CBTm

COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY WITH MINDFULNESS

THÉRAPIE COGNITIVO-COMPORTEMENTALE DE LA PLEINE CONSCIENCE

Class 5 Handouts

Mindfulness Exercise - *Loving Kindness*

Anger and Coping Strategies for Anger

Assertiveness

Problem Solving

Testing Your Thoughts

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LOVING KINDNESS

Start by being comfortable in your chair, with your back gently supported, in a relaxed posture. Let your eyes close, fully or partially. Take a few easy, slow breaths, bring your awareness to your body and into the present moment. (Pause)

Bring to mind a person or another living being who naturally makes you smile. This could be a child, a grandparent, a pet – whoever naturally brings happiness to your heart and a smile to your face. If you can't think of a living being, think back to a memory of a place where you felt happy and at ease. Allow the feelings of what it is like to be in the company of that being to come into the present moment. Allow yourself to enjoy their company. (Pause)

Now, recognize how vulnerable this loved one is. Just like you, vulnerable to life events, bad things happening: sickness, aging, difficult events. And just like you and every other living being, your loved one wishes to be happy and healthy and free from suffering. Keeping the warm, kind, loving feelings you have for your loved one close to your heart, repeat to yourself, silently, slowly, softly and gently, feeling the importance of your words:

May you be safe and free from harm
May you be healthy and free from suffering
May you have contentment and peace of mind
May you care for yourself with ease and well-being

When you notice that your mind has wandered, return to the words and the image of the loved one you have in mind. Return to the feelings of warmth, kindness, love and compassion. Now add yourself to your circle of warmth and good will. If it feels comfortable, place your hand over your heart, feel the warmth and comfort of your hand, and say, repeat to yourself silently, slowly and gently:

May you and I be safe and free from harm
May you and I be healthy and free from suffering
May you and I have contentment and peace of mind
May you and I care for ourselves with ease and well-being

(continued on next page)

LOVING KINDNESS
(CONTINUED)

Visualize your whole body in your mind's eye, noticing any tension, discomfort, stress or uneasiness that may be lingering within you, and offer warmth, comfort, and kindness to yourself.

May I be safe and free from harm
May I be healthy and free from suffering
May I have contentment and peace of mind
May I care for myself with ease and well-being

Now bring your attention to your breath, take a few easy comfortable breaths and just rest quietly in your own body, savoring the good will and compassion that flows naturally from your own heart. (Pause)

If you are ever swept up in emotion, you can always return to your breathing. Then, when you're comfortable again, returning to the phrases.

[*If you want to repeat them again]*
May I be safe and free from harm
May I be healthy and free from suffering
May I have contentment and peace of mind
May I care for myself with ease and well-being

When you're ready, take a few breaths, begin to wiggle your fingers and toes to bring energy back to your body, and bring yourself back to the room. Then gently open your eyes. If you turned your screen off at the start of the exercise, please turn it back on.

WHAT IS ANGER?

Normal Anger



Anger is a normal human emotion. Everyone feels annoyed, frustrated, irritated, or even very angry from time to time. Anger can be expressed by shouting, yelling, or swearing, but in extreme cases it can escalate into physical aggression towards objects (e.g., smashing things) or people (self or others). In some cases, anger might look much more subtle, more of a brooding, silent anger, or withdrawal.

In a controlled manner, some anger can be helpful, motivating us to make positive changes or take constructive action about something we feel is important. But when anger is very intense, or very frequent, then it can be harmful in many ways.

What Causes Anger?

Anger is often connected to some type of frustration — either things didn't turn out the way you planned, you didn't get something you wanted, or other people don't act the way you would like. Often poor communication and misunderstandings can trigger angry situations.

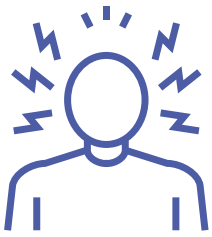
Anger usually goes hand-in-hand with other feelings too, such as sadness, shame, hurt, guilt, or fear. Many times people find it hard to express these feelings, so just the anger comes out.

