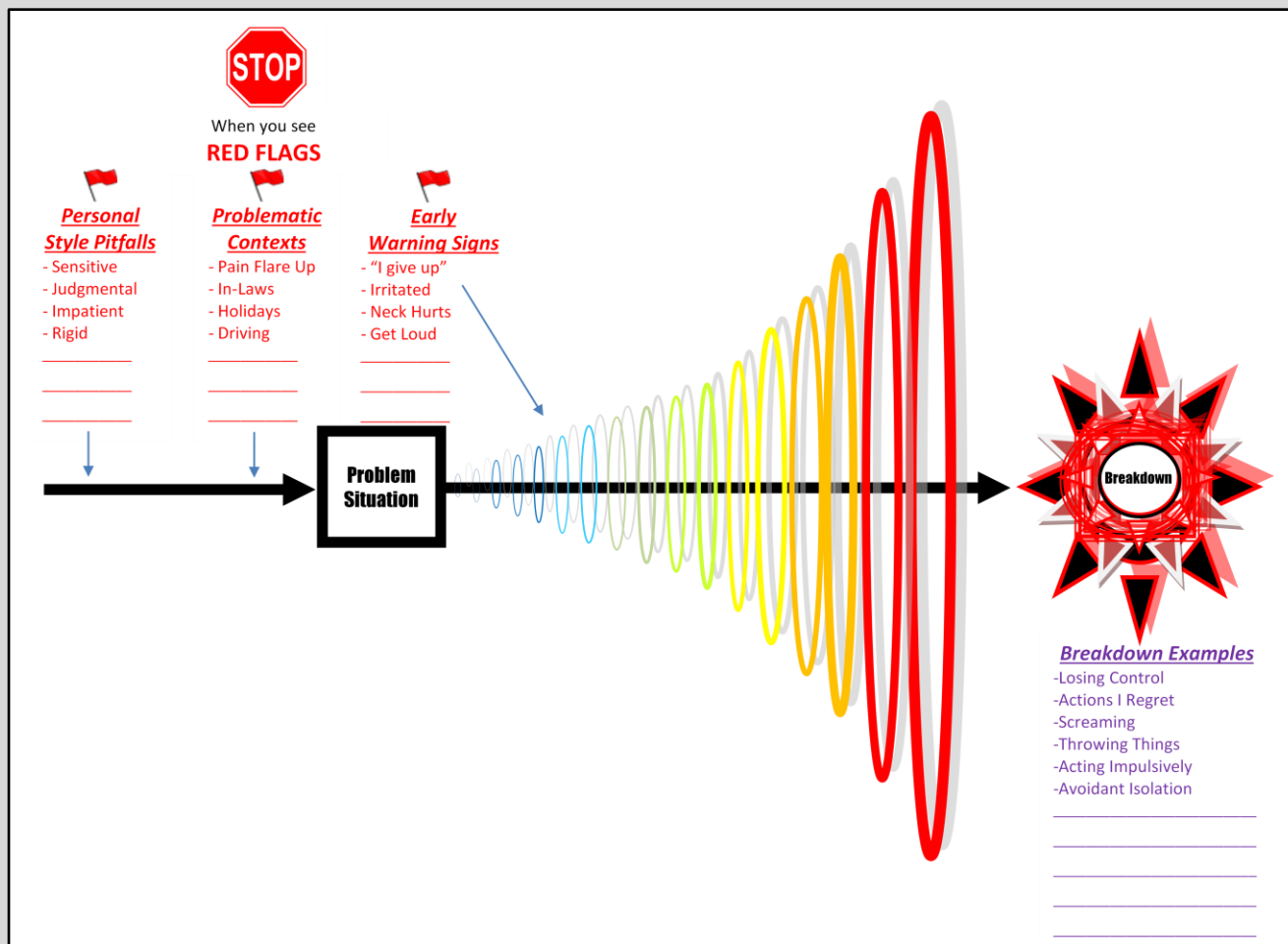
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Remember, the sooner you notice a red flag, the more successful you will be in using strategies to regain control of your problem orientation. Becoming aware of red flags will help keep you out of the red zone!

**Practice**

Please fill out the "Monitoring Problem Orientation II" form on the next page at home. To fill out the form, over the next week, please notice what kind of reactions you have to problems you encounter. You will also get good sense of your own **red flags**.

## Home Assignment: Monitoring Problem Orientation II



### Problem Orientation Monitoring II:

What was the problem: \_\_\_\_\_

When did it happen: \_\_\_\_\_

Did I notice any **RED FLAGS**: \_\_\_\_\_

**Personal Style Pitfalls**: \_\_\_\_\_

**Problematic Contexts**: \_\_\_\_\_

**Warning Signs**: \_\_\_\_\_

What was my emotional reaction: \_\_\_\_\_

Was my problem orientation positive, negative, in between: \_\_\_\_\_



## Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities

### **Goals & Activities** that may be worth adding to your day

## GOALS FROM HEALTH COACHING

- Meditating
- Yoga
- Eating a good, healthy meal
- Exercising
- Taking a walk or going hiking
- Connecting with a friend
- Drink more water
- Stretching exercises
- Learn about tai chi – (YouTube)
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Keep food log for Mediterranean diet
- Walk around block after dinner
- Replace chips with celery and carrots
- Use stairs instead of elevator
- Home exercise: squats, hand weights, wall pushups
- Challenge negative thoughts daily
- Reward self with massage
- Use consistent bed time
- Add berries to breakfast
- Use stationery bike
- Spend time socializing with Veterans
- Take warm bath before bed
- Pick a class to take
- Cook at home at least 5 nights
- Practice 2 new relaxation techniques
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## POSITIVE ACTIVITIES

- Playing a musical instrument
- Playing with children or grandchildren
- Working on machines (cars, bikes, etc.)
- Riding a bike or motorcycle
- Going out for coffee
- Taking a picture
- Eating out
- Doing a favor for someone
- Bird watching
- Watching a sunrise or sunset
- Going to a religious service/ceremony
- Spending time with friends
- Listening to the sounds of nature
- Volunteering
- Golfing
- Going to the beach
- Doing art work
- Studying religious or spiritual readings
- Painting, woodworking, or other craft
- Going to a sports event
- Listening to music
- Boating/fishing
- Giving a compliment
- Camping
- Solving a problem, crossword, etc.
- Going on a picnic
- Walking a dog
- Going to a party
- Cooking or baking
- Taking a trip
- Visiting others
- Bowling
- Gardening or yard work
- Going on a date
- Sitting in the sun
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## Home Assignment: Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

Activity	When did you do the activity?	Achieved (If yes, ✓)	If not achieved, what got in the way?
1.			
2.			
3.			

### **Meeting 3 Summary:**

- This week we discussed red flags, which are signs that we are beginning to get upset and our problem orientation is turning negative.
- There are 3 types of red flags:
  - Personal Style Pitfalls
  - Problematic Contexts
  - Early Warning Signs

### **Home Assignment:**

- Complete Monitoring Problem Orientation II exercise
- Choose 3 Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities; keep track of them on the "Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities."

### **Plan for Next Week:**

- Next meeting to take place on (date & time): \_\_\_\_\_

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# **PST for GWI**

## **Session 4:**

### Problem Orientation: Management Strategies

## MEETING 4

### Problem Orientation – Management Strategies

#### Objectives:

- Check-in
- Introducing Problem Orientation strategies
- How to identify and use:
  - ***Self-talk*** strategies
  - ***Behavioral*** strategies
  - ***Self-soothing*** strategies
- Weekly Goals & Activities

#### Handouts:

- Problem Orientation III
- List of Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
- Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

## MEETING 4: Problem Orientation – Management Strategies

### Check-in

### Review of Last Week

Last week we discussed **red flags**. These are signs that we might soon encounter a problem, or are already in a problem situation. Knowing our red flags gives us an opportunity to pick some strategies so we can manage the problem situation with skill. A big part of this is keeping our problem orientation positive!

There are 3 types of red flags:

- Personal Style Pitfalls
- Problematic Contexts
- Early Warning Signs

### Today's Focus

The focus of today's meeting will be on introducing Problem Orientation strategies that can be used to keep ourselves calm and our problem orientation positive.



### Reviewing Home Practice

1. Monitoring Problem Orientation II
  2. Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
-

## Meeting 4 Content

### Problem Orientation – Management Strategies

Now that we have talked about the importance of identifying **red flags**, it's time to talk about what to do next.

- If the red flag is a heads up to  going towards the red zone,
- The Problem Orientation **Strategy Toolbox** lists some  strategies that we can use to keep our problem orientation positive. These **strategies** can help us get back to the blue/green zone.

Using these **strategies** can help grow our confidence and optimism. They can help us coach ourselves through the rocky territory of the problem so that we can shift towards a positive problem orientation. We stay out of the red zone and avert a coping breakdown.

In general, the goal is to respond sooner rather than later, because the sooner you prepare for and anticipate a possible breakdown, the more likely your efforts will be successful.

#### ***For example:***

*Brian's wife had a family reunion coming up and he was getting really nervous. The event was pretty far away, and he was worried that such a long car ride would make his chronic fatigue even worse. Plus, he generally did not enjoy spending time with his wife's family. He found them to be inconsiderate and dismissive of his fatigue, which had led to arguments and sore feelings in the past. At the same time, Brian wanted to be supportive towards his wife, and wished he could have a better relationship with her family.*

*He recognized his red flags. His **personal style pitfalls** of being somewhat short-tempered and very sensitive interfered with his ability to connect with them and enjoy himself. He also knew that his fatigue was a **problematic context** making situations more difficult. Rather than accuse his wife of being insensitive to his needs, he used **problem orientation strategies** instead: (1) He used positive **self-talk** to remind himself to breathe and to appreciate his wife. That cleared his head and he decided to plan in rest breaks, pack heating pads, and have the option of staying at a motel at the halfway point if needed. Seeing his red flags – before his trip even started – helped him use strategies to calm down. That allowed him to think clearly and plan for ways to make the trip easier.*

It helps to have a **Toolbox**, or series of cognitive, behavioral, and self-soothing strategies at hand – you never know when you might need your wrench or tape measure!

**Your Personal Problem Orientation Strategy Toolbox**, on the next page, is a list of options to consider using in order to help manage your problem orientation and nudge it towards the positive side. As you look at the toolbox, ask yourself:

- Which strategies might work for you?
- What additional tools would be helpful to *add* to your toolbox?
- What *obstacles* do you anticipate in using these tools?







## PROBLEM ORIENTATION TOOLBOX

### **COGNITIVE / SELF-TALK STRATEGIES**

- “It may take me longer, but I can still do it”
- “Let it go, this will pass”
- “Is there another way to look at this situation? What am I missing?”
- “What would *Bobby* do?”
- “I’ve solved issues like this before”
- “When I am **H**ungry, **A**ngry, **L**onely or **T**ired – **HALT!**”
- “My perceptions may be distorted – Look for the evidence”
- “Take it step by step; I can do this”
- “Problems are part of life for everyone.”
- “Am I using all-or-nothing thinking?”
- “Is this a situation requiring *acceptance* or *change*?”
- 

### **BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES / THINGS YOU CAN DO**

- Leave the scene, walk away
- Count to 10
- Distract myself (e.g., watch a movie, listen to music, call a friend, play with the dog)
- Use a worksheet
- Prayer
- Journal
- Go outdoors, be in nature
- Go to a Veterans’ group (e.g., VFW, VA, etc.)
- Exercise or stretch
- Go for a bike ride
- Call a support person
- Do something self-loving (e.g., eat a healthy meal, say something kind to myself)
- Help someone else who is need
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### **SELF-SOOTHING / BODY-BASED STRATEGIES**

- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Deep breathing
- Guided imagery: Beach, Forest, Country road
- Engage senses (e.g., aromatherapy, splash face with cold water, take warm bath)
- Massage neck and shoulders
- Meditation
- Make a cup of aromatic tea, or have a special comforting food
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# PROBLEM ORIENTATION TOOLBOX

## **COGNITIVE / SELF-TALK STRATEGIES**

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## **BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES / THINGS YOU CAN DO**

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## **SELF-SOOTHING / BODY-BASED STRATEGIES**

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## Pain Management Strategies

