



P R O B L E M - S O L V I N G
T R A I N I N G (P S T)



THIS PST WORKBOOK WAS DEVELOPED BY:
SHANNON B. JUENGST, PHD, CRC

IN COLLABORATION WITH:
CHUNG LIN (NOVELLE) KEW, PHD, CRC
ALEXANDRA HOLLAND, LMSW

**THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS WORKBOOK WAS
SUPPORTED BY THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTIONS:**
UT SOUTHWESTERN MEDICAL CENTER
TIRR MEMORIAL HERMANN
TEXAS A & M
UT RIO GRANDE VALLEY
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

COPYRIGHT © 2023 BY SHANNON B. JUENGST
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

NO PART OF THIS PUBLICATION MAY BE REPRODUCED,
DISTRIBUTED, OR TRANSMITTED IN ANY FORM OR BY ANY
MEANS, INCLUDING PHOTOCOPYING, RECORDING, OR
OTHER ELECTRONIC OR MECHANICAL METHODS, WITHOUT
THE PRIOR WRITTEN PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER,
EXCEPT AS PERMITTED BY U.S. COPYRIGHT LAW. FOR
PERMISSION REQUESTS, CONTACT PUBLISHER.

CASE EXAMPLES, ALL NAMES, CHARACTERS, AND
INCIDENTS PORTRAYED IN THIS PRODUCTION ARE
FICTITIOUS. NO IDENTIFICATION WITH ACTUAL PERSONS
(LIVING OR DECEASED), PLACES, BUILDINGS, AND
PRODUCTS IS INTENDED OR SHOULD BE INFERRED.

Foreword

Problem-Solving Training (PST) helps people learn a step-by-step process to solve problems, make decisions, and achieve goals. It can help people cope with life stressors and manage day-to-day activities. Research studies on PST show that PST is effective, and that people enjoy PST and think it is helpful. This workbook will be a complete guide for you to learn the PST strategy and use it to manage everyday challenges and goals in your daily life.

The workbook has five major sections, which you will see in the Table of Contents. In the first section, you'll get an introduction to and an overview of PST. The second section will describe the PST strategy in detail, to help you understand why each step is important and what you should do at each step. The third and fourth sections are the Steps of PST and Thing/Areas Thank Are Making Me Stressed worksheets. These worksheets are your guide for using the PST strategy. You will use them in sessions - if you are doing PST with a therapist or coach - and/or on your own. The fifth section is an example of how to fill out the Steps of PST worksheet, which may be helpful as you use the worksheet to apply the PST strategy to a goal or problem of your choosing.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

02

PROBLEM-SOLVING TRAINING (PST)
STUDY OVERVIEW

04

INFORMATION SHEET: MORE ABOUT THE
STEPS OF PST

08


STEPS OF PST WORKSHEET

10

AREAS OF STRESS WORKSHEET

12

STEPS OF PST EXAMPLE



PROBLEM SOLVING TRAINING

ABC APPROACH TO PROBLEM SOLVING

ABCDEF - THE STEPS TO PROBLEM-SOLVING

A is for **Assess**: Assess the Problem/Goal. What is the problem/goal about? Write down a clear description of ONE problem/goal to work on. If it is complicated, try to break it down into smaller problem/goals and consider them one at a time. Think through or find out all about this problem/goal. When, where, who, why? What would you like to happen? Set a realistic goal about the problem/goal.

B is for **Brainstorm** Solutions: What are different things you could do about the problem/goal? List as many as you can. Do not rule anything out.

C is for **Consider** and **Choose**: What are the pros and cons of each idea? Pick ONE to try out that seems best—the most do-able and likely to succeed.

D is for **Develop** a plan and **Do** It! Try the one you picked. Write out exactly what you will do first to make sure you have thought of everything. Write down how you will decide if your plan worked or did not work.

E is for **Evaluate**: How did it work? What has gotten better? If it worked, keep it up. If it needs to be changed, make some changes and try again.

F is for **Flex**: It's a reminder that not every plan works the first time, don't give up. We can make adjustments to your plan and try again.



