

HANDOUT P/C/P-15. 1

Problem-Solving Examples

EXAMPLE #1

Jim lives with his 3-year-old daughter in a small apartment. Jim's sister lives nearby, and he has enjoyed seeing her in these last few months, especially since their relationship had been really difficult for a long time. After many years of heavy drinking, Jim has been sober for 9 months, and he is going to have his first job interview after many years of not working. In addition to being excited and also a little nervous about the interview, he is really worried about not having anybody to leave his 3-year-old daughter with. Although Jim had arranged for a babysitter to come, he just used his last few dollars the day before to buy a few groceries. What could he do?

EXAMPLE #2

Kim has just begun working part-time as a checker at a grocery store, and she has recently started going to church. She wants to start a new life by moving to a different place because her neighbors are nosy and noisy, and the neighborhood doesn't feel safe anymore. Kim's family lives in another city, but her younger sister will soon be moving nearby. Kim has lived in her current apartment for 9 years now, and she just doesn't know how to begin finding another place. The problem just seems overwhelming right now.

EXAMPLE #3

Carlos's life has not been easy these last few years, but he really wants to "get his life back on track." He has recently moved to a small house in his old neighborhood. His cousin, who owns the home, said Carlos could stay there while he gets back on his feet because after years of heavy drinking and using drugs, Carlos has been clean and sober for 5 months. He is proud of his accomplishment and wants to move forward with his life. While Carlos is really glad to be back in familiar circumstances, he is also beginning to feel worried about hanging out with his old buddies, many of whom still drink a lot and often use drugs. He doesn't like to feel bored, so he is wondering what he could do to fill his spare time now.

From Velasquez, Crouch, Stephens, and DiClemente (2016). Copyright by The Guilford Press.

Problem-Solving Steps

1. The problem/decision is:

2. Possible solutions (brainstorm creatively, don't stop too soon):

a.

b.

c.

d.

3. Take each solution above and consider its pros and cons.

Solution

Pros

Cons

a.

b.

c.

d.

4. Select one solution to try:

From Velasquez, Crouch, Stephens, and DiClemente (2016). Copyright by The Guilford Press.

Goal Setting and Change Plan (Example)

My problem substances are:

This includes a list of the substances that cause you problems.

My goal for changing my substance use is:

This includes the exact changes you plan to make. For example, if abstinence is not your immediate goal, by how much will you reduce your use? Be specific about amounts and plans. Here are two examples from other clients:

"My problem substances are alcohol and cocaine. I plan to quit using both of these substances and to remain abstinent."

"My problem substances are alcohol and marijuana. I plan to reduce my alcohol use so that I drink only three drinks a day on the weekend and do not drink during the week. I do not plan to change my marijuana use."

What steps I plan to take:

Be as specific as possible about the actions you will take to reach your goal. For example:

"I will stay away from my friends who use and I will avoid bars."

"I will plan healthy activities, such as exercising, to combat boredom and help me cope with urges to use."

What can get in the way:

Think about any barriers you might encounter as you work toward your goal. For example:

"I might get lonely or bored and want to spend time with old friends."

"My cousin might try to talk me into using because he thinks that's how we can have a good time."

People who can help me:

List people (or groups of people) who can help you as you work toward your goal. For example:

Other group members

AA friends

From Velasquez, Crouch, Stephens, and DiClemente (2016). Copyright by The Guilford Press.

My Goal Setting and Change Plan

My problem substances are:

My goal for changing my substance use is:

What steps I plan to take:

What can get in the way:

People who can help me:

From Velasquez, Crouch, Stephens, and DiClemente (2016), Copyright by The Guilford Press.
