Problem-solving worksheet

Work on one practical problem. Include options that share the load or change the circumstances.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

Specific problem

e.g. Three tasks are due on the same day.

What I want to change

e.g. A realistic order and deadline for each task.

Possible option	Benefits / support needed	Drawbacks / feasibility
e.g. Ask to move one deadline.	e.g. More time; manager's agreement needed.	e.g. May affect another team's timing.

My plan: who, what and when

e.g. Discuss priorities with my manager on Tuesday.

What happened at review

e.g. One deadline changed; two priorities agreed.

Next step or source of help

e.g. Review the plan if another urgent task arrives.

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Using this resource

Problem-solving worksheet

What this helps with

When several problems compete for attention, thinking harder can become another source of overload. Structured problem solving narrows the task to one specific difficulty and a step you can actually try. It works best for a practical problem with some possibility of action. It is less useful for repeatedly asking what might happen in an uncertain future. You can acknowledge that uncertainty while choosing what is within reach today.

How to use it

1. Describe one specific problem and a realistic outcome you would prefer.
2. List several options before judging them, including asking for help.
3. Compare likely benefits, costs, feasibility and any safety concerns.
4. Choose one small step; specify who, when and what support is needed.
5. Review what happened on an agreed date and adapt the plan.

A fictional worked example

Lewis felt overwhelmed by missed household bills and kept reopening the same letters without acting. He defined the immediate problem as not knowing which payment needed attention first. Possible options included making a short list, contacting the providers or asking a trusted relative to sit with him. He chose to list the letters on Saturday morning with support, then contact one provider about available arrangements. The plan did not solve every financial difficulty, but it made the next action clear. At review he noted which information was still missing and decided whether specialist advice would be useful.

Keep in mind

Use qualified advice for financial, legal, employment or medical decisions; this sheet organises thinking rather than providing that advice. If there is immediate danger, act on safety needs first. Problems outside your control may need support and acceptance of limits rather than more planning.

Sources and attribution

NHS. Every Mind Matters: Problem solving.

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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