

Structured Problem Solving

A practical path from a problem to a workable next step

Use this process for a specific, current problem that you can influence. The aim is not to find a perfect answer, but to clarify the problem, choose a realistic response, and take the next useful step.

- **1 Define the problem**
Be specific about what is happening.
- **2 Set the goal**
What would I like to be different?
- **3 Identify what you can influence**
Focus on what you can influence. Accept what cannot be changed, then adapt by choosing how you respond and where to place your energy.
- **4 Brainstorm options**
List as many possible actions or solutions as you can.
- **5 Choose an option**
Consider likely benefits, drawbacks, and how realistic it is right now.
- **6 Chunk and schedule**
Break the option into smaller, manageable steps. Decide the first step, when, where, and for how long you will do it.
- **7 Review and adjust**
See how it went. What did you learn? Adjust your plan or try a different option.

Is there a workable action?

Can I act now or make a plan for later?

-  **Yes** — use this worksheet.
-  **Not yet** — gather information, seek support, or schedule a return time.
-  **No direct action right now** — accept what cannot be changed, then adapt your response and focus.

Accept • Adapt • Focus



Accept

Recognise the parts of the situation that cannot be changed directly.



Adapt

Choose how you want to respond, what support may help, and where to place your energy.



Focus

Return to what remains within your influence and take the next useful step.

Helpful reminders



Small steps

Progress comes from manageable actions, not perfect solutions.



Self-compassion

Be patient with yourself. Problem solving is a skill you are practising.



Influence

Put your effort into what you can influence. Accept and adapt around the rest.



Review

Every attempt gives you information. Adjust the plan rather than judging yourself.

Adapted from Problem-Solving Therapy.

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