Perhaps the anger is triggered by a particular situation, such as being caught in a traffic jam, or being treated rudely by someone else, or banging your thumb with a hammer while trying to hang a picture-hook.

Other times there is no obvious trigger — some people are more prone to anger than others. Sometimes men and women handle anger differently, but not always.

Problems Associated With Anger

Uncontrolled anger can cause problems in a wide range of areas of your life. It may cause conflicts with family, friends, or colleagues, and in extreme situations it can lead to problems with the law.



But some of the other problem effects of anger may be harder to spot. Often people who have a problem with anger feel guilty or disappointed with their behaviour, or suffer from low self-esteem, anxiety, or depression.

There are also physical side-effects of extreme or frequent anger, such as high blood pressure and heart disease. Some studies suggest that angry people tend to drink more alcohol, which is associated with a wide range of health problems.

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WHAT IS ANGER?

Do I Have a Problem with Anger?

Perhaps you have already identified that anger is a problem for you, or someone else has mentioned it to you. But if you are not sure whether anger is a problem for you, consider the questions below:

1. Do you feel angry, irritated, or tense a lot of the time?
2. Do you seem to get angry more easily or more often than others around you?
3. Do you use alcohol or drugs to manage your anger?
4. Do you sometimes become so angry that you break things, damage property, or become violent?
5. Does it sometimes feel like your anger gets out of proportion to the situation that set you off?
6. Is your anger leading to problems with relationships, such as with family, friends, or at work?
7. Have you noticed that others close to you sometimes feel intimidated or frightened by you?
8. Have others (family, friends, colleagues, health professionals) mentioned that anger might be a problem for you?
9. Do you find that it takes you a long time to 'cool off' after you have become angry or irritated?
10. Have you ended up in trouble with the law as a result of your anger, for example, getting into fights?
11. Do you find yourself worrying a lot about your anger, perhaps feeling anxious or depressed about it at times?
12. Do you tend to take your frustration out on loved ones or people less powerful than you, rather than dealing with the situation that triggered your anger?



If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, it may be that anger is a problem for you. It may be that addressing your anger can allow you to live a much more positive and rewarding life.

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WHAT IS ANGER?

How Can I Manage Anger Better?

You may have heard about 'anger management' and wondered what it involves. Anger management can be addressed in groups or through individual therapy, and there are also a lot of self-help resources available.

Anger management is not just about counting to ten before you respond (although that is often a good idea). It is about helping you to better understand why you get angry, what sets it off and what are the early warning signs, and about learning a variety of strategies for managing those feelings more constructively.

You may wish to read through our 'Anger Coping Strategies' handout for more information about this.





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ANGER COPING STRATEGIES

Anger and Problem Anger

Anger is a normal human emotion, and can range from mild irritation to an intense rage or fury. The previous handout 'What Is Anger?' provides more detail about the difference between normal anger and problem anger, and some questions to help you identify whether anger may be a problem for you.

This handout includes a number of tips which you may use to help you to cope better with your anger. You may wish to practice some of these on your own, or you may wish to combine them with individual or group therapy for extra support.

Triggers and Early Warning Signs

One of the first steps in managing your anger is to identify what types of situations usually trigger your anger. Make a list of the things which usually set you off, for example:

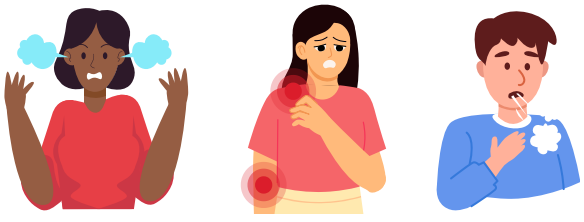
- Being cut off in traffic
- Running late for an appointment
- Other people running late
- Your son/daughter leaving their schoolbag in the hall
- Your partner not putting away the dishes
- A colleague falling behind on a project



Some of these situations you may be able to avoid, such as planning ahead to avoid running late. Other situations are less in your control, such as being cut off in traffic, but what you *can* control is your response.

