RE: SOLVE A Problem Solving Pathway
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Once we believe in ourselves, we can risk curiosity, wonder, spontaneous delight, or any experience that reveals the human spirit.

E. E. Cummings
Welcome to RE:SOLVE - a problem solving pathway!

You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes.
You can steer yourself any direction you choose.
You're on your own and you know what you know.
And YOU are the one who'll decide where you go.

Dr. Seuss

We all have problems from time to time, and mostly we deal with them. But sometimes the problems can be too hard and leave us feeling stressed out. Luckily, there is a solution - the RE:SOLVE pathway!

What is the RE:SOLVE pathway?
RE:SOLVE is a pathway for solving problems. It has clear signposts to follow, and helps you sort out your challenges - even the tricky ones. Other young people have used it and given it the thumbs up.

What's in it for me?
Following the RE:SOLVE pathway is like going on a journey. Along the way you will discover more about your own problem solving - the helpful bits and the not so helpful bits! You will find out new ways of knowing when a problem exists. And you will learn to follow the RE:SOLVE signposts to become a better problem solver.

You will use your whole self on this journey. Your whole self means your mind and emotions, your body, your spirit, and your family and community. Together, these things can help you to build the resolve that it takes to transform a problem into a solution.

What does resolve actually mean?
When you resolve something, you fix it. So RE:SOLVE is about fixing problems. That's one meaning.
Resolve is also a feeling of having really decided to stick at something. This feeling helps a lot when you are dealing with problems. Following this pathway will help you develop more resolve and determination in tackling life's tricky times.

We hope you enjoy your journey along the RE:SOLVE problem solving pathway.
**RE:SOLVE Nuts and Bolts**

**Practice!**

We want you to become a confident problem solver. For this, you will need to practice. Practice is a chance to try out what you learn in your sessions. It should also help with solving some of your problems.

You are the expert on your own learning. So you know what you need to practice. Use this self knowledge to sort out with your RE:SOLVE guide what you will work on between sessions.

**REMEMBER!** People who practice learn the pathway MUCH better than people who don’t.

**This Book**

This is your book to keep and look at. You can draw or make notes in your book if you want to.

**Your Safety Matters to us!**

You are taking part in RE:SOLVE because you came here after self harm which is serious. Taking part in RE:SOLVE can help you build on the times you have already sorted your problems in helpful ways. And to keep doing this in the future.

In the meantime, your safety is very important to us. So each time you meet with your RE:SOLVE guide they will check in with you about safety. They will ask about any thoughts of self harm you might be having. They will also ask how you are feeling in yourself. This way, you can get the help or support you might want or need. Please fill in these details so you always have them available:

- **RE:SOLVE Guide name:**

- **RE:SOLVE Guide Telephone Number:**

- **Crisis Team Telephone Number:**
Introducing Lydia and Michael

Lydia and Michael are two young people with some problems. They each had a very upsetting experience and they then decided to hurt themselves. This brought them to the RE:SOLVE pathway. You can follow them through the RE:SOLVE pathway as they travel along it for the first time. Michael and Lydia are based on real people but details that could identify them have been changed.

Lydia

Hey! My name is Lydia. I’m 16 years old and in year 12 at school. My family are complicated, but here goes. I have two homes, one with my mum and one with my dad. At Mum’s there is Mum, of course, and James my stepdad, my little brother Hamish – he’s 11 - and the newest person in the house, Emily. Emily is my half sister and she is 5 weeks old. She’s cute but it’s weird to have a sister so much younger. And she is really demanding. Like, do I still have a mother?? Am I still part of this family? Mum is just obsessed by the new baby. By the way, James and I do not get on. And now I’m related to him by blood. Gross.

The other house is my Dad’s and it has always been just us 3 – me, Dad and Hamish. I mean Dad has had girlfriends but no one really serious. But now he has a girlfriend who lives with him. So it’s all different. HE’s different.

My whole family have changed on me. Including Hamish – well actually he’s always been pretty weird. I mean, I really like him but sometimes I really hate him too. He was diagnosed with ADHD recently, which to me is another way of saying he’s really full on and annoying and I’m the one who has to deal with it most of the time. Everything is about Hamish. So, yeah, that’s my two homes.

As I said I’m in year 12 at school. School has always been pretty easy for me and I’m used to doing well. This year, though, it’s a lot harder. It feels like a really big jump from last year. So I’m pretty stressed out about keeping up. Especially because everyone expects me to do really well and not find it hard. So it’s really hard to talk to anyone cause they’re all like, you? Find it hard? Yeah right. And I’ve just got so much on. I’m one of the peer support people at school, and I’m on the school council, and I’m in the school production.

