

PROBLEM-SOLVING MODULE

Using the RESCUE Website to Take
Charge of Your Loved One's Care



RESCUE

Resources & Education for Stroke Caregivers'
Understanding & Empowerment

Part 1: Introduction

As a stroke caregiver, you will face challenges every day.

This module will help you work through these challenges using a problem-solving approach.

Objectives:

1. Discuss the role of creativity and optimism in problem-solving.
2. Identify the problem-solving steps.
3. Search the RESCUE Website to find health information.
4. Develop a personalized plan to help solve your problem.



What is a Problem-Solving Approach?

A problem-solving approach refers to working through the details of a problem to find a solution.

Components of A Successful Problem-Solving Approach

Creativity

Optimism

Planning

Expert Information



Creativity is when you use your imagination to come up with ideas.


Example:

Viewing the problem from a new perspective.

- ❖ Take a step back from the problem.
- ❖ Try to view the problem through someone else's eyes.
- ❖ Think about how that person might solve the problem.

Tips for Being More Creative

- Brainstorm a lot of ideas.
- Don't be afraid to try new things.
- Carry around a small notebook to write in. Creative ideas often strike when we least expect it.
- Talk to others. Listening to how someone else handled a problem may trigger new ideas for you.



Think of a time when you have been
creative in solving a problem.

Optimism is having a positive attitude and being able to see good in things.

Examples:

- Viewing caregiving as a challenge, not a burden.
- Thinking good thoughts about yourself and the job you are doing as a caregiver.
- Giving yourself a pep talk.
 - “I can handle it!”
 - “Good job!”

Tips For Being More Optimistic

Practice getting rid of negative thoughts

- Focus on things you can do
- Take it one step at a time
- Replace negative thoughts with positive thinking & good memories
- Forgive and forget your mistakes
- Relax about things you can't change



Think of when a positive attitude has
helped you handle a problem.

Planning is when you lay out the steps it will take to reach a goal.

The planning steps are:

- ❖ Step 1: Identifying the problem
- ❖ Step 2: Prioritizing the problem
- ❖ Step 3: Selecting the highest priority problem
- ❖ Step 4: Gathering Expert Information
- ❖ Step 5: Setting realistic goals
- ❖ Step 6: Listing all possible solutions
- ❖ Step 7: Choosing the best solution
- ❖ Step 8: Evaluating the plan



Step 1: Identify your problems

Think of all of the problems you are facing. Write them down.



Step 2: Prioritize your Problems

Number your problems from most burdensome to least. Label the most burdensome problem as #1.



Step 3: Identify Your Highest Priority Problem

The problem you marked as #1 is your highest priority problem.



Step 4: Gather Expert Information

Search for information related to your problem. Be sure you get your information from a trusted source.

Good Sources of Information

- ❖ Healthcare providers

- ❖ Trusted Websites

 - ❖ RESCUE

 - <http://www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue/>

 - ❖ American Stroke Association

 - <http://www.strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/>

 - ❖ My HealthVet

 - <https://www.myhealth.va.gov>

- ❖ Medical Books

- ❖ Health care pamphlets or hand-outs

Step 5: Set Realistic Goals

Choose a small, reasonable goal at first. Once that goal is reached, you will be more confident. You will feel better able to reach the next goal.

Step 6:List All Possible Solutions

Write down all the solutions you can think of to solve your problem.

Along with creative new solutions, think of how you have solved problems in the past. Can a past solution help you solve your current problem?

Step 7: Choose the Best Solution

Weigh the pros and cons of each solution. Select the solution(s) you believe are most likely to be successful.

Step 8: Evaluate Your Plan

Pick a time to evaluate your plan. For example: 1 week, 3 weeks, 1 month.

Ask yourself:

Does my plan seem to be working?

Is the problem getting better?

Have I given my plan long enough to see improvement?

Do I need to make changes to my plan?

Let's Review

How can creativity be useful in the problem-solving approach?

Answer:

- ❖ Creativity allows you to use your imagination to come up with new ideas on how to solve problems.