Once you have finished listing your common trigger situations, make a separate list of the warning signs for your anger. What is it that usually happens in your body when you get angry? Becoming aware of your body's alarm bells helps you to spot anger early on, which gives you a better chance of putting other coping strategies into practice. Some common warnings are:

- Tightness in chest
- Feeling hot or flushed; sweating
- Grinding teeth
- Tense muscles or clenched fists
- Pounding or racing heart
- Biting your nails



Why Am I Angry?

When you notice these warning signs, stop and ask yourself what it is that is making you angry. Often there will be something going on that is quite reasonable to feel angry about, so allow yourself to acknowledge this. But it is also important to be clear about the cause of our anger so that we don't respond in a way that is out of proportion (e.g., staying angry all day about someone else using up the last of the milk) or take out the anger on the wrong person (e.g., getting angry at family members when it is your boss you are angry with).

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ANGER COPING STRATEGIES

Taking Out The Heat

When you notice yourself becoming angry, there are a number of techniques which you can use to 'take the heat out' of your anger. These include:

- **Time Out:** This simply means removing yourself from the situation for a period of time, to give yourself a chance to 'cool down' and think things through before you act. For example, when you notice yourself becoming angry during an argument with your partner, say "I need to take time out, let's talk about this calmly when I get back" and then go for a walk.



- **Distraction:** If you cannot change the situation, it can help to distract yourself from whatever is making you angry by counting to ten, listening to music, calling a friend to chat about something else, or doing housework. For example, if you are stuck in traffic and getting angry, put on the radio and try to find a song you like, or count the number of times the chorus is sung.



- **Silly Humour:** While it is not always possible to 'laugh your problems away', you can often use humour to help you take a step back from your anger. For example, if you are angry with a colleague and refer to them as 'a stupid clown', think about what this means literally. Imagine or draw them dressed in a clown suit, with big shoes and a red nose. If you picture this image every time they do something which bothers you, it will be much easier to keep things in perspective.



- **Relaxation:** Just as our bodies are strongly affected by our emotions, we can also influence our emotional state with our physical state. Relaxation techniques, such as taking slow deep breaths or progressively tensing and relaxing each of your muscle groups, can help to reduce anger.

Self-Talk and Helpful Thinking

How you are thinking affects how you are feeling, so focusing on negative thoughts such as "this is so unfair" will maintain the angry feeling. Make a list of more balanced statements you can say to yourself before, during and after difficult situations.

For example:

Before: *I know I can handle this; I have strategies to keep my anger under control and can take time out if I need to.*

During: *Remember to keep breathing and stay relaxed. There is no need to take this personally. I can manage this.*

After: *I handled that well. Even though I felt angry, I didn't raise my voice too much and I think I got a better result.*

Assertiveness and Practice

Another key strategy in managing anger is to learn to be assertive. Assertiveness means expressing your point of view in a clear way, without becoming aggressive. You may wish to read other handouts about this topic. Finally, because anger is often an automatic response, all of these techniques require a lot of practice.

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ASSERTIVENESS

adapted from AnxietyCanada

Assertive communication is the honest expression of one's own needs, wants and feelings, while respecting those of the other person. When you communicate assertively, your manner is non-threatening and non-judgemental, and you take responsibility for your own actions.



If you have anxiety or depression, you may have some difficulty expressing your thoughts and feelings openly. Assertiveness skills can be difficult to learn, especially since being assertive can mean holding yourself back from the way you would normally do things. For example, you maybe afraid of conflict, always go along with the crowd, and avoid offering your opinions.

As a result, you may have developed a **passive** communication style. Alternatively, you may aim to control and dominate others and have developed an **aggressive** communication style.

However, an assertive communication style brings many benefits. For example, It can help you to relate to others more genuinely, with less anxiety and resentment. It also gives you more control over your life, and reduces feelings of helplessness. Furthermore, it allows OTHER people the right to live their lives.

Remember: Assertiveness is a learned skill, not a personality trait you are born with. It is what you *do,* not who you are.