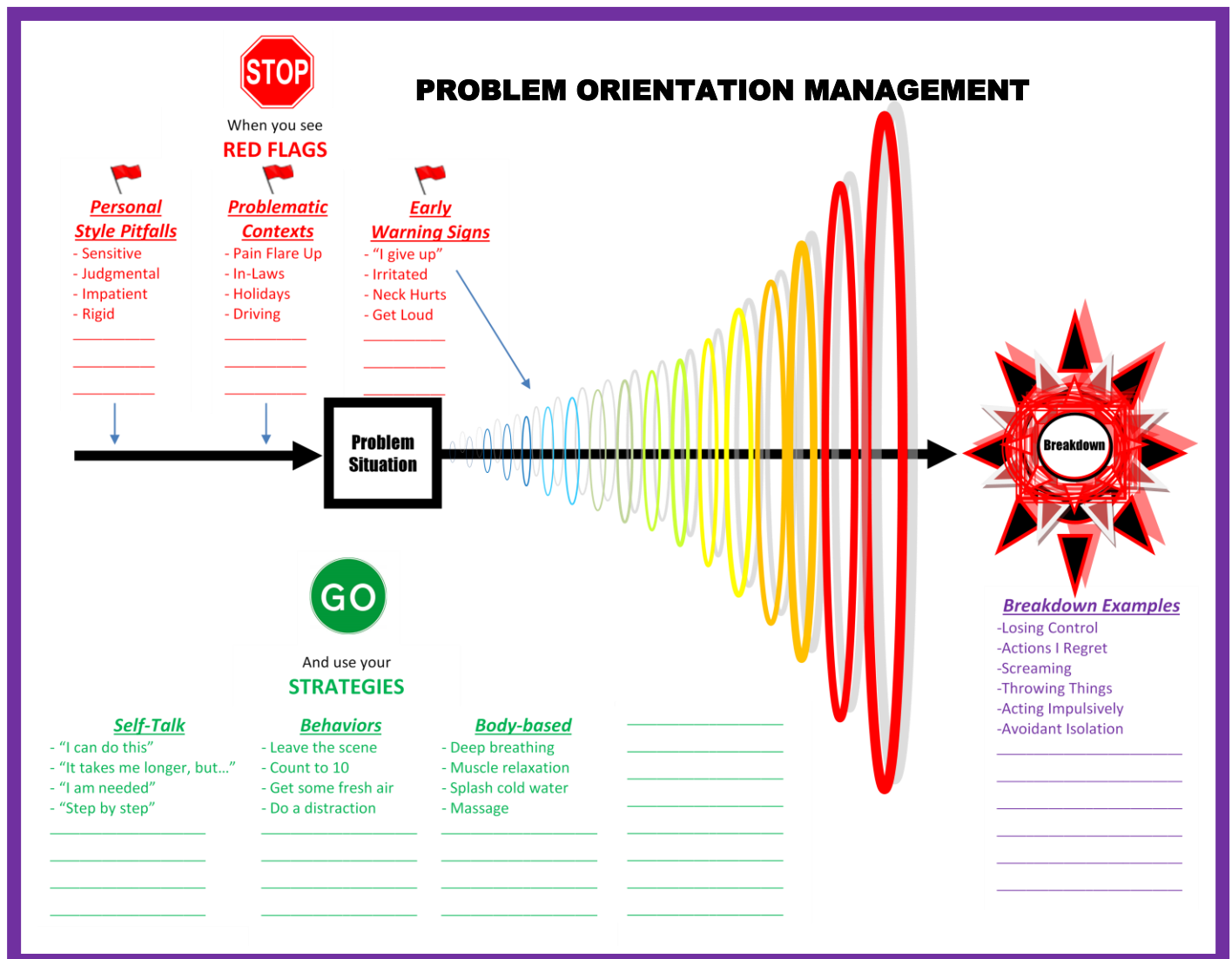
People who experience pain face additional challenges in managing problem orientation. Because of this, adding pain management strategies to the toolbox is an idea worth considering! See the appendix for a list of pain management strategies you may want to consider adding to your toolbox if chronic pain is a challenge for you.

## Avoiding a Coping Breakdown

The reason we use problem orientation strategies is to avoid having a *problem* turn into a *breakdown* of coping skills.

The way to do that is:

- Know your red flags so they can alert you to 
- Then, have a list of strategies so you can  and use them to calm down and cope.



## Acceptance

Using the strategies above can help you manage what is within your control, and work towards living the best possible life. However, what about those things that are not within your control? This is where acceptance plays an important role. Acceptance means understanding that there are some things that are not in your control, and being open to these experiences in the present moment (versus struggling against them). The following questions will help you reflect on the role acceptance plays in your own life.

What does acceptance mean to you? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What are some things in your life that are not within your control? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What is the cost of continuing to fight against these things that are not within your control? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What would it be like to accept these experiences? \_\_\_\_\_

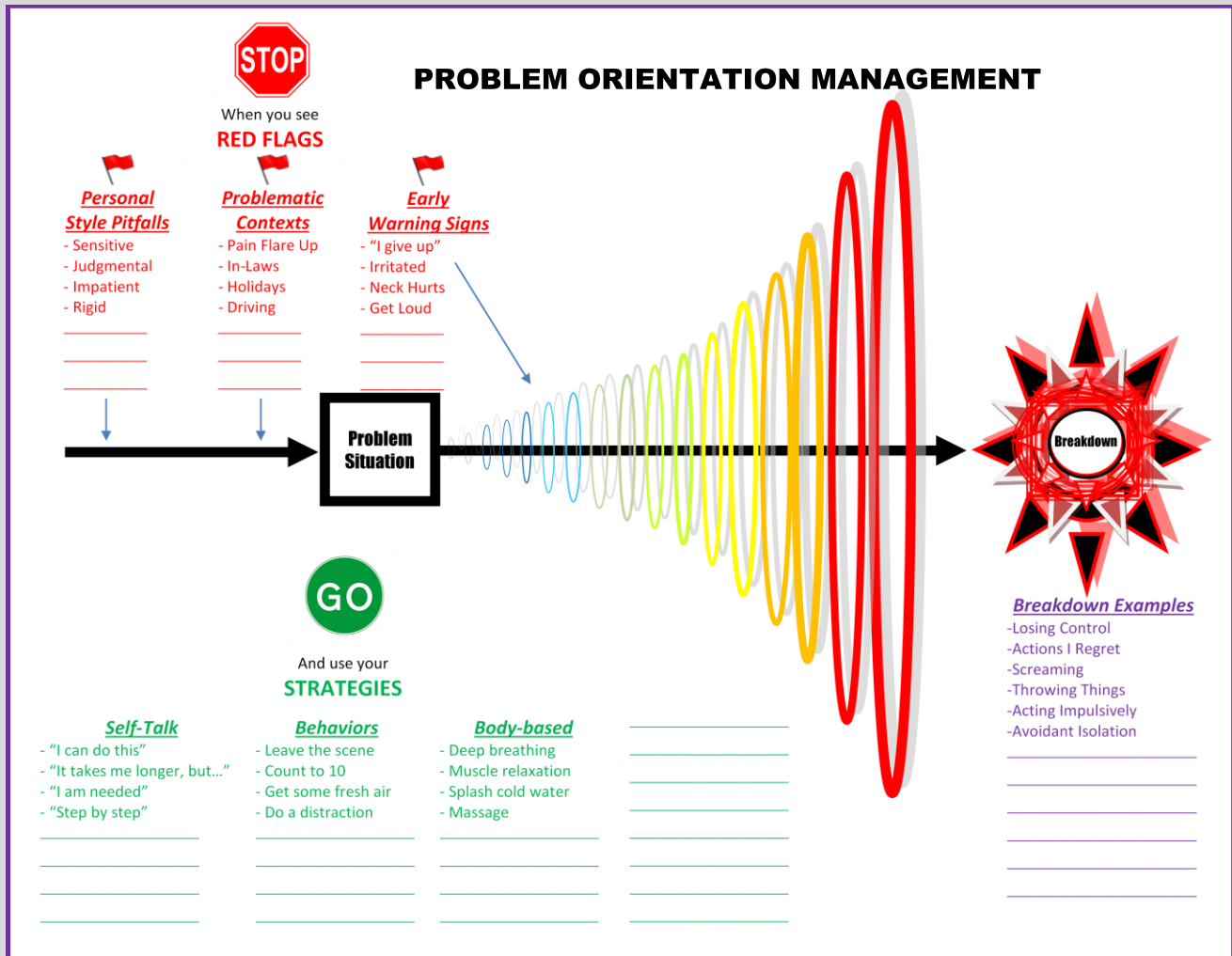
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## Practice

Please fill out the “Monitoring Problem Orientation III” form on the next page. To fill out the form, over the next week:

- Identify what the problem was.
- Notice what kind of reactions you had to the problem.
- Were you able to notice your **red flags**?
- What was your problem orientation like?
- Which **Strategies** from the Problem Orientation Toolbox helped keep you positive and in control?

# Home Assignment: Monitoring Problem Orientation III



## Problem Orientation Monitoring III:

What was the problem: \_\_\_\_\_

When did it happen: \_\_\_\_\_

Did I notice any **RED FLAGS**: \_\_\_\_\_

**Personal Style Pitfalls**: \_\_\_\_\_

**Problematic Contexts**: \_\_\_\_\_

**Warning Signs**: \_\_\_\_\_

What was my emotional reaction: \_\_\_\_\_

Was my Problem Orientation positive, negative, in between: \_\_\_\_\_

What Problem Orientation strategies helped: \_\_\_\_\_

## Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities

*Goals & Activities that may be worth adding to your day*

### GOALS FROM HEALTH COACHING

- Meditating
- Yoga
- Eating a good, healthy meal
- Exercising
- Taking a walk or going hiking
- Connecting with a friend
- Drink more water
- Stretching exercises
- Learn about tai chi – (YouTube)
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Keep food log for Mediterranean diet
- Walk around block after dinner
- Replace chips with celery and carrots
- Use stairs instead of elevator
- Home exercise: squats, hand weights, wall pushups
- Challenge negative thoughts daily
- Reward self with massage
- Use consistent bed time
- Add berries to breakfast
- Use stationery bike
- Spend time socializing with Veterans
- Take warm bath before bed
- Pick a class to take
- Cook at home at least 5 nights
- Practice 2 new relaxation techniques
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### POSITIVE ACTIVITIES

- Playing a musical instrument
- Playing with children or grandchildren
- Working on machines (cars, bikes, etc.)
- Riding a bike or motorcycle
- Going out for coffee
- Taking a picture
- Eating out
- Doing a favor for someone
- Bird watching
- Watching a sunrise or sunset
- Going to a religious service/ceremony
- Spending time with friends
- Listening to the sounds of nature
- Volunteering
- Golfing
- Going to the beach
- Doing art work
- Studying religious or spiritual readings
- Painting, woodworking, or other craft
- Going to a sports event
- Listening to music
- Boating/fishing
- Giving a compliment
- Camping
- Solving a problem, crossword, etc.
- Going on a picnic
- Walking a dog
- Going to a party
- Cooking or baking
- Taking a trip
- Visiting others
- Bowling
- Gardening or yard work
- Going on a date
- Sitting in the sun
- 
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## Home Assignment: Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

Activity	When did you do the activity?	Achieved (If yes, ✓)	If not achieved, what got in the way?
1.			
2.			
3.			

#### **Meeting 4 Summary:**

- Identified ways to manage challenges to problem orientation.
- Added additional strategies to Problem Orientation Toolbox.

#### **Home Assignment:**

- Problem Orientation Monitoring III exercise
- Choose 3 Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities; keep track of them on the "Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities."

#### **Plan for Next Week:**

- Next meeting to take place on (date & time): \_\_\_\_\_

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# **PST for GWI**

## **Session 5:** Problem-Solving Styles

## MEETING 5

### Problem-Solving Styles

#### Objectives:

- Check-in
- Problem-Solving Styles
  - Impulsive
  - Avoidant
  - Planful
- What is ***your typical*** problem-solving style?
  - Do you use different styles in different situations?
- Planful Style uses ***5 logical steps*** to **S-O-L-V-E** the problem
  - **S** – State the problem and goal
  - **O** – Options are identified
  - **L** – List the pros and cons of each option
  - **V** – Visualize steps to try the chosen option
  - **E** – Evaluate the success: do you need to redo or revise?
- Weekly Goals & Activities

#### Handouts:

- My Roadmap
- PS Worksheet
- List of Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
- Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

## **MEETING 5: Problem-Solving Styles**

### **Check-in**

#### **Review of Last Week**

Last week we talked about the ways in which GWI symptoms can make it difficult to maintain a positive orientation towards problems or challenges. We also discussed strategies to stay emotionally regulated through use of your toolbox.

#### **Today's Focus**

The focus of today's meeting will be to introduce the 3 "Problem-Solving Styles," and identify the one that is best for solving problems.

#### **More About Problem Orientation**

We continue to pay attention to Problem Orientation – which is the 1<sup>st</sup> component of PST – throughout the entire problem-solving process. Managing difficult emotions, maintaining a sense of hope and keeping a positive attitude (all parts of Problem Orientation) will help us as we go through the 5 problem-solving steps, which is the 2<sup>nd</sup> component. Because of this, Problem Orientation skills are woven into all 12 meetings.

