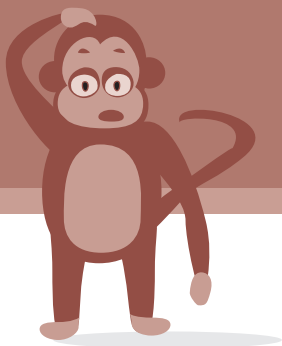


SOLVE YOUR PROBLEMS



We solve problems every day. Many problems are small and can be solved easily. Other problems are not so easy to fix. Ignoring problems can make them worse—and leave us feeling upset, frustrated, stressed, and even depressed or hopeless. Here are seven steps to help you take control of your problems.

Step 1: Is there a problem?

It's easy to overlook problems or concerns until they become bigger or more complicated. Pay attention to your feelings—they might be telling you that there is a problem that needs to be fixed.

Step 2: Define the problem

You can't solve a problem until you know what the problem is! Ask yourself:

- What's the situation right now? What's making me feel upset?
- What would I like the situation to be?
- What's standing between me and my ideal situation?

Step 3: Choose a goal to help you describe what needs to change

Remember that goals should be SMART: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-limited.

Step 4: Think about solutions

Look at every solution that comes to mind (even ridiculous ones!). Sometimes the best solutions aren't the solutions that come to mind first. Write down as many as you can think of. Ask for help from people in your life.

Step 5: Choose a solution

The perfect solution rarely exists. Choose the solution that is most helpful. A good solution ...

- Actually solves the problem
- Makes you feel better, or doesn't make you feel bad
- Takes a realistic and appropriate amount of your time and energy
- Benefits you and others more than it harms you and others

Step 6: Put your solution into action

Try writing out each step in your plan so you know exactly what to do.

Step 7: Evaluate the outcome

Did your solution solve the problem? If it did, congratulations! If not, that's okay. You might need to work through the steps a few times to find a solution that works best.