PROBLEM SOLVING TRAINING

INFORMATION SHEET: MORE ABOUT THE STEPS OF PST

A – Assess the problem/goal at hand. It is important to get all the facts about the problem/goal to figure out solutions. What exactly is the problem/goal? How often does it occur? What triggers the problem/goal (who, what, where, and when does it happen)? How important is it to you or others (urgent, important, or just annoying)? Is this a problem/goal that is feasible to solve – that is, a problem/goal that you, yourself, can have some control over? Sometimes it is important to break up a big problem/goal into small pieces. Then you can tackle one small piece at a time. You will want to define the problem/goal in a way that is easy to measure your progress. It usually helps to be clear on how you want the problem/goal to change. It should be realistic; something you can really do or make progress on between now and our next visit. For instance, if someone is having trouble sleeping, their goal in working on that problem/goal might be to sleep 7 hours a night. So, when you set a goal, think of two things.

One, you have to be able to measure whether you've reached the goal successfully (something like "I want to sleep 7 hours a night" is easier to measure than "I want to sleep better"). Two, your goal has to be realistic. Most do not get 8 hours of uninterrupted sleep EVERY night.

B – Brainstorm possible ways to reach or solve your problem/goal. There are usually several ways to solve a problem/goal. The more creative ideas you come up with when you are brainstorming, the better. This way you have more potential solutions. The more ideas you come up with, the better – do not cross anything out just yet. Lay all your ideas out on the table – no matter how silly they may sound – you can figure out the pros and cons of each after you have a list of ideas.

C – Consider and Choose a strategy to try out. The first step in choosing is to list the pros and cons of each solution; that is, what part of each solution that would make it easy to do, and what would make it hard to do. What are the things that would help the solution and what are the obstacles or barriers? Other things to consider are time commitment, cost, effort, consequences and effect on others, and other factors such as needing others to help. After comparing the pros and cons of all the possible solutions, choose one out to try. This should be the solution that seems to have the best chance for success, has the fewest negatives, and is something you feel that you would really be able to do.

It is often easy to toss out the strategies that are just not usable. For instance, if having money to pay a bill is the problem/goal, robbing a bank is not the best solution due to all cons, although it may be on the list. Remember, the solution you pick may not be ideal, but doing something about the problem/goal is likely to be better than doing nothing.

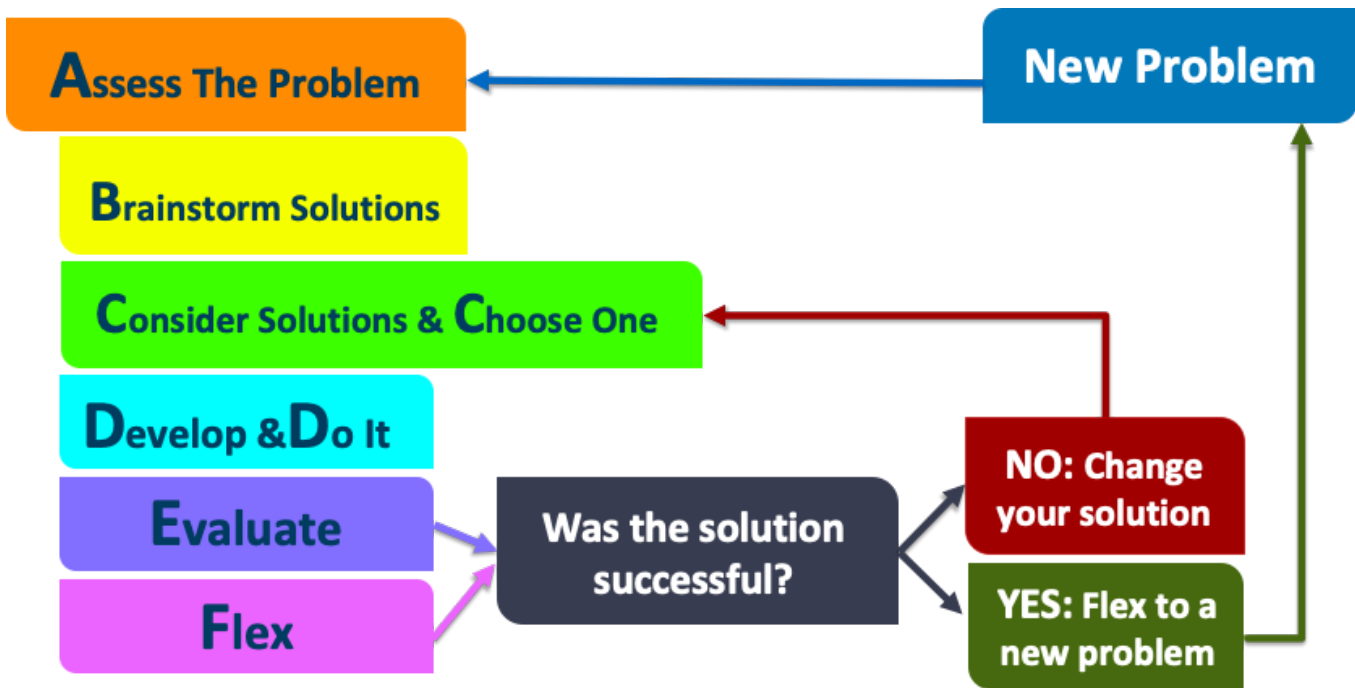
D – Develop a Plan and Do It. Figure out a plan of action. What are the steps of your chosen solution? What am I going to do? When will I do it? Where will I do it? Are there any obstacles or barriers that might be in the way? You get the idea. The more specific you are in planning, the more likely it is that you will be able to carry out your plan of action. Decide what it will have happened if you achieve your goal. Also decide what will have happened if you partially achieve your goal or exceed your goal. Finally, what will not have happened if you do not achieve your goal. When you finish the plan of action, try it out. Remember, you may need to try it more than once. Most changes take practice to get results.

