
INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Problem solving

We all use problem-solving skills in our everyday lives. For example, if we are hungry, we take several steps:

- Identify the problem (I am hungry)
- Think of how to tackle the problem (I need to eat something)
- Consider and analyse the different options (crisps: too unhealthy, banana: none left, sandwich: don't fancy, roast dinner: too long to cook, toasted teacake: not too filling, but won't spoil my dinner, doesn't take too long to make, have them in cupboard... perfect!)
- Plan how to do it (go into kitchen, get teacake from cupboard, slice it in half...)
- Review how it went (am I still hungry?)

We may not think of these as skills, as they come so naturally, but every time we decide what we need to do and how we are going to do it, we are using problem-solving skills. Much of the time, we do this without thinking about it, or calling it problem-solving. However, when we feel down or worried, or have to face new difficulties, it can be difficult to find solutions or think of different ways of doing things. Using a structured, problem-solving approach to dealing with difficulties is a simple but effective way of taking control of our lives and of

dealing with things which may, at first, seem overwhelming. You may find it useful to complete the problem solving sheet on the next page to help you get started.

Further sources of information

Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. Stating a web address does not imply we endorse a particular site. Neither does not stating a web address imply lack of endorsement.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

The PALS team is available to help with any of your comments, compliments or concerns and will ensure a prompt and efficient service. Contact details:

- King's Mill Hospital **01623 672222**
(out of hours answer phone)
Email: Pals.kmh@sfh-tr.nhs.uk
- Newark Hospital **01636 685692**
(out of hours answer phone)
Email: Pals.nwk@sfh-tr.nhs.uk

If you need this information in a different language or format, please contact PALS, as above.

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Step 1	Identify the problem Break it down into smaller steps and decide what you want to action first
Step 2	Write down as many ideas as you can that might help solve the problem, no matter how silly they seem – don't dismiss any possible solutions.
Step 3	Consider the pros and cons of each possible solution, using a separate piece of paper.
Step 4	Choose one of the possible solutions that looks likely to work, based on the advantages and disadvantages
Step 5	Plan out step-by-step what you need to do to carry out this solution. What? When? How? With whom or what? What could cause problems? How can you get around those problems? Is this realistic and achievable?
Step 6	Do it! Carry out the plan
Step 7	Review how it went. Was it helpful? Did you achieve what you set out to achieve? If not, how could you have done it differently? Did you achieve any progress, however small, towards your goal? What have you learned?
Step 8	If you achieved your goal – consider tackling the next step of your original problem. If you didn't fully achieve your goal – make adjustments to your chosen solution, or return to steps 3 and 4 and choose another possible solution.