

TIP SHEET 7.4

Problem solving for clients

You already encounter and deal with problems every day. Sometimes when we encounter problems, we get so involved that we can no longer see a possible solution. The following problem-solving steps are to help you deal with these more difficult problems.

Orientation: View a problem as simply a challenge rather than as a disaster. To do this, it is often easier to imagine that the problem is that of a friend instead of your own.

Define the problem: Define exactly what the problem is, and be as specific as possible. For example: you feel stressed because it is school holidays and the kids have been home from school all day. The kids keep demanding attention and complaining about being bored.

Brainstorm solutions: Remember: anything goes. For example:

- drink and ignore them
- go away and leave the kids to fend for themselves
- get a babysitter for a night, and go out with friends
- enrol the kids in a holiday activities program
- share childcare during holidays with someone else who has kids
- listen to a relaxation tape
- phone a friend
- take a long hot bath
- ask the kids to come up with a list of activities for them to do to stop them from being bored.

Make a decision: Weigh up the pros and cons of your solutions.

Decide on the preferable options. For example:

- I can't just leave the kids to fend for themselves.
- If I drink, I will probably just fall back into the trap of drinking all the time when things get tough.
- Having a long hot bath would be easy to do, and help me to relax.
- I know that Sally has two young children. She has often talked about us sharing child-care during the holidays. That would be easy to arrange.

Number 4 is the preferred option.

Try out the solution: Put the decision into action. Sometimes you might need to try out a chosen option with a friend before putting it into practice. This might be good when, for example, you're planning to approach someone about a tricky issue, or when you need to be assertive and say 'no' to a request that someone has made of you.