

**Job Corps TEST Project**

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**Problem  
Solving  
Workbook**

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**Behavioral Science Associates**

**Problem Solving OBJECTIVES:**

- Help me identify problems.
- Help me make responsible decisions.
- Help me guard against impulsive actions.
- Help me learn how to ask for help and information.
- Help me learn how to solve my own problems.

**Problem Solving REQUIREMENTS:**

- Attend 6 weekly Problem Solving Sessions on (day) \_\_\_\_\_; at (time) \_\_\_\_\_.
- Participate in session discussions and demonstrations.
- Complete Skill Card Role Play Assignments.
- Complete Workbook Assignments.
- Fill out Problem Logs.
- Bring Skill Cards and Workbooks to every Session.

**Problem Solving REWARDS:**

- I will be able to stay in control and solve problems.
- I will be able to earn REWARDS:
  - \_\_\_\_\_ for 2 Skill Assignments;
  - \_\_\_\_\_ for Workbook Assignments;
  - \_\_\_\_\_ for Skill Checks;
  - \_\_\_\_\_ for video and session demonstrations.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Witnessed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Session 1 Problem Solving Introduction

**Decisions:** Every day we have to make decisions or choices. We decide when to get up, what to wear, what to eat, what to do, who we want to talk to, what we want to accomplish, etc. Some decisions and problems are so easy that we make them without much thought. Others are more difficult and are likely become our problems.

How many *easy* decisions do you make in an average day? \_\_\_\_\_

How many *hard* decisions do you make in an average day? \_\_\_\_\_

Total decisions per day? \_\_\_\_\_

**Types of Problems:** There are three different types of problems that you are likely to have.

- 1) **educational/work problems**— these are decisions and tasks involved in your vocational and educational training at the Center.
- 2) **relationship problems**— these are problems that we have with others (teachers, friends, parents, bosses, etc.)
- 3) **personal problems**— these are our own problems that we have with ourselves.

Can you think of examples of each type of problem?

1) **educational/work problems** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2) **relationship problems** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3) **personal problems** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Problem Solving Introduction (continued)**

**Why Not Quit?** Although almost all problems can be solved, problem solving takes effort. One way to solve a problem is just to give up and quit. Usually this makes sense only when the goal is not very important or when the obstacles are very great.

One way of quitting is to fool ourselves into thinking that something is too hard or just not worth the effort when it really is. Can you describe a time when you've done this? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What would happen if you quit too soon or too often? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Problem Solving Training.** Problem solving is how we make decisions that will help us get what we want. It is easier to solve problems if you have a system for working on them. In this program you will learn how to make decisions and solve problems so that you can overcome obstacles and reach your goals.

**Goals and Obstacles:** Most problems have two different parts– goals and obstacles.

- 1) goals– this is what we want.
- 2) obstacles– this is what gets in the way of what we want.

**Problem  
Situation  
Examples**

List below:

- 1) some of your goals (the things that you have wanted to get or to accomplish); and,
- 2) the obstacles that get in the way of the goals.

**You ⇨ Problem Solving ⇨ Goal**

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Problems are a normal part of our daily lives. We can't avoid them & complaining doesn't help– so we need to learn how to solve them.

**Problem Solving Introduction (continued)**

**Setting Realistic Goals.** An important step in problem solving is to set good goals for yourself. These are goals that are good for you and are worth the effort it takes to achieve them. Bad goals are either not worthwhile or are too hard or too easy. To set and achieve good goals we have to be able to think realistically about our abilities and be willing to work for what we want. List below examples of some bad goals you have set (too easy, too hard, not worthwhile) and change them into good goals.

Bad Goals	Good Goals
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Good Goals Take Hard Work.** As a general rule, large important goals take more effort to achieve than small goals. Rate some of your small & large goals below. (Tip: Try breaking large goals into several small ones.)