So the only person I can really talk to is my boyfriend, Liam. We’ve been going out for over a year now and he is amazing, he is just so cool. I can tell him anything. Well, I thought I could.

Which brings to me to how I came here. A couple of weeks ago now, I decided I had to stay home all weekend and catch up on things for school - nerd, I know. And I had to miss a party that all my friends were going to. I thought about going but Sunday would have been a write off. My boyfriend Liam still went which was fine. Anyway, at school on Monday there was all this gossip going around that he had been seen with someone else at the party. I was devastated. I couldn’t believe it. I mean, what could be worse? I felt like my whole world was falling apart, and I could never trust anyone again. So that’s when I decided to hurt myself and I ended up here.

When I was offered the chance to do RE:SOLVE I figured it couldn’t make things worse so I said yes.
Hi! I’m Michael. I’m 14 and I live with my mum and my little sister who’s 10. Mostly it’s just us but my mum has a boyfriend who stays quite a bit too. He’s one of the big problems in my life. He’s pretty aggro to my mum and sometimes to me and my sister. There’s been police involved sometimes and CYFS. I have a sort of a case worker/mentor from CYFS who comes and meets me at school to talk about home. He’s pretty cool.

Another problem for me is my dad. He lives in Palmerston North which is like, 6 hours from here! He split up with my mum when I was 5 and he has a new wife and new kids which is pretty weird. I hardly ever get to talk to him and I haven’t seen him for a few years.

At school I’m in year 10. I don’t really like school that much, it’s hard. The school counsellor reckons that’s because of being stressed out by home. Maybe it is, I don’t know.

I’ve got one really good friend, Thomas. We hang out together most of the time. I don’t really have any other friends. Apart from all that I’m really into music and I’m really into adventure books and graphic novels. Those are my favourite things to do. Also I write stories and stuff.

So anyway. How I ended up here. Well, not that long ago, I was meant to be visiting my dad in Palmie and staying for like, a week. I was pretty nervous but mostly really excited. I was kind of hoping I could tell dad about mum’s boyfriend and maybe he could help. But then Dad cancelled the whole thing. He said their little kids were really sick. I was gutted. I just thought it couldn’t get any worse and was never going to get better. I just thought it was all so hopeless. So yeah, that’s when I hurt myself and ended up here. And now I’m doing RE:SOLVE.
The Pathway At A Glance

“The mind can go in a thousand directions, but on this beautiful path, I walk in peace.”
Thich Nhat Hanh

You are now ready to start the RE:SOLVE problem solving pathway. Here is a picture of the complete pathway, from start to finish.
The Starting Post: Problem Orientation

"Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference"

Winston Churchill

What is Problem Orientation?

Problem Orientation is a name for how we THINK and FEEL about problems and our ability to solve them. Our thoughts and feelings decide how we ACT when faced with a problem. You could think of problem orientation as your attitude, or approach, towards problems.

Working on Problem Orientation is all about setting your internal compass so you are facing the right direction to start successful problem solving.

Positive Problem Orientation

Having Positive Problem Orientation means you see problems as a normal part of life. It also means you are confident you can solve them. You probably have a realistic and optimistic attitude towards solving problems. These all help with solving problems successfully.

REMEMBER! Positive problem orientation is NOT the sort of positive where you have to act as if you feel good about things! It’s more about being real and honest and facing things as they are.

Negative Problem Orientation

Having a positive problem orientation doesn’t come easily for everyone. DON’T WORRY if you think you have a negative problem orientation. It doesn’t mean anything is wrong with you. And it can be changed.

Having a negative problem orientation just means you feel threatened by problems and don’t feel confident you can solve them. You are probably much more likely to avoid problems. Or you might rush into trying to solve them without thinking things through carefully.
What is My Problem Orientation?

Knowing where you are at means you know where change is needed. This is a strength. 

So, take some time now to check out your problem orientation.

DON’T WORRY if you think you have a negative problem orientation. 
It DOESN’T mean anything is wrong with you!

Think about: Which thoughts and feelings seem most like me, most of the time?

Positive Problem Orientation

- I know problems are a normal part of life
- I see problems as challenges, a chance to sort things out
- I believe most problems can be solved
- I believe I can solve most problems
- I am prepared to put the effort in and stick at it until a problem is solved
- I am willing to solve problems when they happen

Negative Problem Orientation

- I often believe it is my fault when problems happen
- I worry that having problems means something is wrong with me
- I feel threatened by problems
- I don’t believe most problems can be solved
- I don’t believe I can solve most problems
- I feel frustrated and upset when problems happen
- I prefer to avoid problems
- I make decisions about problems really quickly without thinking it through too much

Is the first box most like you? 
Then you probably have a positive problem orientation and you are ready to move on.

