

Facilitator Guide: Practice Problem Solving

Introduction: Why Problem Solving Matters

You Say:

"Avoiding problems is something many of us are used to doing, especially when we've used our behavior of concern to cope. But recovery means facing life more directly and finding new ways to handle challenges. The Problem Solving tool helps us do that by offering a simple structure to think things through."

Key points to highlight:

- In the past, many of us used our behavior of concern to **avoid or escape problems**.
- This tool teaches a new way: **face problems and solve them directly**.
- It's about **finding workable solutions**, not perfect ones.

Step 1: Introduce the Problem Solving Steps

You Say: "Here are five steps we can use when we're faced with a challenge:

1. **Define the problem** – What exactly is going on?
2. **Brainstorm possible solutions** – List as many ideas as you can without judging them.
3. **Evaluate the options** – What are the pros and cons of each?
4. **Pick one** – Choose a solution that seems realistic and worth trying.
5. **Create a plan** – What steps will you take, and when?"

Facilitator's Role:

- Walk through each step using a group example or brief reflection.
- Normalize that it's okay to feel stuck at any point—the goal is to practice.

Step 2: Group Practice or Guided Reflection

You Say: "Let's either try this together as a group or take a few minutes to reflect on your own."

Group option:

- Use a shared, low-stakes example like "trouble managing time," "stress before appointments," or "feeling isolated."
- Go through each of the five steps together.

Individual option:

- Invite participants to choose a current problem and walk through the steps on their own.
- Provide space for quiet reflection or journaling.

Facilitator Quick Tips:

- Encourage small, doable solutions, not every option needs to be perfect.
- Reinforce effort, especially when participants are trying something new.

Step 3: Encouraging Ongoing Use

You Say:

"It's okay if solving problems doesn't feel easy right away. Like anything new, it takes what we call the **Three Ps**—Practice, Patience, and Persistence. These skills grow stronger the more we use them."

"The more you use this skill, the more natural it feels. Try using it on paper, talking it out with someone you trust, or thinking through the steps when something comes up."

Optional Reflection Questions:

- What's one problem you'd like to approach differently this week?
- Which step feels easiest for you? Which one is a challenge?
- How does solving problems directly support your recovery?

Summary

The **Practice Problem Solving** tool helps participants move from avoidance to action. With five simple steps, they learn to face challenges directly and create workable plans, building confidence and resilience in the process.