#### **Reviewing Home Practice**

- 1. Monitoring Problem Orientation III**
  - 2. Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities**
-

## Meeting 5 Content

For the past few meetings, we have been focusing on the idea of “problem orientation” and how to keep it positive.

“Problem orientation,” the first component of problem-solving, describes our **relationship** to problem situations – how we are **oriented** around problems.

How would you describe what Problem Orientation means?

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Today, we will add the idea of “problem solving style.” This is the second component of problem-solving. It refers to what we actually **do** about the problem.

### REFERENCE CHECK ☒

**Problem Orientation:** Attitudes, expectations, and beliefs around your ability to solve a problem (Can be negative, positive, or in between).

**Problem-solving Style:** What kind of approach you typically take when a problem occurs. What do you do? (Are you Avoidant? Impulsive? Planful?)

There are 3 styles that people use when they try to solve problems. These are: **avoidant**, **impulsive**, and **planful**.

*Poor problem-solving is usually caused by avoiding problems or making impulsive decisions.*

For many people, one of their **personal style pitfalls** is that they tend to be **avoidant** or **impulsive** decision-makers.

Good problem-solving typically uses a **planful** style.

# PROBLEM SOLVING STYLES

## **AVOIDANT STYLE**

- Putting off solving problems until “later” but doesn’t actually go back to the problem and solve it
- Being passive
- Hoping the problem will go away on its own
- Hoping someone else will fix the problem
- Denying the problem exists at all
- “Analysis paralysis”

## **IMPULSIVE STYLE**

- Goes with first idea that comes to mind
- Reflexively reacts to situation rather than making a considered response
- Does a quick fix
- Can be incomplete and careless
- Emphasis on the short-term goal

## **PLANFUL STYLE**

- Thoughtful
- Organized
- Identifies both short-term & long-term goals
- May take additional time and effort
- Uses a Positive Problem Orientation. Able to manage frustration and maintain hopeful attitude about ability to solve problem
- Able to ask questions like:
  - “What do I *really* want from this situation?”
  - “Am I missing something?”
  - “Will this problem look different when I’m not in pain?”
  - “Does the other person have a valid perspective that I am not seeing?”
  - “Is there some way we can both get something we want from this situation?”
  - “Are there additional options I should consider?”
  - “How urgent is this situation? Can I wait to act?”
- Follows a step-by-step approach:
  - (1) Defines the problem, sets up goals
  - (2) Brainstorms a set of possible options
  - (3) Examines likely pros and cons of each option
  - (4) Implements the chosen option one step at a time
  - (5) Evaluates success, learns from experience, makes another go at it

### In-Meeting Exercise A:

- Practice identifying each problem solving style using the example below:

#### Read the following example about Joe.

*Joe has chronic fatigue and IBS. His symptoms makes it difficult for him to do household chores, like mowing the lawn. Joe defines his problem as: "I take pride in my house and I really need to mow my lawn, but my GWI symptoms are getting in my way."*

### Avoidant Style

If Joe were to use an avoidant style, he might just lie on the couch and watch T.V. to distract himself from the whole thing. Why would he adopt this style? Well, if Joe is feeling bad about himself because he has trouble getting household tasks done and is in the habit of avoiding things that make him feel bad, he will probably use this style . The avoidant style might make Joe feel better temporarily, but the actual problem (the overgrown yard) will keep getting worse, and so will his negative thoughts and feelings in the long run.

This is different from *planful avoidance* which is when you take a temporary break and then come back to solve the problem. *Planful avoidance* can be a good thing; but an avoidant style is usually not.

*How might planful avoidance be helpful for you? How might an avoidant style not be helpful?*

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From your own experience, please describe a time when you approached a problem with an **avoidant style**. *What were the advantages? Disadvantages?*

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## Impulsive Style

If Joe were to use an impulsive style, he would probably immediately mow the entire lawn, pushing himself past his limits. He would **not** take the time to think through the consequences of his actions. *How is being spontaneous different from being impulsive?*

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From your own experience, please describe a time when you approached a problem with an **impulsive style**? What were the positive and negative consequences?

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It's normal to feel pulled to use an avoidant or impulsive style at times. How might problem orientation tools help you be less avoidant and less impulsive?

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## Planful Style

In order for Joe to use a planful style, it would be helpful for him to recognize his red flags, and then use his problem orientation management strategies.

For example, if Joe recognizes that thinking about mowing his lawn triggers some of his **early warning signs (e.g., getting tense in his neck and chest, pacing around his house, having thoughts about being a burden, and being overly critical on himself)**, he can then use some strategies to calm down and think more clearly (e.g., practicing muscle relaxation, and using self-talk to remind himself that while chronic pain may make things more difficult for him, he is still a useful person and capable of solving problems).

Once Joe's problem orientation becomes more positive and hopeful, he can more clearly see the problem, brainstorm possible solutions, evaluate those solutions, and pick the most effective one. For example, after thinking through some possible

options, Joe might decide to divide his yardwork into smaller pieces, so that he can do a little at a time. What kinds of positive and negative *consequences* are there with this planful kind of solution?

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From your own experience, please describe a time when you approached a problem with a **planful style**.

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What can make it hard to use a planful style?

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### What is your go-to Problem-Solving Style?

People often use a variety of styles depending upon the situation, but is there one style that you tend to use more than the others?

	Problem-Solving Styles		
	Avoidant	Impulsive	Planful
✓ Check your style			

What problem orientation tools could you use to help you get back on the planful track when you are *avoiding* your problems? Or using an *impulsive* style? (Your problem orientation toolbox can give you some ideas!)

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## Steps to Use a Planful Style

1. First, identify if you are using an avoidant or impulsive style, and use strategies to help you use a planful style. Use the My Roadmap handout on the next page to develop your own personal roadmap to success.
2. Second, follow a step-by-step, logical approach to solving problems. This approach is outlined below. We will talk about each of these steps in more detail over the next few weeks. If you have trouble remembering the steps, remember that you need to **S-O-L-V-E** the problem!

### **S** – *State the problem and set up goals.*

The first step is to try and define the actual problem. We need to figure out what we really want out of a situation to avoid solving the “wrong” problem. Once the problem is defined, goals can be identified. A goal is a desired result that directly follows the problem definition.

### **O** – *Options.*

Brainstorm all possible options and solutions. It is critical to think of many options or activities that will help you accomplish your goals. This is sometimes called “brainstorming.”

### **L** – *List the pros and cons of each solution, and pick the best one.*

Evaluate the options by looking at the Pros and Cons of each. We do this by looking at the likely consequences of each option. Once all options have been evaluated, one is selected to try first.

### **V** – *Visualize the steps you need to take.*

It’s best to develop a step-by-step approach for what you need to do to carry out your solution. Take the time to plan out exactly what you need to do to make your solution a reality. Visualize each step before you act!

### **E** – *Evaluate your success.*

Next you will measure how successful the solution was. If it was effective and it helps you reach your goal, you have successfully solved the problem. If the solution did not help you reach your goal, think about what you have learned about the problem. How can that knowledge help you try something else that might work better?

### **In-Meeting Exercise B:**

The “My Roadmap” worksheet on the next page, is a great way to summarize the major steps of Problem Solving in a way that is customized to you:

- *Problem Orientation:* What are your **red** flags? What **strategies** can you use to make your problem orientation more positive?
- *Problem Solving Style:* Identify your style and ways to use a planful style more regularly.

Let’s fill out the “My Roadmap” form together now.

# MY ROADMAP

## **MY RED FLAGS**



MY PERSONAL STYLE PITFALLS

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐



MY PROBLEMATIC CONTEXTS

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐



MY WARNING SIGNS

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

## **MY PROBLEM ORIENTATION STRATEGIES**



MY COGNITIVE / SELF-TALK STRATEGIES

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐



MY BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES / THINGS I CAN DO

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐



MY SELF-SOOTHING / BODY-BASED STRATEGIES

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

## **MY PROBLEM-SOLVING STYLE**

- WHICH IS MY "GO TO" STYLE?
  - ☐ Avoidant
  - ☐ Impulsive
  - ☐ Planful
- IN WHAT TYPES OF SITUATIONS DO I USE A PLANFUL STYLE MOST CONSISTENTLY?
  - ☐
  - ☐
  - ☐
- HOW CAN I USE THE PLANFUL STYLE MORE REGULARLY?
  - ☐
  - ☐
  - ☐
  - ☐
  - ☐

### **In-Meeting Exercise C:**

On the next page is the Problem Solving Worksheet. This is the most important worksheet of the PST treatment, because it includes all the concepts of problem-solving in one place.



- ✓ The **top box** lets you identify the problem.
- ✓ The **middle box** focuses on problem orientation.
- ✓ The **bottom box** spells out the 5 planful problem-solving steps that make up the planful style.

Let's fill out the first two boxes of the Problem Solving Worksheet on the next page together now.

# PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked


## HOW POSITIVE or NEGATIVE WAS YOUR PROBLEM ORIENTATION?

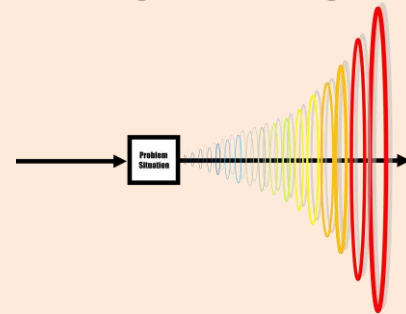
- ☐ What were your attitudes, beliefs and expectations?
- ☐ How much of your reaction was driven by emotion? Were your emotions regulated or unregulated?
- ☐ What  **Red Flags** did you notice in order to  ?

Personal Style Pitfalls?

Problematic Contexts?

Early Warning Signs?

- ☐ What **Strategies** did you use to  regain control?



## STEPS to **SOLVE** the PROBLEM

### 1. **S**tate the Problem & Goal:

Initial: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Revised: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. **O**ptions:

### 3. **L**ist Pros & Cons:

	3. <b>L</b> ist Pros & Cons:	
	Pros (+)	Cons (-)

Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. **V**isualize the steps:



- 
- 
- 

### 5. **E**valuate success – Need to redo or revise?

# PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked


## HOW POSITIVE or NEGATIVE WAS YOUR PROBLEM ORIENTATION?

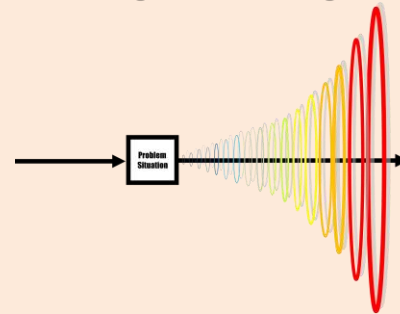
- ☐ What were your attitudes, beliefs and expectations?
- ☐ How much of your reaction was driven by emotion? Were your emotions regulated or unregulated?
- ☐ What  **Red Flags** did you notice in order to  ?

Personal Style Pitfalls?

Problematic Contexts?

Early Warning Signs?

- ☐ What **Strategies** did you use to  regain control?



## STEPS to **SOLVE** the **PROBLEM**

### 1. **S**ate the Problem & Goal:

Initial: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Revised: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. **O**ptions:

### 3. **L**ist Pros & Cons:

	3. <b>L</b> ist Pros & Cons:	
	Pros (+)	Cons (-)

Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. **V**isualize the steps:

- 
- 
- 

### 5. **E**valuate success – Need to redo or revise?

## Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities

*Goals & Activities that may be worth adding to your day*

### GOALS FROM HEALTH COACHING

- Meditating
- Yoga
- Eating a good, healthy meal
- Exercising
- Taking a walk or going hiking
- Connecting with a friend
- Drink more water
- Stretching exercises
- Learn about tai chi – (YouTube)
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Keep food log for Mediterranean diet
- Walk around block after dinner
- Replace chips with celery and carrots
- Use stairs instead of elevator
- Home exercise: squats, hand weights, wall pushups
- Challenge negative thoughts daily
- Reward self with massage
- Use consistent bed time
- Add berries to breakfast
- Use stationery bike
- Spend time socializing with Veterans
- Take warm bath before bed
- Pick a class to take
- Cook at home at least 5 nights
- Practice 2 new relaxation techniques
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### POSITIVE ACTIVITIES

- Playing a musical instrument
- Playing with children or grandchildren
- Working on machines (cars, bikes, etc.)
- Riding a bike or motorcycle
- Going out for coffee
- Taking a picture
- Eating out
- Doing a favor for someone
- Bird watching
- Watching a sunrise or sunset
- Going to a religious service/ceremony
- Spending time with friends
- Listening to the sounds of nature
- Volunteering
- Golfing
- Going to the beach
- Doing art work
- Studying religious or spiritual readings
- Painting, woodworking, or other craft
- Going to a sports event
- Listening to music
- Boating/fishing
- Giving a compliment
- Camping
- Solving a problem, crossword, etc.
- Going on a picnic
- Walking a dog
- Going to a party
- Cooking or baking
- Taking a trip
- Visiting others
- Bowling
- Gardening or yard work
- Going on a date
- Sitting in the sun
- 
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## Home Assignment: Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

Activity	When did you do the activity?	Achieved (If yes, ✓)	If not achieved, what got in the way?
1.			
2.			
3.			