E – Evaluate your plan of action. Did your solution work completely or partially? Go back to how you defined achieving, exceeding, or not achieving your goal and decide if your plan worked. What did and did not work so well? Did something get in the way? What could you do differently to make it work better? How did it feel to try out the plan?

You may need to adjust the plan and try it again. OR, you may decide that this just did not work and go back to your list of possible solutions to choose another plan of action.

F – Flex. Do not give up. Maybe you need some help in solving a particularly sticky problem/goal or overcoming an obstacle. And remember to congratulate yourself when you make progress and when your solution works! Sometimes we forget to take credit for smart thinking and persistent action.

PST STEPS (ABCDEF) AT GLANCE





Assess the PROBLEM/GOAL:

Goal:

Brainstorm SOLUTIONS:	Consider and Choose:	
	PROS	CONS

Develop a PLAN and Do it:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Evaluate:

Better than I thought:

Met goal:

Still needs work:

Flex:

1.

2.

3.

Evaluate:

Better than I thought:

Met goal:

Still needs work:

THINGS/AREAS THAT ARE MAKING ME STRESSED

This worksheet can help you identify things or areas in your life that may be contributing to your stress and making it more difficult than usual for you to get things done. Take a little time to describe how you are doing in each of the areas below. Try to be specific and as descriptive as you can.

Relationships

Stressors in this area might include conflict, communication issues, and need for more support in personal and professional relationships.

Work

Work-related stressors like high workload, deadlines, job security, or conflict with people can affect your emotional well-being and productivity.

Money and finances

Financial problems, including debt, not making enough money, bills, or unexpected expenses, can create ongoing stress and anxiety, affecting one's ability to focus and solve problems effectively.

Sleep/Rest

We all need good quality sleep and rest to manage daily responsibilities and think clearly. Too much or too little sleep and feeling worn out from different activities might be areas to work on.

Exercise

Exercise and being physically active is good for your health and a great way to manage stress. But, it can be hard to set realistic fitness and physical activity goals.

Social/Leisure time

We all need balance between our responsibilities and fun or relaxing activities. Prioritizing hobbies, socialization, or relaxation might require specific planning.

Nutrition

Eating healthy can be difficult and stressful. Some nutritional goals might be limiting alcohol and caffeine, eating more fruits and vegetables, or meal planning.

Environment

Our environment, like home or work setting, affects how we feel. Making sure it is comfortable, organized, and safe could help you relax and focus better.

Time Management

Poor time management and disorganized routines can lead to you running late, feeling overwhelmed, or not having enough time to do the things you need to do.



Caring for others

Many of us have others that rely on us to support or take care of them. Sometimes asking for extra help or putting your own needs first is necessary for your own well-being and stress.