Small Goal	Large Goal
<u>do 1 homework assignment</u>	<u>get my GED</u>
easy 1-2✓3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 hard	easy 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9✓10 hard
_____	_____
easy 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 hard	easy 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 hard

**Problem Solving Key Steps.** The Training will cover the following five key steps to problem solving. The major challenge for each step

Step	Challenge
🔑 1. Problem Identification.	<i>What's the problem?</i>
🔑 2. Stop & Think.	<i>How do I stay in control?</i>
🔑 3. Generating Alternatives.	<i>What are my choices?</i>
🔑 4. Decision Making.	<i>Is this the best plan?</i>
🔑 5. Monitoring & Evaluating.	<i>How well did I do?</i>

# Session 1 Homework Assignment

## Skill Card Assignment

### **I - Goal Setting**

1. DECIDE on the GOAL you'd like to accomplish
2. LIST the BENEFITS of reaching the goal
3. RECOGNIZE any OBSTACLES to reaching goal
4. EVALUATE the value of attaining the goal
5. DECIDE whether to WORK for goal attainment

	Situation	Date	Staff
<input type="checkbox"/> Role Play #1	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Role Play #2	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Extra Credit	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Extra Credit	_____	_____	_____

Workbook Assignment	Page
<input type="checkbox"/> Number of Easy & Hard Decisions	3
<input type="checkbox"/> Types of Problems	3
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem Examples	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Why Not Quit?	4
<input type="checkbox"/> Bad & Good Goals	5
<input type="checkbox"/> Goal Effort & Goal Value	5

# Session 2

## Problem Solving Steps

1. What's the problem?
2. How do I stay in control?
3. What are my choices?
4. What's the best plan?
5. How am I doing?

### 1 Problem Identification. *What's the problem?*

Before You Can Problem Solve- you have to be able to:

- 1) Recognize that you have a problem; and,
- 2) Identify what the problem is.

#### I Recognizing When You Have a Problem

**Problem Warning Signs.** Sometimes the first indication that you have a problem may be when you have uncomfortable thoughts and feelings. What are your problem signals?

- |                                              |                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> uncertainty         | <input type="checkbox"/> confusion                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> angry               | <input type="checkbox"/> worried                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> restless            | <input type="checkbox"/> think about getting away |
| <input type="checkbox"/> feel like giving up | <input type="checkbox"/> frustration              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____        | <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____             |

**Your Problem Warning Signs.** The thoughts and feelings that you usually experience when you have a problem will be your best *early warning signal*. Sometimes these are the same as the Anger Signs you listed in the Anger Control Module. What is your best problem signals:

*Warning  
Signals*




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## Problem Identification (continued)

### II. Identifying What The Problem Is

**A. Problem Identification.** Once you have recognized that you have a problem, the next step is to define the problem as clearly as you can. To do this, you will need to ask yourself several questions.

**Directions.** Think of a problem that you have and answer the following questions about it.

1. What is my goal? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What do I want to happen? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What do I want to accomplish? \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. What are the obstacles? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What is getting in the way? \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. What do I need to change? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What do I need to do? \_\_\_\_\_

Problem identification makes us to act like *detectives examining clues*. We have to figure out what is *fact* and what is *opinion*. *Facts* are what we know to be true. *Opinions* are what we think is true.

**Caution!**  
**Trick**  
**Question**

When Joe didn't get a letter from his girl friend for 2 weeks, he decided she didn't like him and decided to break-up with her. Was this decision based on fact or opinion?

- \_\_\_ (a) fact  
 \_\_\_ (b) opinion

**Answer:**  (b) opinion. Joe didn't *know* that she didn't like him anymore. What if she still liked him but was sick and couldn't write. Then he would have made a mistake when he broke up with her.

Problem Identification (continued)

II. Identifying What The Problem Is

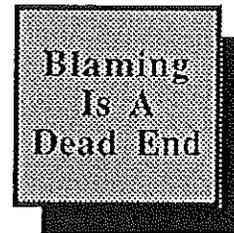
B. Progress Language. The language that you use in defining the problem is also important. Problems can either be identified in a way that leads to:

- 1) discouragement and defeat (Dead End Language); or,
- 2) optimism and positive change (Progress Language).

Examples:



My problem is:  
 "My teacher."  
 "My girl friend."  
 "The Job Corps."  
 "The staff."



My problem is:  
 "I'm not sure what my teacher wants me to do."  
 "My girl friend doesn't like my other friends."  
 "The fact that I miss my friends back home."  
 "The staff gives me a hard time for not working."

Directions: Pick a problem and define it first in dead-end, and then, in progress language. Note the differences in terms of your attitude, motivation for change, and the number of good ideas that result from each type of definition.

Dead End Language: \_\_\_\_\_

Progress Language: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Conclusion:** How clearly your problems are defined will determine how effective your problem solving will be.