Why is optimism important in the problem-solving approach?

Answer:

- ❖ A positive attitude will help you to approach caregiving as a challenge, not a burden.

What are the steps in the problem-solving plan?

Answer:

- ❖ Step 1: Identifying the problem
- ❖ Step 2: Prioritizing the problem
- ❖ Step 3: Selecting the highest priority problem
- ❖ Step 4: Gathering Expert Information
- ❖ Step 5: Setting realistic goals
- ❖ Step 6: Listing all possible solutions
- ❖ Step 7: Choosing the best solution
- ❖ Step 8: Evaluating the plan

REMEMBER

C.O.P.E. can help you face the challenges of caregiving with Creativity and Optimism.

You can create a successful Plan by using Expert information.

Part 2: Practice Example

Alice became a caregiver when her father suffered a stroke two months ago. Over the last month, Alice has become increasingly stressed. She admits to feeling resentful of her new role. She is unsure if she can continue to care for her father.

Step 1: Alice Identifies Her Problems

- No time for herself
- Her father is agitated & yells at her frequently
- Solicitors call all day long for overdue bills
- Her father is incontinent. She has to change the bed frequently.

Step 2: Alice Prioritize Problems

1. No time for herself
2. Her father is incontinent and she has to change the bed frequently
3. Her father is agitated & yells at her frequently
4. Solicitors call all day long for overdue bills

Step 3: Alice Identifies Her Highest Priority Problem

1. No time for herself

3. Her father is agitated & yells at her frequently

4. Solicitors call all day long for overdue bills

2. Her father is incontinent and she has to change the bed frequently

Step 4: Alice Gathers Expert Information using the RESCUE website

Alice looks at the RESCUE Fact sheets:

- Getting Help from Family, Friends and Community
- Caregiver Stress & Depression
- Taking a Break from Caregiving (Respite Care)

Step 5: Alice Sets a Realistic Goal

Alice's goal is to set aside 1 hour each day to do something for herself, like take a walk or read a book.

Step 6: Alice Lists All Possible Solutions

Below is information found on the RESCUE website:

- Make a list of what tasks you need and who you can ask. Getting help with household chores like laundry and cleaning can free you up for “Me Time”.
- Remind others that your loved one enjoys friendly visits. During these visits, you can get a short break to go for a walk or have lunch with a friend.
- Check with the social worker at your local VA medical center about Respite Care. A number of local VA and community resources are available.

Step 7: Alice Chooses the Best Solution

Alice decides to ask her teenage daughters to help do the dishes and wash their own clothes. This will free up extra time for Alice.

Step 8: Alice Evaluates Her Plan

In the last 4 weeks, Alice has motivated her daughters to help out more around the house. With the additional help, Alice is now able to enjoy one hour to herself each evening.

Part 3: Individualized Practice Exercise

Now it is your turn to make a Problem-Solving Plan.

RESCUE WEBSITE

<http://www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue/>

Print out the problem-solving diary found on the RESCUE website.

Step 1

Take a moment to think of the problems you are having and write them down.

Step 2

Number your problems from most burdensome to least burdensome.

Remember: Try to think of your problems as challenges. Positive thinking is an important part of the problem-solving approach.

Step 3

Identify your priority problem.

Step 4

Look on the **RESCUE** website to gather information.

Step 5

Using the information that you find, set a realistic goal for solving your problem.

Step 6

List all possible solutions that you can think of.

Step 7

Pick the best solution(s) to make your plan.

Remember: Try to be creative when solving problems.

Step 8

Pick a time to evaluate if your plan.

For example: 1 week, 3 weeks, 1 month

At that time, ask yourself:

- How is it going?
- Is your plan working out?
- Do you need to alter your plan?

References

Houts, P.S. (Ed.). *Eldercare at Home*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: The AGS Foundation for Health in Aging; 2004.

Houts, P.S., Nezu, A.M., Nezu, C.M. & Bucher, J.A. (1996). The prepared family caregiver: a problem-solving approach to family caregiver education. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 27, 63-73.