

Problem Solving Treatment (PST)

PST Treatment:

- Brief: 6 sessions – 1 hour today, then 30 minutes
- Practically focused on current, real-life problems
- Collaborative between client and therapist

How It Works

- Depression is often caused by problems in life
- PST helps patients begin to exert control over the problems in their life
- Regaining control over problems improves mood and helps patients feel better

Depression is very common. It's often caused by problems of living. We all encounter problems in our lives, big and small, everyday. It's a normal part of living. Having problems isn't unfair, really; it's just a part of the way life is. If we let problems pile up unresolved, however, it can become overwhelming and lead us to feeling depressed. People who are depressed can learn ways of dealing with these problems. Using problem-solving skills, people can learn to cope better with their problems and feel better as a result.

We can almost always exert some degree of control over our problems. And, if we're able to tackle problems as they arise, it will decrease the likelihood that we become, or stay, depressed. A depressed mood is a signal that there are problems in one's life that need attending to and we can use this as a cue to take action. To stop and think: what problem might be troubling me? We can then put our problem-solving skills to work and begin to feel better.

Problem-solving is a systematic, common sense way of sorting out problems and difficulties. If you can learn how to problem-solve easily, you can lessen your depressive symptoms and feel better. In problem solving treatment, the therapist explains the details of the treatment and provides encouragement and support, but the ideas, plans and action come from you. Problem solving skills will not only be useful now, but can also help you when future problems arise.

PST has 7 important stages:

1. Write down a clear description of one problem to work on. What is the problem about? When does the problem occur? Where? Who is involved? Try to break up complicated problems into several smaller ones and consider each one separately.
2. Set a realistic goal. What would you like to happen? Choose a clear and achievable goal.

3. Brainstorm. List as many solutions as you can think of. Don't rule anything out.
4. Consider the advantages and disadvantages (pros and cons) for each potential solution. What are the benefits of each solution? What are the difficulties or obstacles?
5. Choose the solution that seems best. Which solution seems the most feasible and has the least impact on your time, effort, money, other people's effort, etc.?
6. Develop an Action Plan. Write down exactly what you will do and when.
7. Review and evaluate your progress. Make needed changes. How has this helped your mood?

Problem-solving may not solve all of your difficulties, but it can teach you a better way to deal with them. As you begin to feel more in control of your problems, your mood will feel better too.

The Importance of Pleasant Activities

When people get depressed they don't feel up to doing the kinds of things they typically enjoy. By doing fewer enjoyable things they begin to feel even worse. As they feel worse, they do even less, and get caught up in a vicious cycle of doing less and less and feeling worse and worse



As part of problem solving treatment we will help you set a goal of doing at least one pleasurable activity each day. In other words, arranging to provide yourself with a “treat” each day. Sometimes working on the problem of too few pleasant activities can be a simple and effective way to start to learn problem solving skills.

The positive benefits are:

1. You can use problem-solving steps to help with pleasurable activities
2. You will start to assert control over your life in a positive and beneficial way
3. Your success with doing pleasurable things will give you motivation to tackle some of the more difficult problems in your life.