### Meeting 5 Summary

- Identified 3 problem-solving styles:
  - Avoidant
  - Impulsive
  - Planful

### Home Assignment:

- Problem-solving Worksheet (first 2 boxes only)
- Choose 3 Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities; keep track of them on the “Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities.”

### Plan for Next Week:

- Next meeting to take place on (date & time): \_\_\_\_\_

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# PST for GWI

## Session 6:

Planful Style to **S O L V E**:

**'S'** State the Problem & Goal

## MEETING 6

### Planful Style: **S-O-L-V-E**

**S** = "State the problem and goal(s)"

#### Objectives:

- Check-in
- Learn to "State the problem and goal(s)"
- Weekly Goals & Activities

#### Handouts:

- PS Worksheet
- List of Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
- Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

## MEETING 6: Planful Problem-Solving:

**S** = "State the problem and goal(s)"

### Check-in

#### Review of Last Week

Last week we talked about the 3 Problem-solving Styles

- Avoidant
- Impulsive
- Planful

#### Today's Focus

The focus of today's meeting will be to introduce the first step of planful problem solving. It is the **S** step of the **SOLVE** process. **S** is to "State the problem and goal(s)."

#### More About Problem Orientation

We need to honor the emotions we feel when we experience chronic symptoms, trauma or disappointment; but we also need to separate the objective reality (the facts) from these understandable subjective emotional reactions.

#### Reviewing Home Practice

2. Problem-solving Worksheet
  3. Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
-

## Meeting 6 Content

### Planful Problem-Solving Steps: S – State the Problem and Goal

As we have been discussing, how we see a problem will direct our thinking about what our goals are.

#### REFERENCE CHECK ☒

When you **define the problem**, you clearly state the conflict you are experiencing, including the obstacle that is getting in the way.

Once you have a clear and accurate problem definition, you can identify your **goal**.

People aren't usually aware that they are making Problem Definitions or goals; they are just reacting naturally to situations. Nevertheless, the way we see and understand these situations lead to the choices we make about how to solve the problems. You will practice becoming more aware of your reactions and beliefs. This will help you choose a Problem Definition that will better help you achieve what you actually want to achieve. Sometimes the first definition we come up with is not the most accurate or helpful. We need to pause and think about whether we need to revise our problem definitions.

### In-Meeting Exercise A:

Read the following example about Jack.

Jack is on the phone. He is trying to contact his doctor about a new acupuncture treatment for his lower back pain. He is transferred from one person to the next and kept on hold for a long time. He begins to notice that his back pain increases from sitting too long. This causes him to get very frustrated. He starts having thoughts that *"my doctor and her office are horrible."* He continues to think about how it's probably useless to try this new treatment anyway.

In his frustration, Jack develops the **problem definition**: *"I want help but I'm stuck on hold in this telephone nightmare! My doctor is awful!"* That kind of problem definition could lead to the goal of ending the nightmare. Jack might hang up and just avoid the doctor. But if Jack is able to stop and think about what he really wants, he might come up with a **revised problem definition** like this: *"I need to get information about acupuncture but I'm getting frustrated and I'm in pain."*

### How could Jack revise his Problem Definition?

#### Checking your Problem Orientation

The first step in revising a problem definition is checking your **Problem Orientation**. If Jack can first use a more **Positive Problem Orientation**, he can better talk himself through the problem calmly.

What sorts of things do you tell yourself when using a **negative** problem orientation?

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One way to develop a more Positive Problem Orientation is to identify and replace **negative** and catastrophic language:

- ✗ *"This is the worst!"*
- ✗ *"I can't stand it."*
- ✗ *"Why does this stuff always happen to me?!"*
- ✗ *"I'll never figure this out."*

If Jack uses positive, hopeful and realistic language instead, he can reframe problems as challenges. Jack can develop a more Positive Problem Orientation by reminding himself of **positive** facts:

- ✓ *"Challenges are a normal part of life."*
- ✓ *"Most problems are solvable one way or another."*
- ✓ *"It may take a little time and work, but I should be able to solve this."*
- ✓ *"I may not have found the solution yet, but I'm pretty sure it's here somewhere."*
- ✓ *"I have solved problems like this in the past."*

What sort of things do you tell yourself when using a more **positive** problem orientation?

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What makes it hard to do this?

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## Clearly State the Problem

A problem is a conflict that does not have an immediately obvious solution. Remember, there are three types of problems:

- Conflict between 2 of your own goals,
- Conflict between your goal and someone else's goal, and
- When your original plan is blocked and you can't think of other options.

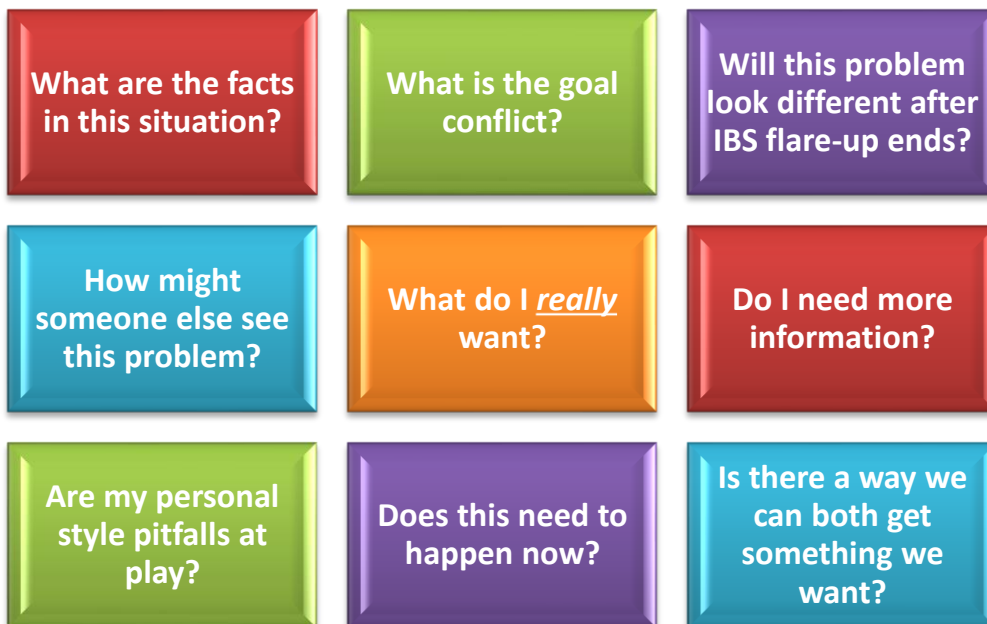
Identify the obstacle right in the problem definition.

The way to do this is to add the word "**but**"

### Problem Definition Examples:

- "I want to go to my cousin's wedding **but** I can't afford the plane ticket."
- "I want to shovel snow **but** I'm afraid I'll pull my back out."
- "My daughter wants her son to come live with me **but** I don't have the energy anymore for a 6-year-old boy in my house."
- "My wife tries to be nice when she says she understands my pain **but** there's no way she can and I wish she would stop saying it!"

Also, to define the problem, we need to think flexibly and open up our thinking. We can promote flexibility by **asking questions**. Shake things up. Suggestions include:



### Set up Goals

Once you have defined a problem, the next part is to define your goal for that problem. What would you like to see changed about your problem? If your problem was changed, what would you be able to achieve? Your goal should flow naturally from your problem definition.

For example, if Jack's problem is "I need to get information about this new treatment but I'm getting frustrated and I'm in pain," then his goal might be **to manage his frustration and pain while he waits for the information he needs.**

### In-Meeting Exercise B:



Let's use the "Problem-Solving Worksheet" on the following page using a problem from real life. We will fill out the first 2 boxes, and the Step **S**: "State the Problem & Goal," of the third box.



# PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked


## HOW POSITIVE or NEGATIVE WAS YOUR PROBLEM ORIENTATION?

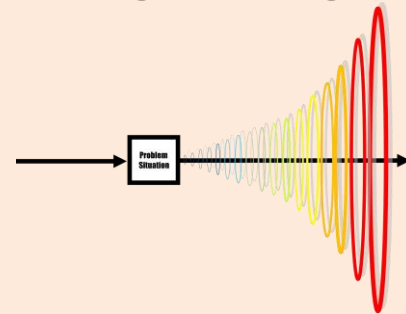
- ☐ What were your attitudes, beliefs and expectations?
- ☐ How much of your reaction was driven by emotion? Were your emotions regulated or unregulated?
- ☐ What  **Red Flags** did you notice in order to  ?

Personal Style Pitfalls?

Problematic Contexts?

Early Warning Signs?

- ☐ What **Strategies** did you use to  regain control?



## STEPS to **SOLVE** the PROBLEM

### 1. **S**ate the Problem & Goal:

Initial: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Revised: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. **O**ptions:

### 3. **L**ist Pros & Cons:

	3. <b>L</b> ist Pros & Cons:	
	Pros (+)	Cons (-)

Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. **V**isualize the steps:




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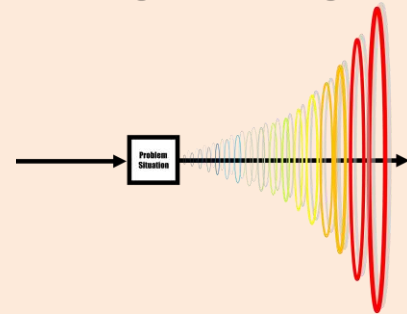
### 5. **E**valuate success – Need to redo or revise?

# PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked

## HOW POSITIVE or NEGATIVE WAS YOUR PROBLEM ORIENTATION?

- ☐ What were your attitudes, beliefs and expectations?
- ☐ How much of your reaction was driven by emotion? Were your emotions regulated or unregulated?
- ☐ What  **Red Flags** did you notice in order to  **STOP** ?
- Personal Style Pitfalls?
- Problematic Contexts?
- Early Warning Signs?
- ☐ What **Strategies** did you use to  **GO** regain control?



## STEPS to **SOLVE** the **PROBLEM**

### 1. **S**ate the Problem & Goal:

Initial: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Revised: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. **O**ptions:

### 3. **L**ist Pros & Cons:

	3. <b>L</b> ist Pros & Cons:	
	Pros (+)	Cons (-)

Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. **V**isualize the steps:

- 
- 
- 

### 5. **E**valuate success – Need to redo or revise?

# Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities

*Goals & Activities that may be worth adding to your day*

## GOALS FROM HEALTH COACHING

- Meditating
- Yoga
- Eating a good, healthy meal
- Exercising
- Taking a walk or going hiking
- Connecting with a friend
- Drink more water
- Stretching exercises
- Learn about tai chi – (YouTube)
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Keep food log for Mediterranean diet
- Walk around block after dinner
- Replace chips with celery and carrots
- Use stairs instead of elevator
- Home exercise: squats, hand weights, wall pushups
- Challenge negative thoughts daily
- Reward self with massage
- Use consistent bed time
- Add berries to breakfast
- Use stationery bike
- Spend time socializing with Veterans
- Take warm bath before bed
- Pick a class to take
- Cook at home at least 5 nights
- Practice 2 new relaxation techniques
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## POSITIVE ACTIVITIES

- Playing a musical instrument
- Playing with children or grandchildren
- Working on machines (cars, bikes, etc.)
- Riding a bike or motorcycle
- Going out for coffee
- Taking a picture
- Eating out
- Doing a favor for someone
- Bird watching
- Watching a sunrise or sunset
- Going to a religious service/ceremony
- Spending time with friends
- Listening to the sounds of nature
- Volunteering
- Golfing
- Going to the beach
- Doing art work
- Studying religious or spiritual readings
- Painting, woodworking, or other craft
- Going to a sports event
- Listening to music
- Boating/fishing
- Giving a compliment
- Camping
- Solving a problem, crossword, etc.
- Going on a picnic
- Walking a dog
- Going to a party
- Cooking or baking
- Taking a trip
- Visiting others
- Bowling
- Gardening or yard work
- Going on a date
- Sitting in the sun
- 
-

## Home Assignment: Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

Activity	When did you do the activity?	Achieved (If yes, ✓)	If not achieved, what got in the way?
1.			
2.			
3.			

### Meeting 6 Summary:

- When faced with a problem, we need to clearly define how we see the problem to make sure we are addressing the problem we really want to solve. Often, our first definition doesn't quite capture our concern, so it is a great idea to ask ourselves, "do I need to **re**define the problem?"
- Once we (re)define the problem, we can identify our goal.