Problem Solving Log I

Time/ Day	Situation	Problem Recognition Warning Signs:	Problem Identification Goal: Obstacle(s): Change(s):
1.		Warning Signs:	Goal: Obstacle(s): Change(s):
2.		Warning Signs:	Goal: Obstacle(s): Change(s):
3.		Warning Signs:	Goal: Obstacle(s): Change(s):
4.		Warning Signs:	Goal: Obstacle(s): Change(s):

# Session 2 Homework Assignment

## Skill Card Assignment

**2 - Problem Identification**

1. RECOGNIZE you have a problem (*signs*)
2. IDENTIFY the problem (*goals & obstacles*)
3. DEFINE the problem with *facts*, not *opinions*
4. DEFINE problem with *progress language*
5. DECIDE what you need to do

	Situation	Date	Staff
<input type="checkbox"/> Role Play #1	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Role Play #2	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Extra Credit	_____	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Extra Credit	_____	_____	_____

### Workbook Assignment

	Page
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem Warning Signs	8
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem Identification Questions	8
<input type="checkbox"/> Facts & Opinions Question	8
<input type="checkbox"/> Dead-End & Progress Language	9
<input type="checkbox"/> Problem Log I	10

# Session 3

***Problem Solving Steps***

1. *What's the problem?*
2. *How do I stay in control?*
3. *What are my choices?*
4. *What's the best plan?*
5. *How am I doing?*

## ‡ 2 Stop & Think. *How do I stay in control?*

**Staying In Control.** In order to problem solve and make good decisions we have to stay in control of our emotions and our behavior. We must learn how to keep from acting impulsively by pausing and slowing things down. Many of the same skills used for anger control can be used to keep our cool and keep control for effective problem solving.

**Impulse.** We call our first reactions to a problem *impulses* and people who act on the first reactions are described as *impulsive*.

**Impulse Actions.** People usually have a general tendency or style when they are acting impulsively. Some people get upset with others, others get upset with themselves. Some may want to run away from problems and others want to attack. What are your *impulse actions*? \_\_\_\_\_

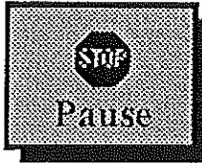
Usually the first things that we think of (our *impulse actions*) are not very good for us. Can you think of examples when your first ideas were not very good, but later you had good ideas and acted more wisely.

Impulse	Later

***Guard Against Impulse Actions***

Stop & Think (continued)

Pause Techniques. Use pause techniques to prevent acting impulsively.



Pause Techniques. The second step in problem solving is to pause and get control. The same pause techniques you use for anger control can be used to keep control in problem situations:

- Count To Ten
- Repeat *problem solving reminders*
- Deep Breathing
- Use *distracting behaviors*

Pause Techniques. Review the following, and select the ones that will help you slow things down and stay in control.

1. **Count To Ten.** Just look away from the thing that you are getting upset about and slowly count from 1 to 10 to yourself.
2. **Take A Deep Breath.** This technique is used by athletes and others who need to calm themselves down.
  - Breathe in slowly through your nose, filling your lungs.
  - Hold the breath in for a moment.
  - Slowly exhale through your mouth.
  - As you exhale, let your muscles relax and say calming words to yourself- *calm....relax...chill out.*
3. **Control Reminders.** Talk to yourself using positive self-instruction statements. Select statements that you can repeat to yourself.
  - A. **Preparation-** when you begin to think about the stressful situation.
    - I can handle this.*
    - Stop worrying and just do it*
    - \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. **Confrontation-** during the conflict or stress.
    - I'm cool and in control.*
    - Take it one step at a time.*
    - \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. **Arousal-** as you begin to get upset.
    - Take a deep breath.*
    - Keep your cool.*
    - \_\_\_\_\_
  - D. **Afterward-** use these statements to self-reward.
    - I kept my cool.*
    - Log it- another success.*
    - \_\_\_\_\_

### Stop & Think (continued)

#### Pause Techniques

4 **Distracting Behaviors.** List behaviors that you can use to distract yourself so that you can slow down and get the time to problem solve. (You may have practiced this as part of Anger Control.)

- |                      |                               |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| • exercise           | • listen to music             |
| • talk to a friend   | • talk to staff               |
| • go off by yourself | • sleep                       |
| • watch TV           | • think about pleasant things |
| • other: _____       | • other: _____                |
| • other: _____       | • other: _____                |

**Your Best Pause Techniques** List the Pause Techniques you will use:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**To Get What You Want  
You Have to Stay in Control**

**Conclusion:** To problem solve, you have to:  
1) avoid being impulsive & jumping to conclusions; and,  
2) use pause & distracting techniques to slow things down and stay in control;