Step 1: Identifying your trouble spots



To start, ask yourself the following questions to identify what area(s) to work on:

- Do I struggle to ask for what I want?
- Is it hard to state my opinion?
- Do I have trouble saying no?

Tips for Communicating Assertively:

Many people find it hard to ask for what they want, feeling that they don't have the right to ask, or fearing the consequences of the request. For example, you may think, "What if he says no?" or "She would think I am rude for asking".

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When making a request, it can be helpful to start by saying something that shows you understand the other person's situation. For example, "I know you probably have had a lot on your mind lately."

Next, describe the situation and how you feel about it. For example, "This presentation is due next Friday and I am feeling pretty overwhelmed, and worried that I won't be able to get it done in time." It is important to talk about your feelings, not to make accusations to others. For example, it is better to say, "I feel resentful when you show up late to meet me," than it is to say, "You are always late! You don't care about me!"



Then, describe what you would like to see happen. Be as brief and positive as possible. For example, "I'd really like to figure out how we can share more of the work responsibilities."

Last, tell the person what would happen if your request was honoured. How would you feel? Sometimes, you may want to add what you will do in return. For example, "I would make sure to help create the slides for your presentation next week."

Many people have trouble expressing their views openly. Perhaps you wait for others to give their opinion first, and will share yours only if you happen to agree. Being assertive means being willing to state your opinion, even if others haven't done so or if your opinion is different.



Being assertive also means that you "own" your opinion; that is, you take responsibility for your view. For example: "My personal view is that it was unfair for her to ask that of you."

Being assertive also means being willing to consider new information, and even changing your mind. However, it does not mean changing your mind just because others think differently.

Tips for Saying "No"

Saying "No" can be difficult if you are usually more passive. However, if you are not able to say no to others, you might not feel in charge of your own life.

When saying "No", remember to use assertive body language (e.g., standing straight, eye contact, speaking loudly enough that the other person can hear).

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ASSERTIVENESS

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Before you speak, decide what your position is. For example, think about how you will say “No” to a request, such as, “I would like to help you out but I already have quite a bit of work to get done this week.”



Make sure to actually wait for the question, and don’t say “Yes” before the other person even makes the request.



Take care not to apologize, defend yourself, or make excuses for saying “No” when it is not necessary.

If saying “No” right away is too difficult, practice telling someone, “I need to think about it” as a first step. This will help break the cycle of always saying yes, and will give you a chance to think about what you really want to do.

Remember: Everyone has the right to say “No!”

Step 2: Practice your new assertiveness skill

First, think of a couple past scenarios when you avoided giving your opinion or preference, saying “No”, or asking for what you wanted. How could you have handled the situation differently? What would be an assertive way to communicate in those situations?

Practice saying your assertive statement out loud to yourself, to get used to it. For example, “Actually, I thought the movie dragged on a bit”, “Unfortunately, I can’t help you out next weekend”, or “I’d like the dishes done before 9 o’clock”.

Next, think of a situation that is coming up in the next week in which you could use your assertiveness skills. Begin with a scenario that is easier, for example, giving your opinion or saying “No” to more familiar people, and then try it in more difficult situations.

Try it out - how did it go? Notice how the other person reacted. Would you do something differently next time? Remember: assertiveness is like any new skill, and requires time and practice. Don’t be too hard on yourself if you are feeling nervous, or not getting it quite right. Reward yourself when you do speak up!

Note: Sometimes people who are not used to us being assertive may need some time to adjust. Just because people may not initially respond in a positive way, doesn’t mean that being assertive is wrong - they just need to adjust to the change!

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Barriers to Behaving Assertively - Myths about Assertiveness

Myth #1: Assertiveness means getting your own way all the time

This is not true. Being assertive means expressing your point of view and communicating honestly with others. Often, you may not get "your own way" when you are assertively giving your opinion. But telling others how you feel and trying to work out a compromise shows respect for both yourself and others.