### Home Assignment:

- Fill out Problem-solving worksheet(s) based on a problem you actually encountered. Complete up to Step **S**: "State the Problem & Goal."
- Choose 3 Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities; keep track of them on the "Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities."

### Plan for Next Week:

- Next meeting to take place on (date & time): \_\_\_\_\_

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# PST for GWI

## Session 7:

Planful Style to **S O L V E**:

**'O'** Options

**'L'** List Pros & Cons

## MEETING 7

### Planful Style: **S-O-L-V-E**

**O** = Options

**L** = List the pros and cons

#### **Objectives:**

- Check-in
- Review problem orientation and problem definition
- Introduce generating options & listing pros & cons
- Weekly Goals & Activities

#### **Handouts:**

- PS Worksheet
- List of Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
- Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

## MEETING 7: Planful Problem-Solving:

**O** = "Options"

**L** = "List the Pros & Cons and Choose best one"

### Check-in

#### Review of Last Week

Last week we talked about:

- Planful Step **S**: Stating the problem and identifying goals
- Identifying how your problem orientation affects how you see your problems

#### Today's Focus

The focus of today's meeting will be on generating different types of possible solutions to attain your goal. In the **S O L V E** model, we will discuss **O** & **L** today.

#### More About Problem Orientation

A big part of developing a positive problem orientation is having the belief that the problem – or some part of it – may be **solvable**. This is not always easy to do. But by being open to generate possible options that might help the situation, we can sometimes discover choices we didn't originally think of.

#### Reviewing Home Practice

1. Problem-solving Worksheet
  2. Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
-



## Meeting 7 Content:

### Problem-Solving Steps: **O** – Options

After working through the steps of defining the problem and goal, the next step is to generate possible options. This is often called brainstorming. An option is any possible action that gets you closer to your goal.

### Planful Problem-Solving Step: **S** – State the problem and identify goal

#### Problem Definition:

*Devin wants to go to his grandson's football game **but** knows he will regret it.*

#### ***For example:***

**Devin struggles with his breathing and fatigue. He wants to go to his grandson's football game but knows if he goes, he will regret it. It will worsen his symptoms which will be embarrassing and will ruin his week. Thinking about missing the game makes him feel hopeless. He starts to question whether he will ever be able to do the things he likes to do.**

Initially, Devin thought the problem definition was that there's no way that he could attend the football game no matter how much he wanted to do so. He knows the football bleachers are hard and only aggravate his fatigue. He thought that people would think he was frail and exaggerating if he complained. He thought that it was foolish for him to think that he would be able to go given his condition.

Devin realized that he was using a **negative problem orientation**, and was being too critical of himself and his own abilities. Devin tried to think about the problem more positively. Devin took a deep breath. He closed his eyes and tried to calm himself. He replaced negative self-talk, "I can't do anything" with positive self-talk, "It's so nice my family wants me to participate." He tried to think of at least 3 times when things eventually worked out despite his chronic symptoms. He remembered that while he would probably still be uncomfortable during the game, it might be a good distraction and would get him out of the house. And he has been wanting to get out more. This allowed him to develop a more positive problem orientation.

**Revised Problem Definition:** Devin was then able to define the problem like this: *I want to spend more time with my family and to get out of the house, **but** I am afraid of being stuck at the game without a way home if I need to leave early.*

**Goal:** To attend the game and have an **exit strategy** in case I need to leave early.

### Planful Problem-Solving Step: **O** – Options

- Devin’s daughter goes to the game, and Facetimes him so he can participate.
- Devin just goes to the football game – symptoms be damned!
- Devin asks his friend Moe to drive him to the game and makes a plan to attend only 30 minutes of the game.
- Devin goes to his grandson’s football practice before the game to avoid a crowd and brings along his friend Moe or a family member to take him home.
- Devin brings a cushion which will make the seat more comfortable.
- Devin gets some education on using Uber or Lyft, so he can leave if he has to without bothering anyone else.

### Planful Problem-Solving Step: **L** – List Pros and Cons & Pick Best Option

An effective solution is one that accomplishes a pre-determined goal, improves a situation, and/or lessens stress. A good solution will maximize positive consequences and minimize negative ones. Often a doable solution will have both short and long term effects, and we need to identify what they are before making a choice of which solution to try. Once you have looked at all the possible solutions, it’s time to select the solution you think is best based on the list of pros and cons. Do you see this solution as one that shows a high likelihood of you achieving your goal? Do the pros outweigh the cons? You will probably notice that the easiest solution is not always the best solution.

Devin will now think about the pros and cons of each of his generated options. Will the cost of an Uber or Lyft be within Devin’s budget? What is his relationship like with Moe these days? How confident is he that the seat cushion will do the trick? How important is it for him to be there in person (as opposed to using Facetime)?

### In-Meeting Exercise A: Generating **O**ptions & **L**ist Pros/Cons

In our last meeting’s exercise you identified a problem which we used to explore the **S** step of the Planful Style (State the problem and identify goal). In that exercise you identified a problem definition, perhaps revised that problem definition and then finally determined a goal. Let’s use that same goal to brainstorm a number of possible **O**ptions to get closer to your goal. Then, let’s **L**ist the likely advantages (pros) and disadvantages (cons) of putting each of these options into action. Let’s use the Problem-solving Worksheet on the next page to do this.

# PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked


## HOW POSITIVE or NEGATIVE WAS YOUR PROBLEM ORIENTATION?

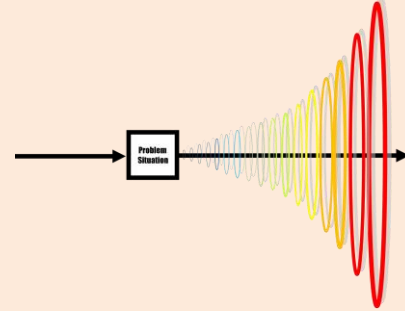
- ☐ What were your attitudes, beliefs and expectations?
- ☐ How much of your reaction was driven by emotion? Were your emotions regulated or unregulated?
- ☐ What  **Red Flags** did you notice in order to  ?

Personal Style Pitfalls?

Problematic Contexts?

Early Warning Signs?

- ☐ What **Strategies** did you use to  regain control?



## STEPS to SOLVE the PROBLEM

### 1. **S**ate the Problem & Goal:

Initial: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Revised: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. **O**ptions:

### 3. **L**ist Pros & Cons:

	3. <b>L</b> ist Pros & Cons:	
	Pros (+)	Cons (-)

Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. **V**isualize the steps:



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### 5. **E**valuate success – Need to redo or revise?

# PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked


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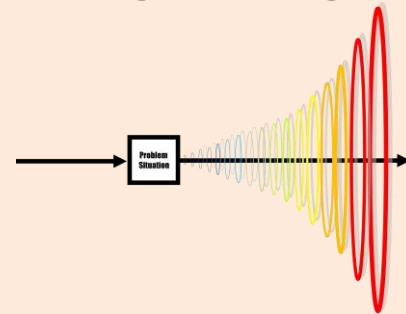
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Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. **V**isualize the steps:

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### 5. **E**valuate success – Need to redo or revise?

## Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities

*Goals & Activities that may be worth adding to your day*

### GOALS FROM HEALTH COACHING

- Meditating
- Yoga
- Eating a good, healthy meal
- Exercising
- Taking a walk or going hiking
- Connecting with a friend
- Drink more water
- Stretching exercises
- Learn about tai chi – (YouTube)
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Keep food log for Mediterranean diet
- Walk around block after dinner
- Replace chips with celery and carrots
- Use stairs instead of elevator
- Home exercise: squats, hand weights, wall pushups
- Challenge negative thoughts daily
- Reward self with massage
- Use consistent bed time
- Add berries to breakfast
- Use stationery bike
- Spend time socializing with Veterans
- Take warm bath before bed
- Pick a class to take
- Cook at home at least 5 nights
- Practice 2 new relaxation techniques
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### POSITIVE ACTIVITIES

- Playing a musical instrument
- Playing with children or grandchildren
- Working on machines (cars, bikes, etc.)
- Riding a bike or motorcycle
- Going out for coffee
- Taking a picture
- Eating out
- Doing a favor for someone
- Bird watching
- Watching a sunrise or sunset
- Going to a religious service/ceremony
- Spending time with friends
- Listening to the sounds of nature
- Volunteering
- Golfing
- Going to the beach
- Doing art work
- Studying religious or spiritual readings
- Painting, woodworking, or other craft
- Going to a sports event
- Listening to music
- Boating/fishing
- Giving a compliment
- Camping
- Solving a problem, crossword, etc.
- Going on a picnic
- Walking a dog
- Going to a party
- Cooking or baking
- Taking a trip
- Visiting others
- Bowling
- Gardening or yard work
- Going on a date
- Sitting in the sun
- 
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## Home Assignment: Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

Activity	When did you do the activity?	Achieved (If yes, ✓)	If not achieved, what got in the way?
1.			
2.			
3.			

### Meeting 7 Summary:

- Coming up with options to problems should be created without restrictions. Brainstorm!
- Using a pro and con list can help rate the likely success of your options. This will help you pick the best one.

### Home Assignment:

- Fill out Problem-solving worksheet(s) based on a problem you actually encountered. Complete Steps
  - **S**: "State the Problem & Goal"
  - **O**: "Options"
  - **L**: "List Pros & Cons and Pick Best One"
- Choose 3 Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities; keep track of them on the "Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities."

### Plan for Next Week:

- Next meeting to take place on (date & time): \_\_\_\_\_

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# PST for GWI

## Session 8:

Planful Style to **S O L V E**:

**'V'** Visualize the Steps

**'E'** Evaluate Success



## MEETING 8

### Planful Style: **S-O-L-V-E**

**V** = Visualize the steps

**E** = Evaluate success

#### **Objectives:**

- Check in
- Review generating options & listing pros & cons
- Introduce visualizing the steps and evaluating your success
- Weekly Activities & Goals

#### **Handouts:**

- PS Worksheet
- List of Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
- Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

## MEETING 8: Planful Problem-Solving:

**V** = "Visualize the steps"

**E** = "Evaluate success"

### Check-in

#### Review of Last Week

Last week we talked about:

- Planful Step **O**: Options, brainstorming as many options as possible
- Planful Step **L**: Listing the pros & cons of each option and choosing one

#### Today's Focus

The focus of today's meeting will be on generating different types of possible solutions to attain your goal. In the **S O L V E** model, we will discuss **V** & **E** today.

#### More About Problem Orientation

If we can keep our problem orientation more positive, our ability to navigate the 5 problem solving steps gets better. Do you agree with this statement? Why, or why not?

#### Reviewing Home Practice

1. Problem-solving Worksheet
  2. Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
-

## Meeting 8 Content

### Planful Problem-Solving Steps: **V** – Visualize the steps

Once a solution is decided upon, it is now the time to visualize steps to implement the solution. Any particular solution can be broken down into smaller, attainable steps.

***For example:***

Let's say Diane's goal is to have more energy. She chose the solution of starting an exercise program. She needs to identify the smaller, attainable steps to begin her program. These small steps can include determining what type of exercise, determining a time to exercise, and setting a gradual exercise progression (e.g., start walking 5 minutes a day.) Small, attainable steps lead to greater success!

What steps can you visualize that might be best for:

- Sidney, who decided the option to switch careers and get a job in security had the most pros and fewest cons.

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- Doris, who decided the option of getting a home care attendant for her mom was the best way to go.

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- Michael, who decided the option of couples counseling made the most sense

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## Planful Problem-Solving Steps: **E** – Evaluate success

We have now reached the final step! We have already gone through the first 4 steps:

**S** – ***State** the problem and set up goals.*

The first step is to try and define the actual problem. We need to figure out what we really want out of a situation to avoid solving the “wrong” problem. Once the problem is defined, goals can be identified. A goal is a desired result that directly follows the problem definition.

**O** – ***Options.***

Brainstorm all possible options and solutions. It is critical to think of many options or activities that will help you accomplish your goals.

**L** – ***List** the pros and cons of each solution, and pick the best one.*

Then the solutions are evaluated by looking at the Pros and Cons. We do this by looking at feasibility and consequences of each possible solution. Once all solutions have been evaluated, one is selected to try first.

**V** – ***Visualize** the steps you need to take.*

You want to develop a step-by-step outline for what you need to do to carry out your solution. Take the time to plan out exactly what you need to do to make your solution a reality.

Now, we need to:

**E** – ***Evaluate** success.* We want to see how it went; to determine if the option we tried was successful. We can measure success by asking questions like these:

- Did the solution achieve the goal?
- Did the consequences of the solution turn out as we expected?
- Did the benefits of the solution turn out as we expected?
- Are we satisfied with the results?

