

Constructive Problem Solving

Working together to solve individual and family problems is an important characteristic of resilient families. It can build a sense of support within a family, where family members support one another and work together to solve problems that arise and remind each other that they do not have to face them alone.

Families who work together are better prepared to tackle problems in a constructive way.

Constructive problem solving is a process that involves family members co-operating with one another to identify the causes of stress and worry in their lives and to identify and test possible solutions to these issues.

Step 1: What is the problem?

Think about and discuss the problem.

Write it down as a need or a goal rather than as a vague issue (e.g. 'I need to find a job', rather than 'I don't know what to do with myself' or 'I need to have more money in the bank', rather than 'I haven't got enough money').

Write the problem here:

Step 2: List all possible solutions

Brainstorm and put down all ideas, including any that you are not sure about.

Do not make a judgement about any of them yet.

Step 3: Weigh up/discuss each option

Go down the list of options and look at the main advantages and disadvantages of each one. Sometimes giving each option a star rating or a number value out of 10 can help decide which ones work better.

Make notes next to all your possible solutions above.

Step 4: Choose the best or most practical solution

Choose the solution that can be carried out most easily with your current resources (time, money, skills etc.) It does not have to be the perfect solution – there rarely is such a thing.

Step 5: Plan how to carry out the best solution

Include the things you need to do, the resources you require, the hurdles you need to overcome. What I/we need to do:

Resources needed:

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Problems to overcome:

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Step 6: Put the plan into action

Carry out the option you have chosen.

Step 7: Review how effective the solution was

Congratulate yourself on trying to solve the problem, rather than doing nothing!

If you didn't achieve the outcome you hoped for, decide what you might do differently, perhaps go back to step 3. Repeat this problem solving process as many times as needed.

You can make notes here about what you might do differently next time

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