

Problem solving

We all face difficult decisions and problems in our daily lives. Some problems are quite small and easy to resolve, whilst others can require some significant effort, and may take time to work through and sort out. Whether the problem is small, medium, or large, it is helpful to have a basic plan for working things out and deciding on a course of action.

The below six steps focus on identifying the particular problem, and considering and evaluating the options, in order to reach a decision to be acted upon and learnt from. These steps provide a framework for problem solving that can be used by individuals, couples, or groups.

The next time you have a problem that you want to work upon, get a piece of paper or create a document, and then work your way through the headings, making a record of the different options and steps.

Basic problem solving in six steps:

1. Identify: What is the problem? What is it that you want to change or sort out?
2. What are the options or solutions as you see it? Consult with others in relation to the identified problem and the possible solutions.
3. What are benefits or consequences of each option?
4. Choose an option: This is not about this being right or wrong, it is about choosing the best available option for this particular problem and giving it a try.
5. Put it into action: This is where the rubber hits the road, where you can make it happen.
6. Review: It is always worth taking time to review results. What have you learned? What if a similar problem presented itself? Would you do the same thing, or are there other alternatives?

Note: Keeping a log of how you handled particular problems, and the learning in relation to what worked and what you might do differently next time, will enhance your options, choices, and sense of control over your life.