Myth #2: Being assertive means being selfish

This is false. Just because you express your opinions and your preferences does not mean that other people are forced to go along with you. If you express yourself assertively (not aggressively) then you make room for others. You can also be assertive on behalf of someone else (e.g., I would like Susan to choose the restaurant this week).

Myth #3: Passivity is the way to be loved

This is false. Being passive means always agreeing with others, always allowing them to get their own way, giving into their wishes, and making no demands or requests of your own. Behaving this way is no guarantee that others will like or admire you. In fact, they may perceive you as dull and feel frustrated that they can't really get to know you.

Myth #4: It's impolite to disagree

This is not true. Although there are some situations where we don't give our honest opinion (e.g., most people say how beautiful a friend looks in her wedding dress, or we only say positive things on the first day of a new job). Much of the time, however, other people will be interested in what you think. Think about how you would feel if everyone always agreed with you.

Myth #5: I have to do everything I am asked to do

False. A central part of being assertive is setting and keeping personal boundaries. This is difficult for many people. With our friends, we may worry that they will think we are selfish and uncaring if we don't do everything they ask. At work, we may worry that others will think we are lazy or inefficient if we don't do everything we are asked. But other people cannot possibly know how busy you are, how much you dislike a particular task, or what other plans you have already made unless you tell them. Most people would feel badly to learn that you had done something for them that you really didn't have the time for (e.g., writing a report that requires you to work all weekend) or that you really dislike doing (e.g., helping a friend move).

Final Tip:
Although it's important to test skills out and use the trial and error process, we can learn a lot from observing others. Ask yourself who you feel comfortable interacting with - what do they do (smile, etc.). Try to identify some of the things that other people do that make you feel good interacting with them and then try doing those things yourself.

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What is Problem-Solving?

Problem-solving is an important skill for our mental health. Problems that don't go away can take a big toll on our overall well-being. If left unsolved, a small problem can become a much larger problem. This can leave us feeling frustrated, stressed, hopeless and even depressed. When we choose to solve our problems, it allows us to deal more effectively with the stressors in our lives and we are able to continue moving forward.

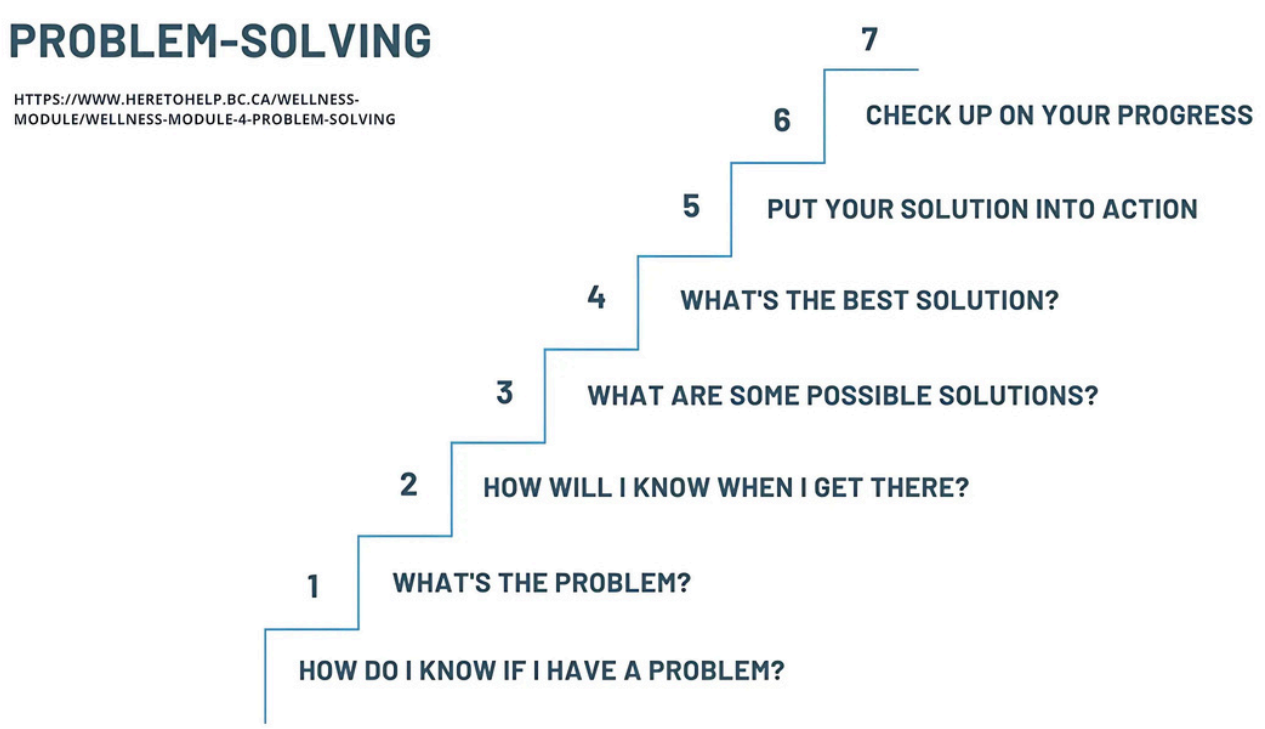
Problem-Solving has other benefits, including:

- Increased functioning at school and/or work
- More positive relationships with friends, family members and co-workers
- Builds our self-esteem
- Increases life satisfaction



Some problems are bigger than others and are not as easily solved. These problems can create stress and impact our well-being. The initial response may be to cope with these problems the way we would with other problems we've faced in the past. However, until we come up with the correct solution, the problem won't go away and will continue to impact our lives.

For difficult problems, there are steps we can follow in order to try to best solve them. In the following pages, you will come to learn the 7 steps involved in effective problem-solving. If you want to learn more, visit www.heretohelp.bc.ca and look at their problem-solving module.



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Problem Solving Worksheet

We all deal with problems almost every day of our lives. Fortunately, we can solve most of our daily problems by thinking up a solution on the spot or using a strategy that worked for us in the past.



Step 1: How do I know I have a problem?

Using your feelings

What emotions am I having? (Frustrated? Anxious? Depressed?)

What is happening? Describe the situation.

What is happening that is making me feel this way?

Make a List

Write out a list of problems that come up again and again.

Look for Opportunities

What are the positive aspects of the problems listed above?

Step 2. What's the problem?



What is going on right now? What is making me feel upset?
For example: I have too much work to do in a day

What would I like the situation to be?
For example: I would like to have less work to do in a day

What is the obstacle standing between what I would like the situation to be and what the situation is right now?
For example: The boss wants me to do all the work

Describe the problem as a question.
For example: How can I get the boss to assign me less work?

Step 3: How will I know when I get there?



This step helps us to figure out how we will know when the problem is solved. To do know this, we can ask ourselves questions about what we would like to change about the situation and imagine our ideal outcome.

What would need to be different for this problem to be better? If you don't know the steps to get there, we could sometimes use the SMART goal to to identify how we get there.

What could I change about this situation?

What's the ideal outcome?

Step 4: What are some possible solutions?



Brainstorm as many different ideas as you can without judging them (be sure to include some wild and silly examples).

Step 5: What's the best solution?



Use the questions from the problem-solving module to help you decide which solution is the best for you. You can give each solution a score from 0 to 5 for each question. The solution with the highest score is probably the BEST solution for your problem.

Possible solution #1

Will this solution help me reach my goals and solve my problem? Rate:
(0=not likely; 5=most likely)

If I choose this solution how good or bad am I likely to feel? Rate:
(0=the worst; 5=the best)

How much time and effort will this solution require? Rate:
(0=the most; 5=the least)

Does this solution have more benefits than costs if I choose it? Rate:
(0=mostly costs; 5=mostly benefits)

Possible solution #2

Will this solution help me reach my goals and solve my problem? Rate:
(0=not likely; 5=most likely)

If I choose this solution how good or bad am I likely to feel? Rate:
(0=the worst; 5=the best)

How much time and effort will this solution require? Rate:
(0=the most; 5=the least)