Remember, the answers to these questions won’t always be “Yes,” but we will always get valuable feedback!

## Paying Attention to Your Problem Orientation

It is frustrating and disappointing when our attempt to solve the problem doesn't work.

It can be hard to maintain a positive problem orientation.

But we need to remind ourselves:

- Problems are a normal part of life and the first attempt we make at solving them doesn't usually work.
- Almost all problems have solutions - but it may take a few tries to find the best one.
- When a solution doesn't work out, it gives us a lot of information that will be very helpful in picking a better solution for our next try.
- Again, this is normal. No one gets the best solution the first time all the time.

When we remember these things, we can nudge our problem orientation in a more positive direction!

## Evaluate Success and Make the Next Move

When we get to the "Evaluate" step and ask ourselves, "*Was the option we chose successful?*" sometimes we will be able to answer "yes" and we are done!

But if we are not satisfied with the result, we need to pick a new option. Or implement it differently. Or maybe even redefine the problem in a new way. Here are some helpful questions to consider:

- ✓ Does it make sense to try out a different possible option from the list we already have?
- ✓ Or do we need to generate new options for the possible solution list?
- ✓ Or would it be better to revise the problem definition and goal and then generate a whole new list of possible solutions based on the new goal?
- ✓ What new information do we have about the problem now that we didn't have before?
- ✓ Did we make any assumptions that we now know are incorrect?

***For example:***

William struggles with fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue and IBS. He's been feeling lonely lately and thought it would be good to rekindle some old friendships he had with the guys he had deployed with to Iraq. His **initial problem definition** was that he wanted to get back in touch **but** figured no one was interested because no one had reached out to him lately. He realized how negative that sounded, so he took a deep breath and relaxed. He then was able to **revise the problem definition** to say that he wanted to be back in touch **but** felt overwhelmed by how he would do that. He set up a **goal** of taking at least the first step to getting back in touch with friends. He generated a list of **options** that included reaching out through social networking, calling back a friend who had sent him a Christmas card a couple of years ago, and flying to Florida to join a Desert Shield/Storm cruise. In **listing pros and cons**, William identified that he didn't like social networking and didn't feel up to traveling to Florida for a cruise. He decided to call the friend who sent the card. He **visualized** the steps of finding the card to locate the contact number, and picking a time to call. He was able to reach his buddy and learned that they both had been struggling with similar physical and mental health problems. He realized that he felt less isolated when he realized he wasn't alone. William **evaluated** his problem-solving as successful, but decided he was interested in doing more. Maybe he would get more information about that cruise...



### **In-Meeting Exercise A:**

Let's use the "Problem-Solving Worksheet" on the following page to analyze a problem from real life. Can you think of an example when:



- You identified all the steps necessary to try out the possible option, but when you tried it, it did not work.
- Nonetheless, did the experience help you make a better choice with the second (or third, or fourth...) try at solving the problem?

Let's log that out on the Problem-solving Worksheet on the next page.

# PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked


## HOW POSITIVE or NEGATIVE WAS YOUR PROBLEM ORIENTATION?

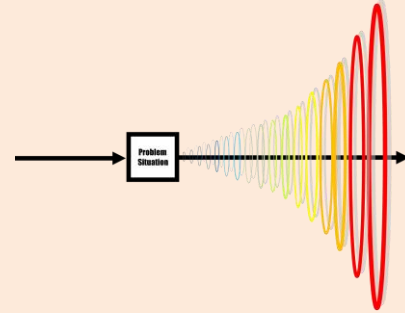
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- ☐ What  **Red Flags** did you notice in order to  ?

Personal Style Pitfalls?

Problematic Contexts?

Early Warning Signs?

- ☐ What **Strategies** did you use to  regain control?



## STEPS to **SOLVE** the PROBLEM

### 1. **S**ate the Problem & Goal:

Initial: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Revised: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. **O**ptions:

### 3. **L**ist Pros & Cons:

	3. <b>L</b> ist Pros & Cons:	
	Pros (+)	Cons (-)

Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. **V**isualize the steps:

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### 5. **E**valuate success – Need to redo or revise?



# PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked


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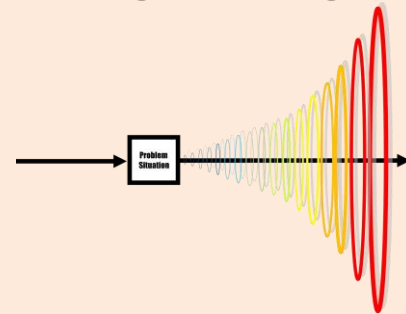
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Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

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- 
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# Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities

*Goals & Activities that may be worth adding to your day*

## GOALS FROM HEALTH COACHING

- Meditating
- Yoga
- Eating a good, healthy meal
- Exercising
- Taking a walk or going hiking
- Connecting with a friend
- Drink more water
- Stretching exercises
- Learn about tai chi – (YouTube)
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Keep food log for Mediterranean diet
- Walk around block after dinner
- Replace chips with celery and carrots
- Use stairs instead of elevator
- Home exercise: squats, hand weights, wall pushups
- Challenge negative thoughts daily
- Reward self with massage
- Use consistent bed time
- Add berries to breakfast
- Use stationery bike
- Spend time socializing with Veterans
- Take warm bath before bed
- Pick a class to take
- Cook at home at least 5 nights
- Practice 2 new relaxation techniques
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## POSITIVE ACTIVITIES

- Playing a musical instrument
- Playing with children or grandchildren
- Working on machines (cars, bikes, etc.)
- Riding a bike or motorcycle
- Going out for coffee
- Taking a picture
- Eating out
- Doing a favor for someone
- Bird watching
- Watching a sunrise or sunset
- Going to a religious service/ceremony
- Spending time with friends
- Listening to the sounds of nature
- Volunteering
- Golfing
- Going to the beach
- Doing art work
- Studying religious or spiritual readings
- Painting, woodworking, or other craft
- Going to a sports event
- Listening to music
- Boating/fishing
- Giving a compliment
- Camping
- Solving a problem, crossword, etc.
- Going on a picnic
- Walking a dog
- Going to a party
- Cooking or baking
- Taking a trip
- Visiting others
- Bowling
- Gardening or yard work
- Going on a date
- Sitting in the sun
- 
-

## Home Assignment: Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

Activity	When did you do the activity?	Achieved (If yes, ✓)	If not achieved, what got in the way?
1.			
2.			
3.			

### Meeting 8 Summary:

- Once you choose a solution, it's helpful if you **visualize** how it could be broken down into small, attainable steps to help ensure success.
- Once you try out the chosen solution, you'll want to **evaluate** its success. If you reached your goal, that's great! If not, it is important to go back and pick a different possible solution to try out, or possibly revise your problem definition.

### Home Assignment:

- Fill out Problem-solving worksheet(s) based on a problem you actually encountered. Complete all parts:
  - **S**: "State the Problem & Goal"
  - **O**: "Options"
  - **L**: "List Pros & Cons and Pick Best One"
  - **V**: "Visualize the steps"
  - **E**: "Evaluate success"
- Choose 3 Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities; keep track of them on the "Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities."

### Plan for Next Week:

- Next meeting to take place on (date & time): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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# **PST for GWI**

## **Session 9:**

### **Practicing Problem-Solving Skills**

## MEETING 9

### Practice using the PST model

#### Objectives:

- Review home practice and the problem-solving model
- In-session problem solving

#### Handouts:

- PS Worksheet
- List of Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
- Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

## MEETING 9: Practice Using the PST Model

### Check-in

### Review of Last Week

Last week we completed the final steps of the **S O L V E** model. When we are able to keep a positive problem orientation **AND** follow the logical **S O L V E** steps, problem solving is most successful.

### Today's Focus

The focus of today's meeting will be to practice using PST skills.

### More About Problem Orientation

What helps you change a negative problem orientation to a positive one? What helps you keep a positive problem orientation positive?

### Reviewing Home Practice

1. Problem-solving Worksheet
  2. Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
-

## Meeting 9 Content

### Review of Problem-Solving Process

- ✓ First, describe **what happened**. Where is the **goal conflict** (internal, external, plan was blocked)?
- ✓ Next, check your **problem orientation**. How positive or negative was your PO? What **red flags** (**personal style pitfalls**, **problematic contexts**, and **early warning signs**) did you notice, and what **strategies** did you use to shift your problem orientation positive if needed?
- ✓ Then, follow the steps to **SOLVE** the problem:
  - **S**tate the problem and Goal
  - **O**ptions to consider
  - **L**ist pros & cons
  - **V**isualize the steps
  - **E**valuate success – need to redo or revise?

### In-Meeting Exercise A:



Let's use the "Problem-Solving Worksheet" on the following page to analyze a problem from real life.



# PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked


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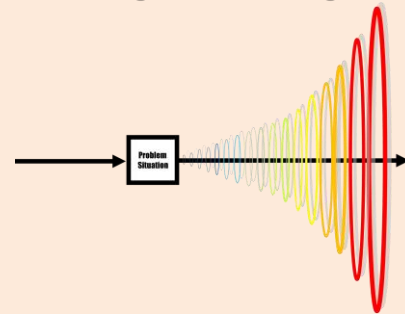
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Personal Style Pitfalls?

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## STEPS to **SOLVE** the PROBLEM

### 1. **S**ate the Problem & Goal:

Initial: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

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Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. **V**isualize the steps:



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- 

### 5. **E**valuate success – Need to redo or revise?

# PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked


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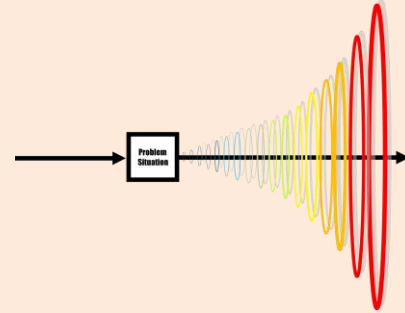
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## STEPS to **SOLVE** the PROBLEM

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*Goals & Activities that may be worth adding to your day*

## GOALS FROM HEALTH COACHING

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- Taking a trip
- Visiting others
- Bowling
- Gardening or yard work
- Going on a date
- Sitting in the sun
- 
-

## Home Assignment: Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

Activity	When did you do the activity?	Achieved (If yes, ✓)	If not achieved, what got in the way?
1.			
2.			
3.			

### Meeting 9 Summary:

- It takes practice and repetition to learn new skills.
- Each time you practice the problem-solving process at home – no matter the obstacles you face – you are strengthening your skills.

### Home Assignment:

- Fill out Problem-solving worksheet(s) based on a problem you actually encountered. Complete all parts:
  - **S**: "State the Problem & Goal"
  - **O**: "Options"
  - **L**: "List Pros & Cons and Pick Best One"
  - **V**: "Visualize the steps"
  - **E**: "Evaluate success"
- Choose 3 Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities; keep track of them on the "Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities"

### Plan for Next Week:

- Next meeting to take place on (date & time): \_\_\_\_\_

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# **PST for GWI**

## **Session 10:**

### Practicing Problem-Solving Skills

## **MEETING 10**

### **Practice using the PST model**

#### **Objectives:**

- Review home practice and the problem-solving model
- In-session problem solving

#### **Handouts:**

- PS Worksheet
- List of Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
- Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

## **MEETING 10: Practice Using the PST Model**

### **Check-in**

### **Review of Last Week**

Last week we practiced using the PST model using real life problems.

### **Today's Focus**

The focus of today's meeting will be to practice using PST skills.

### **More About Problem Orientation**

On a scale of **1** to **10**, with **10** being the most, how much control do you have over your problem orientation?

### **Reviewing Home Practice**

- 1. Problem-solving Worksheet**
  - 2. Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities**
-



## Meeting 10 Content

### Review of Problem-Solving Process

- ✓ First, describe **what happened**. Where is the **goal conflict** (internal, external, plan was blocked)?
- ✓ Next, check your **problem orientation**. How positive or negative was your PO? What **red flags** (**personal style pitfalls**, **problematic contexts**, and **early warning signs**) did you notice, and what **strategies** did you use to shift your problem orientation positive if needed?
- ✓ Then, follow the steps to **SOLVE** the problem:
  - **S**tate the problem and Goal
  - **O**ptions to consider
  - **L**ist pros & cons
  - **V**isualize the steps
  - **E**valuate success – need to redo or revise?



### In-Meeting Exercise A:

Let's use the "Problem-Solving Worksheet" on the following page to analyze a problem from real life.

# PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked


## HOW POSITIVE or NEGATIVE WAS YOUR PROBLEM ORIENTATION?

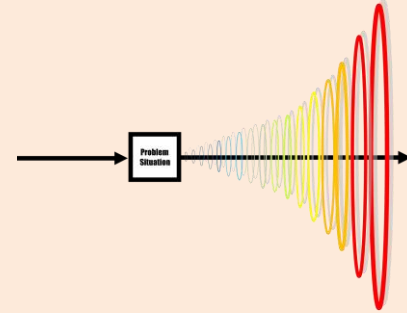
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- ☐ How much of your reaction was driven by emotion? Were your emotions regulated or unregulated?
- ☐ What  **Red Flags** did you notice in order to  ?

Personal Style Pitfalls?

Problematic Contexts?

Early Warning Signs?

- ☐ What **Strategies** did you use to  regain control?



## STEPS to **SOLVE** the PROBLEM

### 1. **S**ate the Problem & Goal:

Initial: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Revised: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. **O**ptions:

### 3. **L**ist Pros & Cons:

	3. <b>L</b> ist Pros & Cons:	
	Pros (+)	Cons (-)

Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. **V**isualize the steps:



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### 5. **E**valuate success – Need to redo or revise?

# PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked


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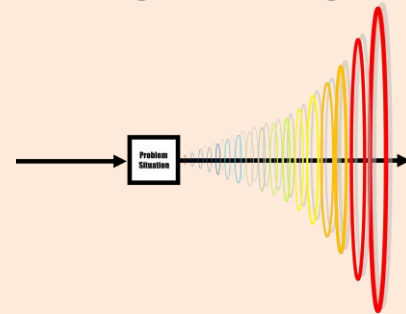
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Initial: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

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Goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. **O**ptions:

### 3. **L**ist Pros & Cons:

	3. <b>L</b> ist Pros & Cons:	
	Pros (+)	Cons (-)

Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. **V**isualize the steps:

- 
- 
- 

### 5. **E**valuate success – Need to redo or revise?

## Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities

*Goals & Activities that may be worth adding to your day*

### GOALS FROM HEALTH COACHING

- Meditating
- Yoga
- Eating a good, healthy meal
- Exercising
- Taking a walk or going hiking
- Connecting with a friend
- Drink more water
- Stretching exercises
- Learn about tai chi – (YouTube)
- Diaphragmatic breathing
- Keep food log for Mediterranean diet
- Walk around block after dinner
- Replace chips with celery and carrots
- Use stairs instead of elevator
- Home exercise: squats, hand weights, wall pushups
- Challenge negative thoughts daily
- Reward self with massage
- Use consistent bed time
- Add berries to breakfast
- Use stationery bike
- Spend time socializing with Veterans
- Take warm bath before bed
- Pick a class to take
- Cook at home at least 5 nights
- Practice 2 new relaxation techniques
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### POSITIVE ACTIVITIES

- Playing a musical instrument
- Playing with children or grandchildren
- Working on machines (cars, bikes, etc.)
- Riding a bike or motorcycle
- Going out for coffee
- Taking a picture
- Eating out
- Doing a favor for someone
- Bird watching
- Watching a sunrise or sunset
- Going to a religious service/ceremony
- Spending time with friends
- Listening to the sounds of nature
- Volunteering
- Golfing
- Going to the beach
- Doing art work
- Studying religious or spiritual readings
- Painting, woodworking, or other craft
- Going to a sports event
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- Boating/fishing
- Giving a compliment
- Camping
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- Walking a dog
- Going to a party
- Cooking or baking
- Taking a trip
- Visiting others
- Bowling
- Gardening or yard work
- Going on a date
- Sitting in the sun
- 
-

## Home Assignment: Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

Activity	When did you do the activity?	Achieved (If yes, ✓)	If not achieved, what got in the way?
1.			
2.			
3.			

### Meeting 10 Summary:

- It takes practice and repetition to learn new skills.
- Each time you practice the problem-solving process at home – no matter the obstacles you face – you are strengthening your skills

### Home Assignment:

- Fill out Problem-solving worksheet(s) based on a problem you actually encountered. Complete all parts:
  - **S**: "State the Problem & Goal"
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  - **E**: "Evaluate success"
- Choose 3 Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities; keep track of them on the "Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities."

### Plan for Next Week:

- Next meeting to take place on (date & time): \_\_\_\_\_

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# **PST for GWI**

## **Session 11:**

### **Practicing Problem-Solving Skills**

## **MEETING 11**

### **Practice using the PST model**

#### **Objectives:**

- Review home practice and the problem-solving model
- In-session problem solving

#### **Handouts:**

- PS Worksheet
- List of Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
- Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities



## **MEETING 11: Practice Using the PST Model**

### **Check-in**

### **Review of Last Week**

Last week we practiced using the PST model using real life problems.

### **Today's Focus**

The focus of today's meeting will be to practice using PST skills.

### **More About Problem Orientation**

As you continue to work towards achieving your goals, you are likely to run into obstacles. How can you move towards a more positive, hopeful problem orientation, even when things aren't working out the way you had planned?

### **Reviewing Home Practice**

- 1. Problem-solving Worksheet**
  - 2. Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities**
-

## Meeting 11 Content

### Review of Problem-Solving Process

- ✓ First, describe **what happened**. Where is the **goal conflict** (internal, external, plan was blocked)?
- ✓ Next, check your **problem orientation**. How positive or negative was your PO? What **red flags** (**personal style pitfalls**, **problematic contexts**, and **early warning signs**) did you notice, and what **strategies** did you use to shift your problem orientation positive if needed?
- ✓ Then, follow the steps to **SOLVE** the problem:
  - **S**tate the problem and Goal
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### In-Meeting Exercise A:

Let's use the "Problem-Solving Worksheet" on the following page to analyze a problem from real life.

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**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked


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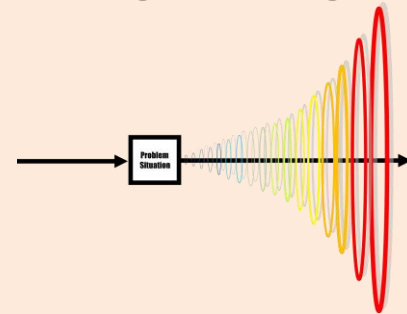
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## STEPS to **SOLVE** the PROBLEM

### 1. **S**ate the Problem & Goal:

Initial: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

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Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. **V**isualize the steps:



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### 5. **E**valuate success – Need to redo or revise?

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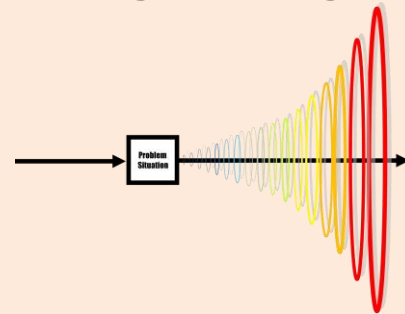
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Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. **V**isualize the steps:

- 
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### 5. **E**valuate success – Need to redo or revise?

## Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities

*Goals & Activities that may be worth adding to your day*

### GOALS FROM HEALTH COACHING

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- Gardening or yard work
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- 
-

## Home Assignment: Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities

Activity	When did you do the activity?	Achieved (If yes, ✓)	If not achieved, what got in the way?
1.			
2.			
3.			

### Meeting 11 Summary:

- It takes practice and repetition to learn new skills and to build hope.
- Each time you practice the problem-solving process at home – no matter the obstacles you face – you are strengthening your skills in overcoming obstacles to reach your goal.

### Home Assignment:

- Fill out Problem-solving worksheet(s) based on a problem you actually encountered. Complete all parts:
  - **S**: "State the Problem & Goal"
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- Choose 3 Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities; keep track of them on the "Weekly Worksheet for Goals/Activities."

### Plan for Next Week:

- Next meeting to take place on (date & time): \_\_\_\_\_

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# **PST for GWI**

## **Session 12:**

### **Strengthening & Reinforcing**



## MEETING 12

### Strengthening and Reinforcing

#### Objectives:

- Summarize the PST model
- Review progress over course of intervention
- Identify pitfalls to avoid
- Discuss possible referrals, if appropriate

## MEETING 12: Strengthening and Reinforcing

### Check-in

### Review of Last Week

Last week we practiced using the PST model using real life problems.

### Today's Focus

The focus of today's meeting will be to review the work we have done these past 12 meetings. We also want to look forward and plan for your continued use of the skills we have discussed.

### More About Problem Orientation

If you were trying to help a friend be a better problem-solver, what would you say about *problem orientation*?

### Reviewing Home Practice

1. Problem-solving Worksheet
  2. Weekly Health Goals & Positive Activities
-

## Meeting 12 Content

### Review of Problem-Solving Process

- ✓ First, describe **what happened**. Where is the **goal conflict** (internal, external, plan was blocked)?
- ✓ Next, check your problem orientation. How positive or negative was your PO? What **red flags** (personal style pitfalls, problematic contexts, and early warning signs) did you notice, and what **strategies** did you use to shift your problem orientation positive if needed?
- ✓ Then, follow the steps to **SOLVE** the problem:
  - **S**tate the problem and Goal
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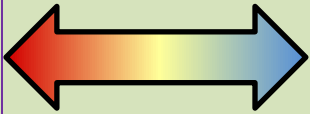
### Reviewing your Progress

Let's review the progress that you have made so far and identify what's been helpful. Let's also consider any potential barriers to maintaining your progress and use your problem-solving skills to address them.

### Problem Orientation Review

When you first started PST, we asked you to observe your problem orientation and identify the ways your symptoms could influence it.

In Session 2, you rated a number of problem-orientation statements. Now that you have an increasingly full problem orientation toolbelt, please rate the statements again on the next page.

Rate your Problem Orientation		Disagree ← → Agree
<i>Please circle the number that represents how much you agree with the statements below.</i>		
		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
1	I view problems as challenges or opportunities for positive change.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2	When faced with a problem, I remind myself of past successes in dealing with similar problems.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
3	I am willing to commit myself to solving problems when they occur.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
4	I have confidence in my ability to solve most problems.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
5	I believe if I put in the necessary time effort, I can make some improvement to the problem situation.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
6	The first thing I usually do when I have to deal with a problem is take a deep breath to relax.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
7	I believe most problems have a solution, (although it may not always be easy to find!)	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
8	I make sure to use encouraging self-talk when working on a difficult problem.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
9	Problems are a normal part of life; so when I have a problem it is just a sign that I am human – <b>not</b> that I messed up.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
10	My instinct is not to avoid problems or make impulsive decisions about them, but to use a methodical approach.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		

## Recognizing Red Flags

The Personal Style Pitfalls, Problematic Contexts, and Warning Signs that particularly threaten my problem orientation are:

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## Problem Orientation Strategies

When I find my problem orientation shifting negative (by recognizing my red flags), I find it most helpful to use strategies like these:

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## Problem-solving Style Review

You have also learned a lot about your own problem-solving style, and have been working hard to consistently use a planful style, which means breaking down the steps of the problem, organizing the information, making decisions after careful consideration of potential solutions, and being focused on the long-term.

In meeting 5, you identified your most frequent style as (circle):

**Avoidant      Impulsive      Planful**

Now, with the new or rediscovered tools in your toolbox, what would you identify as your most frequent style?

**Avoidant      Impulsive      Planful**

What are some pitfalls to look out for?

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## Referrals

It is not uncommon that after completing PST, some Veterans find that they would like to continue working with a therapist to continue practicing their skills.

Continued work with a professional can be like calling on a trusted handyman or a contractor to give you that extra support and help you generate new ideas. There are many excellent resources for continued therapy. Please discuss with your therapist if you would like help identifying therapy resources.

