We All Have Problems

Sometimes we run into problems when we try to change our eating habits. However, by taking the right steps, we can solve those problems.

When working on changing our lifestyle to healthy eating and physical activity, our problems can be as small as a schedule change or as big as an injury. No matter what the problem is, we can take steps to keep it from getting in the way of progress toward our goals.

The Five Steps

Five steps to problem solving:

1. Describe the problem.
2. List all your options.
3. Pick what seems to be the best option, and try it.
4. Make a plan for putting the option into effect.
5. Follow the plan.

Quick Fact

What is the difference between type 1 and type 2 diabetes?

Type 1 diabetes is usually diagnosed during childhood or young adulthood. It was once called “juvenile diabetes.”

With type 1 diabetes, the body stops making insulin. As we know from Session 1, insulin is a hormone that changes the sugar (or glucose) in the food we eat into the energy we need to live.

Type 2 diabetes used to be called “adult-onset diabetes” because until recently few children had this form of the disease.

With type 2 diabetes, the body either does not use insulin effectively and eventually does not make enough insulin.
Why Do These Steps Work For Problem Solving?

Following these steps helps us to be more in control of unexpected setbacks. The steps also force us to be detailed in our search for solutions. Describing the problem helps us to see what we are truly dealing with. The steps also help us to break down the problem into small pieces that we can manage. Then we don’t feel helpless to overcome the problem.

Thinking about and writing down all our options helps us to see the choices available to us. Picking the best option requires us to weigh the pros and cons and then to choose the option that we believe will work best for us.

Give It a Try!

Making a plan to put the best option into practice and trying it out are the final steps we take to solve our problem. We might not make the right choice at first because many events can get in the way of our being more active and eating less fat and fewer calories. But no need to panic! We can overcome our difficulties. We can lose weight and keep it off.

During this session, we will go over each problem solving step in detail.
Step 1: Describe the Problem in Detail

When describing the problem, do the following:

- Be specific.
- Look at what led to the problem.
- Find the action (or behavior) chain.
- Try to see the links in the action chain. Look for —
  - Cues that make you want to eat or be inactive.
  - People who do not support you.
  - Thoughts or feelings that get in your way.

Example: Sarah's Action Chain

1. Did not eat lunch
2. Boss was angry
3. Felt stressed and anxious
4. Came home tired, upset, and hungry
5. Went right to the kitchen
6. Saw cookies on counter
7. Ate cookies
Step 2: Brainstorm Your Options

Think of all the options you have for overcoming the cues you listed in Step 1. Pair them with each event in the action chain that led to the problem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events (Links) in Sarah’s Action Chain</th>
<th>Some of Sarah’s Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did not eat lunch.</td>
<td>☐ Pack a bag lunch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boss was angry.</td>
<td>☐ Talk with boss about solving the problems at work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah felt stressed and anxious.</td>
<td>☐ Quit job. (Just kidding, but not really.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Take a break.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Get support from a co-worker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Came home tired, upset, and hungry.</td>
<td>☐ Go for a walk after work to unwind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Eat a healthy snack.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went right to the kitchen.</td>
<td>☐ Enter house through different door.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Plan something to do immediately after arriving home. (For example, go out in the yard, clean a closet.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saw cookies on counter.</td>
<td>☐ Do not buy cookies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ If other family members have cookies in the house, keep them out of sight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>☐ Keep fruit in sight.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 3: Pick One Option to Try

You have thought about a lot of options, and now it is time to pick one. Follow these guidelines for picking the best option for you.

- Weigh the pros and cons of each option.
- Choose one that is likely to work and that you can do.
- Try to break as many links as you can, as soon as possible.

Sarah's Example

- It will be much easier for me to control my eating in the evening if I eat lunch and do not come home hungry.

- I can avoid the cookies if I do not buy them in the first place.

- Even if I eat lunch, I may still come home hungry. If I do not buy the cookies, it will be easier to choose low-calorie snacks such as fruit when I get home.
## Step 4: Make a Positive Action Plan

Your plan should include each action you will take to make a change in your eating cues. See the example below of the actions Sarah will take.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Plan</th>
<th>Sarah’s Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I will . . .</td>
<td>Pack a bag lunch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When?</td>
<td>Tuesday and Thursday of next week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will do this first...</td>
<td>Shop for food for the bag lunch.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pack lunch the night before.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roadblocks</td>
<td>I might forget to pack or bring the lunch. If so,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I’ll find a healthy lunch place with quick service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• I’ll order a turkey sandwich for delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will do this to make my success</td>
<td>Ask a friend who brings bag lunches to work to join me for lunch on Tuesday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more likely...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This final step is to put your plan into action.

☐ Try your plan. Afterwards ask yourself these questions:

1. Did it work?
2. If not, what went wrong?
3. What can I do next time to make this plan work better?
4. What other plan can I try if this one will not work?

☐ Problem solving is a process.

If your plan does not work, then try each step again. Look closely at the events that led to the problem, and try to find other options that will solve your problem.

Remember: Do not give up!
Problem Solving Practice

Create a plan for using the five problem solving steps, and write down the details of your plan in the space below.

1. Describe the problem in detail. Be specific.

_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

2. Brainstorm your options.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chain of events that lead to unhealthy eating</th>
<th>Options to overcome cues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Pick one option. Is it likely to work? Can you do it?

___________________________________________________________

4. Make a positive action plan.

I will: ______________________________________________________

When? ______________________________________________________

I will do this first: ___________________________________________

Roadblocks that might occur: I will handle them by:

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

I will do this to make my success more likely:

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

How can the Lifestyle Coach and other program participants help me to be successful?

__________________________________________

__________________________________________

5. Try it!
To-Do Next Week

During the next week I will —

- Keep track of my weight, eating, and physical activity.
- Try my positive action plan.
- Answer these questions:
  Did my action plan work?
  ____________________________
  ____________________________
  If not, what went wrong?
  ____________________________
  ____________________________
  What could I do differently next time?
  ____________________________
  ____________________________
- Collect menus from restaurants that I go to, and bring them to the next session.