Does this solution have more benefits than costs if I choose it? Rate:
(0=mostly costs; 5=mostly benefits)

Possible solution #3

Will this solution help me reach my goals and solve my problem? Rate:
(0=not likely; 5=most likely)

If I choose this solution how good or bad am I likely to feel? Rate:
(0=the worst; 5=the best)

How much time and effort will this solution require? Rate:
(0=the most; 5=the least)

Does this solution have more benefits than costs if I choose it? Rate:
(0=mostly costs; 5=mostly benefits)

Possible solution #4

Will this solution help me reach my goals and solve my problem? Rate:
(0=not likely; 5=most likely)

If I choose this solution how good or bad am I likely to feel? Rate:
(0=the worst; 5=the best)

How much time and effort will this solution require? Rate:
(0=the most; 5=the least)

Does this solution have more benefits than costs if I choose it? Rate:
(0=mostly costs; 5=mostly benefits)

Step 6: Put your solution into action



Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Relevant
Timely

Plan of action

Laying out a step-by-step plan can be helpful by breaking up a task into smaller, more manageable tasks. Use the boxes below to write out your action plan in steps.

Write down the steps needed to carry out your solution, making each step a SMART goal. The SMART principle can help you set goals that are clear, realistic, and actionable.

Step 1:

Step 2:

Step 3:

Step 4:

Step 5:

Step 7: Check up on your progress

Did I solve my problem?

If not, what went wrong?



If the problem isn't better at all, try the following:

- Ask yourself if anything is different; has anything changed?
- Maybe try another one of your solutions.
- Check if you followed the steps in the problem-solving approach correctly.

Remember to be proud of yourself for taking these steps and for any progress you've made, no matter how small! If you keep using this approach it will get easier.

Testing Your Thoughts



CATCH IT

1. What is the situation?

   John does not take out the garbage when it's his turn.

2. What am I thinking or imagining?

   He never pulls his weight around the house.

3. How much do I believe it? *(a little, medium, or a lot)*

   I believe it a lot.

4. How does that thought make me feel? *(e.g., angry, sad, nervous, etc.)*

   Angry.

5. How strong is the feeling on a scale of 0-100?

   About a 85 out of 100.



CHECK IT

6. What makes me think the thought is true?

   He often puts off his chores and I end up doing them.

7. What makes me think the thought is not completely true?

   He does do the dishes often

8. What's the worst that could happen?

   John doesn't take out the garbage until the whole house starts to smell.

9. What's the best that could happen?

   He takes the garbage out immediately, all on his own.

10. What will probably happen?

    I will remind him to take out the garbage and he will take it out sometime today.



CHANGE IT

11. What will happen if I keep telling myself the same thought?

    I will snap at John and cause us to get into a fight.

12. What could happen if I changed my thinking?

    I could appreciate the things he does do and talk to him about the garbage calmly.

13. What would I tell my friend _____Pat_____ if this happened to them?

    I would tell my friend that although that's frustrating to deal with, it's not worth ruining your relationship over.

14. What's another way of thinking about this?

    John sometimes doesn't do chores as quickly as I would like, but there are other ways that he contributes. I'll wait a bit and talk to him calmly.

15. How do I feel now? Rerate the intensity on a scale of 0-100.

    A little bit better. I feel a bit less angry. About a 60 out of 100 now.

Testing Your Thoughts



CATCH IT

1. What is the situation?
2. What am I thinking or imagining?
3. How much do I believe it? *(a little, medium, or a lot)*
4. How does that thought make me feel? *(e.g., angry, sad, nervous, etc.)*
5. How strong is the feeling on a scale of 0-100?



CHECK IT

6. What makes me think the thought is true?
7. What makes me think the thought is not completely true?
8. What's the worst that could happen?
9. What's the best that could happen?
10. What will probably happen?



CHANGE IT

11. What will happen if I keep telling myself the same thought?
12. What could happen if I changed my thinking?
13. What would I tell my friend _____ if this happened to them?
14. What's another way of thinking about this?
15. How do I feel now? Rerate the intensity on a scale of 0-100.