### Meeting 12 Summary:

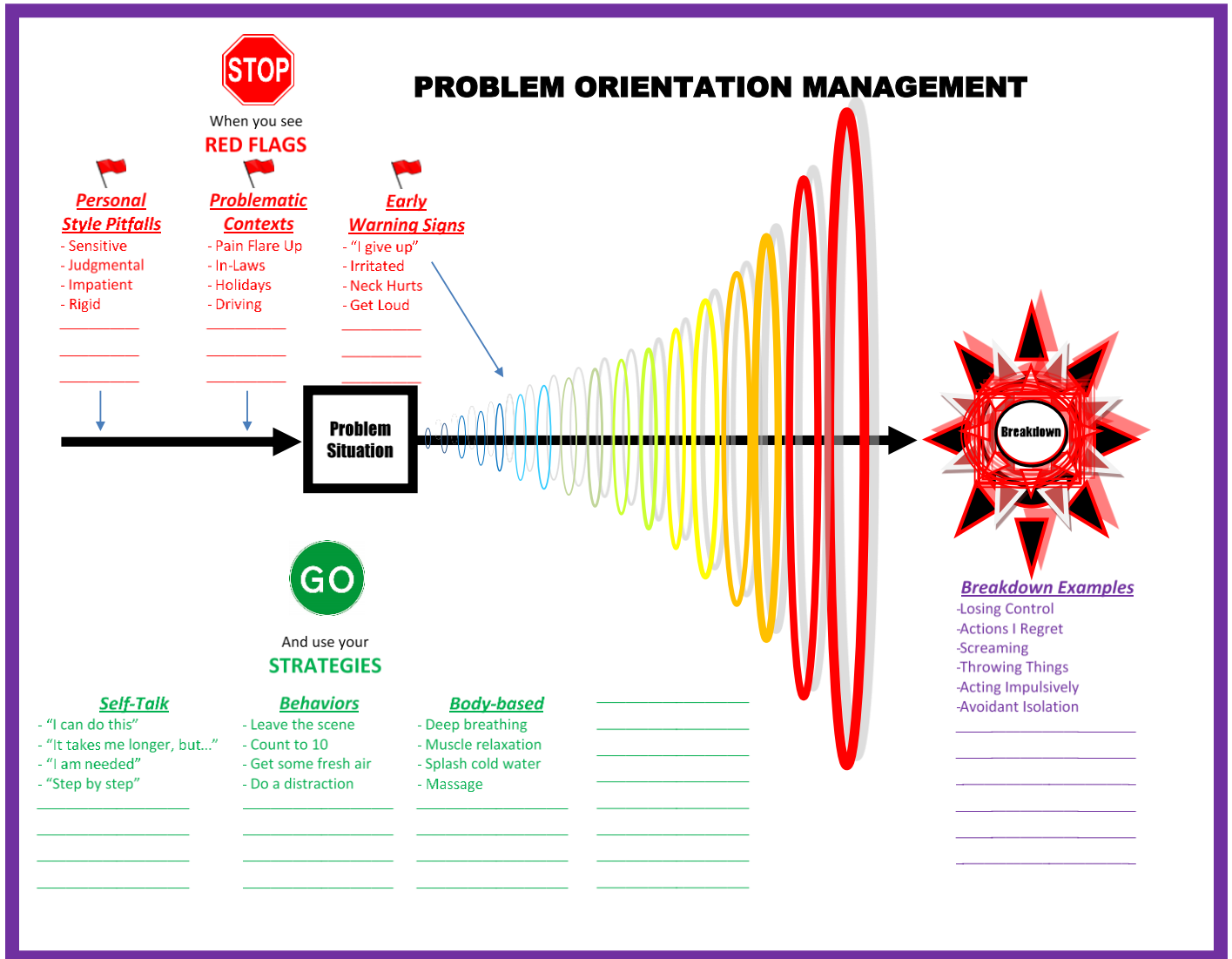
- Reviewed problem orientation and the planful style
- Reviewed your progress since beginning PST
- Discussed need for referrals
- Congratulations on your PST graduation!



# **PST for GWI**

## **Appendix**

**Problem Orientation Management graphic**  
**Pain Management Strategies**  
**Problem Orientation Toolbox (x2)**  
**My Roadmap**  
**Problem-solving Worksheets (x8)**  
**References**





## **PAIN MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES TO ADD TO YOUR PROBLEM ORIENTATION TOOLBOX**

*There are many techniques that can help manage your pain and keep you feeling in control. The key is finding the strategies that work best for you, and identifying as many as possible. Small improvements in pain can add up, and the benefits of each strategy can build on each other.*

### **1. Differentiate between ACCEPTANCE & CHANGE:**

Which aspects of your pain do you need to ***accept***, and which aspects can you ***change***? Maybe you have accepted that you have pain, but are working towards changing your beliefs about pain. Maybe new beliefs include “I can live a good life even with my pain,” or “I may not be able to rid myself of the pain, but using relaxation techniques can reduce it.”

### **2. Plan Ahead:**

When a pain flare occurs, it is often difficult to think clearly, focus, concentrate, or problem-solve. Often, a person may go into survival mode just by trying to endure the increased pain level. It is better to plan ahead before you are having a pain flare up, so that you can prepare for flares. You can develop a personalized list of strategies that you can use at any time to manage pain.

### **3. Be a Detective:**

Try to understand what can create a flare-up, e.g., bending or lifting something, not getting enough sleep, experiencing an emotionally stressful conversation, or another event. Knowing what triggers flare-ups can allow you to approach those situations in a different way in the future. Sometimes, if a person tries to get too much done on a “good” day, it might lead to several “bad” days. A pain diary can be helpful in tracking connections between increased pain and whatever may have triggered it.

### **4. Distraction:**

Look for ways to divert attention to other things in order to minimize over-focusing on the pain, especially when pain is high. Ask, “What are the things that help to distract me?” Everyone is different. Distractions could include music, movies, conversation, games, etc.

### **5. Soothing the Pain:**

This can include applying heat or cold, taking a warm bath or shower, resting, taking a nap, self-massage, applying an ointment, etc.

### **6. Activity Level:**

Gradual increases in physical activity can be helpful for pain. It is important not to give up on physical activity completely during a pain flare. It may be necessary to cut back on normal activity, but it should not be cut out completely. Activities that are particularly helpful for pain include yoga, tai chi, and low-impact aerobic exercise (such as swimming and walking).

### **7. Work with Your Health Care Providers:**

There are many effective treatments for chronic pain. These include acupuncture, biofeedback, meditation, massage, and CBT for chronic pain. Developing a plan to incorporate these alternative treatments into your regular health care routine can help reduce your pain. Talk with your primary care provider about getting a referral!

- 8. What have you found helpful?:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## PROBLEM ORIENTATION TOOLBOX

### **COGNITIVE / SELF-TALK STRATEGIES**

- “It may take me longer, but I can still do it”
- “Let it go, this will pass”
- “Is there another way to look at this situation? What am I missing?”
- “What would *Bobby* do?”
- “I’ve solved issues like this before”
- “When I am **H**ungry, **A**ngry, **L**onely or **T**ired – **HALT!**”
- “My perceptions may be distorted – Look for the evidence”
- “Take it step by step; I can do this”
- “Problems are part of life for everyone.”
- “Am I using all-or-nothing thinking?”
- “Is this a situation requiring *acceptance* or *change*?”
- 

### **BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES / THINGS YOU CAN DO**

- Leave the scene, walk away
- Count to 10
- Distract myself (e.g., watch a movie, listen to music, call a friend, play with the dog)
- Use a worksheet
- Prayer
- Journal
- Go outdoors, be in nature
- Go to a Veterans’ group (e.g., VFW, VA, etc.)
- Exercise or stretch
- Go for a bike ride
- Call a support person
- Do something self-loving (e.g., eat a healthy meal, say something kind to myself)
- Help someone else who is in need
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### **SELF-SOOTHING / BODY-BASED STRATEGIES**

- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Deep breathing
- Guided imagery: Beach, Forest, Country road
- Engage senses (e.g., aromatherapy, splash face with cold water, take warm bath)
- Massage neck and shoulders
- Meditation
- Make a cup of aromatic tea, or have a special comforting food
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## PROBLEM ORIENTATION TOOLBOX

### **COGNITIVE / SELF-TALK STRATEGIES**

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### **BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES / THINGS YOU CAN DO**

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### **SELF-SOOTHING / BODY-BASED STRATEGIES**

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# MY ROADMAP

## **MY RED FLAGS**




 MY PERSONAL STYLE PITFALLS

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

 MY PROBLEMATIC CONTEXTS

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐


 MY WARNING SIGNS

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐


## **MY PROBLEM ORIENTATION STRATEGIES**

 MY COGNITIVE / SELF-TALK STRATEGIES

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

 MY BEHAVIORAL STRATEGIES / THINGS I CAN DO

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

 MY SELF-SOOTHING / BODY-BASED STRATEGIES

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐



## **MY PROBLEM-SOLVING STYLE**

- WHICH IS MY “GO TO” STYLE?
  - ☐ Avoidant
  - ☐ Impulsive
  - ☐ Planful
- IN WHAT TYPES OF SITUATIONS DO I USE A PLANFUL STYLE MOST CONSISTENTLY?
  - ☐
  - ☐
  - ☐
- HOW CAN I USE THE PLANFUL STYLE MORE REGULARLY?
  - ☐
  - ☐
  - ☐
  - ☐
  - ☐

# PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked


## HOW POSITIVE or NEGATIVE WAS YOUR PROBLEM ORIENTATION?

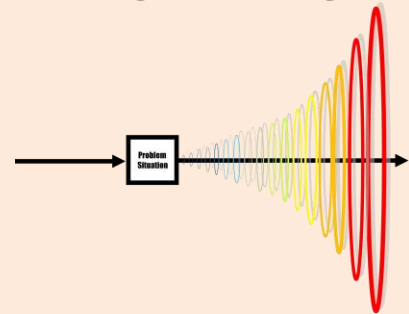
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- ☐ What **Strategies** did you use to  regain control?



## STEPS to **SOLVE** the **PROBLEM**

### 1. **S**ate the Problem & Goal:

Initial: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Revised: " \_\_\_\_\_ but \_\_\_\_\_ "

Goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. **O**ptions:

### 3. **L**ist Pros & Cons:

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Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. **V**isualize the steps:




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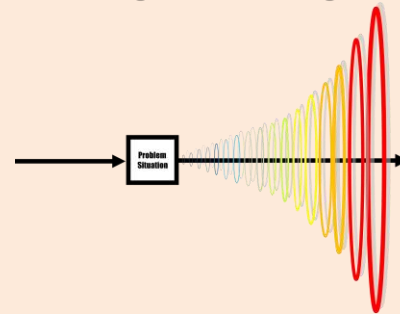
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- ☐ What **Strategies** did you use to  regain control?



## STEPS to SOLVE the PROBLEM

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Goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. **O**ptions:

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	Pros (+)	Cons (-)

Best Option: \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. **V**isualize the steps:



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### 5. **E**valuate success – Need to redo or revise?

# PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**WHAT HAPPENED?** Describe the problem situation. Was it: a) conflict between your goal and someone else's; b) conflict between 2 of your own goals; or c) situation where your plan was blocked


## HOW POSITIVE or NEGATIVE WAS YOUR PROBLEM ORIENTATION?

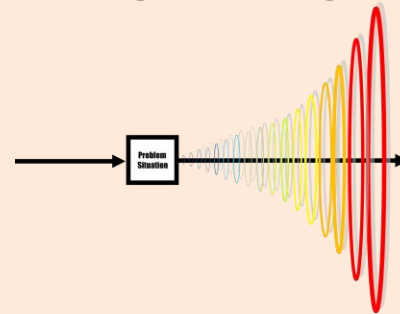
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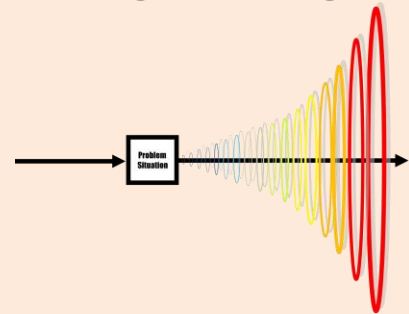
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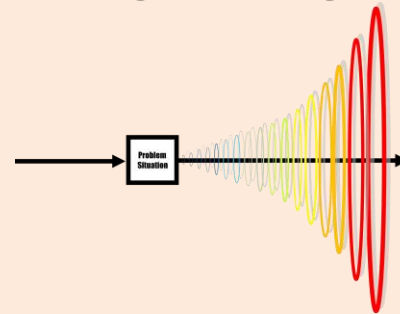
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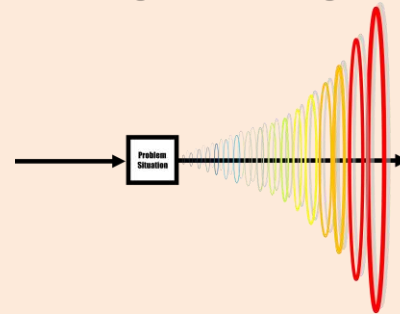
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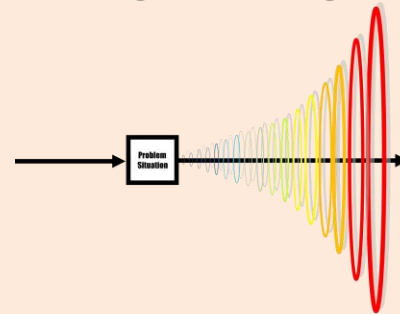
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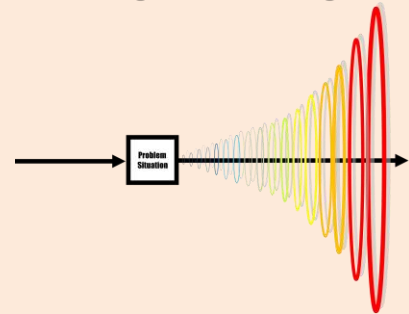
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## REFERENCES

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