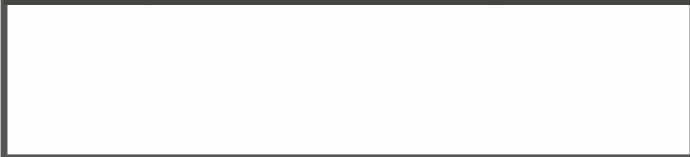
Thinking skills

You may have difficulty with tasks that requiring cognitive skills like focusing, paying attention, concentrating, organizing your thoughts, remembering things, or learning new things.



Spirituality/Religion

Moral or ethical conflicts, participation in a worship community, and spiritual or religious practice like prayer or meditation may be goals for you.




Behavior(s)

The struggle to manage personal behaviors, such as impulsiveness, procrastination, or avoidance, can lead to stress, particularly if these behaviors interfere with daily functioning or relationships.



Other important area(s) that might be contributing to stress



Which of these areas are most important to you in reducing your stress? Which are the ones where a small change might make a big difference? These are the ones to keep in mind when you are feeling overwhelmed. Making even small changes in these areas may improve the way you feel overall, help you think more clearly, and feel less overwhelmed.

Mood

Mood, including anxiety or feeling sad, angry, or irritable, can cause stress and making problem-solving more difficult.



Health

Managing your physical health and chronic illnesses or conditions can be stressful. It may require taking medications, visiting healthcare providers, or managing symptoms.



Assess the PROBLEM/GOAL:

I feel drained because I'm not able to do a lot of the things that I used to enjoy before because I can't leave the house and leave Paul alone at home since he has dementia. Paul also does not like to go out. I have not talked with my friends as much as I used to and I am starting to feel like I am being cut off from the world, and that everything I do revolves around taking care of Paul. I miss volunteering at my community garden and spending time at church with my friends. Now, I rarely leave the house during the week, and I am beginning to feel sad and stressed a lot.

Goal: Spend more time doing things I enjoy.

Brainstorm SOLUTIONS:	Consider and Choose:	
	PROS	CONS
Garden with my husband at home.	Don't have to go anywhere, it's something we can do together.	Expensive; might run out of place; still just me and him not with anyone else.
Take my husband to church with me.	Don't need to find anyone to watch him, doesn't cost any money.	He might get tired and acts up; he only wears old shirts, he might not get to the bathroom on time.
Call my friends once a week.	Super convenient and doesn't cost any money.	Still not leaving the house, not actually seeing my friends or doing anything.
Use an Adult Day Center ★	He can socialize; gives me peace of mind, and chance to go do things	Could be expensive, have to get him dressed and in the car, drive there); he may not like it
Ask a neighbor to stay with my husband for an hour or two.	More affordable than day care; I know and trust my neighbor; husband like being at home	Can't do this a lot or for a long time (not fair to neighbor), neighbor does not know a lot about dementia/might be busy.
Leave my husband by himself.	I could do things I like without him	Not safe, he could hurt himself; would be worrying the whole time so I couldn't enjoy myself.

Develop a PLAN and Do it:

1. Use the Adult Day Center locator (available in a resource guide given to care partners of persons with dementia) to locate an Adult Day Center near their house.
2. Call and ask if the Adult Day Center had any openings and was available to help my husband 1-2 times a week.
3. Repeat steps 1 & 2 until I locate an Adult Day Center that has openings.
4. Schedule when I will drop off and pick up my husband. Call my friends to schedule a meet-up during this time.
5. Pay what is needed.
After dropping my husband off, go get a coffee or something with friends.

Evaluate:

- Better than I thought: Located Adult Day Center + Used services more than once a week
- Met goal: Located Adult Day Center + Used services once a week
- Still needs work: Did not locate Adult Day Center/didn't go

Flex:

1. Schedule when I will drop off and pick up my husband. Call my friends to schedule a meet-up during this time.
2. Start getting my husband ready an hour before we have to leave - make sure that his clothes are on the bed and watch him put them on. Tell him he is going for a meeting.
3. Drop him off and meet my friends for lunch.

Evaluate:

- Better than I thought: Used services more than once a week + Met friends once
- Met goal: Used services once a week and met up with my friends once
- Still needs work: Did not use Adult Day Centers services

THIS PAGE IS INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



