



# How to solve problems

If you feel anxious or depressed, your problems may seem overwhelming. To cope better, it may be helpful to approach your problems in a different way and correct your negative thought patterns. You can do this by using a technique called 'Structured Problem Solving' (SPS). Approaching your problems with SPS helps to put them in perspective.

SPS may help with problems such as:

- relationship problems with your spouse or partner
- family troubles
- problems with children
- unemployment, problems and/or stress at work
- financial problems
- housing problems
- medical issues
- issues with sex or sexuality
- feeling isolated from friends
- drug and alcohol problems
- problems studying.

## What is Structured Problem Solving? (SPS)

Structured Problem Solving is a method designed to work logically through your problems.

SPS helps you to:

- recognise what's caused you to feel this way
- become aware of the support you have, your personal strengths and how you coped with similar problems in the past
- develop an approach to deal with current difficulties
- feel in control of your problems
- deal more effectively with problems in the future.

## How does SPS work?

These are the steps to follow the SPS approach:

### Step 1:

List the problems that are worrying or distressing you and write them down.

### Step 2:

Identify the problem that's causing the most stress and write it down.

### Step 3:

Work out what options are available to deal with the problem and write them down.

### Step 4:

List the advantages and disadvantages of each option, taking into account the resources you have – such as friends, other people to talk to and finances. You might find the table overleaf helpful for writing down your thoughts.

### Step 5:

Identify the best option(s) to deal with the problem.

### Step 6:

List the steps you need to carry out this option.

### Step 7:

Carry out the best option and then think about whether it has worked for you and whether you'd do this again.

## Structured Problem Solving table

| Problem | Options        | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|---------|----------------|------------|---------------|
| 1.      | 1.<br>2.<br>3. |            |               |
| 2.      | 1.<br>2.<br>3. |            |               |
| 3.      | 1.<br>2.<br>3. |            |               |
| 4.      | 1.<br>2.<br>3. |            |               |

### Where to find more information

#### *beyondblue*

[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

Learn more about anxiety, depression and suicide prevention, or talk through your concerns with our Support Service. Our trained mental health professionals will listen, provide information, advice and brief counselling, and point you in the right direction so you can seek further support.

 1300 22 4636

 Email or  chat to us online at [www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport)

#### Head to Health

[headtohealth.gov.au](http://headtohealth.gov.au)

Head to Health can help you find free and low-cost, trusted online and phone mental health resources.



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