Is the second box most like you? 
Then you probably have a negative problem orientation.

DON’T WORRY! It can change!!

Often people find that just by learning the RE:SOLVE pathway, their whole mindset becomes more positive.

ACTION: See the next page for some tips on developing or strengthening positive problem orientation.
**Tips for Developing or Strengthening Positive Problem Orientation**

1. When a problem crops up, tell yourself to STOP and THINK!
2. Notice the thoughts and feelings you are having (problem orientation)
3. If you need to, reset your internal compass!
4. Do this by reminding yourself about Positive Problem Orientation
   - Problems are normal
   - Problems can be solved
   - I can solve them
   - I can stick at it till they are fixed
   - I will face them.
5. When you feel ready, carry on!

---

**Flowchart Description**

- **I meet a Problem**
- **STOP AND THINK**
  - What are my thoughts and feelings?
- **Do I need to re-set my internal compass?**
  - Yes: **Remind myself about Positive Problem Orientation**
  - No: **Keep going With the RE:SOLVE Pathway**
Problem Orientation: Lydia and Michael

Where do Lydia and Michael each think they fit in terms of their problem orientation?

Lydia

I would say I was a mix of both but maybe with a bit more of the positive problem orientation than the other way round. I do know that problems happen to lots people but sometimes it feels like my problems are not normal. Maybe it’s just that I don’t know anyone else dealing with the same stuff. I definitely don’t have all the skills I need for solving things but one thing in my favour is that I’m pretty good at sticking with things. I’m really stubborn. I have never thought of looking at problems as challenges. I kind of like the idea though.

Michael

I fit pretty much in the negative problem orientation box. I just feel overwhelmed by stuff and I have no idea what to do about it all. So if I can avoid it and forget about the bad stuff, that’s what I try to do. I definitely get upset by problems and I wonder what I have done wrong to cause all this.

So that is how Lydia and Michael see themselves right now. Let’s check in with them again about their problem orientation when they have completed the RE:SOLVE pathway.

A few Words About You

Jot down a few words about how you see your problem orientation right now. Then you can check back later and see whether you can see any change.
The Second Signpost: Recognising and Identifying a Problem

“And above all, watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places.”

Roald Dahl

Before you can solve a problem you have to be able to recognise it exists and identify what the problem actually is. The second signpost is all about how to do these two things. There are three parts to this signpost:

1. creating a problem list
2. learning about your problem clues (recognising a problem is there)
3. turning your problem clues into concrete problems (identifying what the problem is).

Before we go on though, we should think about what a problem actually is!

What Is a Problem?

A problem is any situation we find ourselves in that we can’t find an effective solution for, pretty much straight away. An effective solution is one that solves the situation without creating bad side effects. For you or for anyone else.

A problem can be something that seems quite small. And something that is a problem for one person might be no big deal for someone else. But if you don’t know how to solve it, then it still counts as a problem. So don’t think that a problem has to be some big terrible thing. It doesn’t.

Ok. Let’s carry on with the three parts to this signpost!

First: Create a problem list

This is the easiest part of this signpost. Simply make a list of any problems that are on your mind already. Writing them down is the first step towards solving them.

Problems come and go as they are solved or new ones arise. This means your problem list should change too. Remember to cross problems off as you resolve them and add new ones if they come up.

ACTION: Write any current problems you are aware of into the blank list on the following page.
Problems on My Mind at the Moment.

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12
Second: Learn Your Problem Clues

Well done on beginning your problem list!

We don’t always know that we have a problem, though. Sometimes the first clue shows up in other ways.

Have you ever felt not quite right in yourself without really knowing what is wrong? If you have felt like this, you are probably noticing your problem clues!

Problem clues are changes in feelings, thoughts, actions and bodily experiences that mean a problem exists. We all have problem clues. It is important to learn about yours. When you know your unique problem clues, you can start listening to what they have to tell you.

ACTION: On the next page, there are some common problem clues. There are lots of other possible clues too.

1. Look at these examples and see if you relate to any of them.
2. Think about any others you have noticed in yourself.
3. Then fill in your problem clues worksheet on page 19.
Problem Clues: Examples

Problem clues are changes in your feelings, thoughts, behaviours, and bodily experience that tell you there is a problem that needs to be sorted out.

Thoughts
"Nothing ever goes right"
"I’m useless"
“This is all my fault"
"I can’t do it"
"I hate myself"
“Everyone hates me”

Feelings
Sad
Angry
Scared
Anxious
Agitated
Low
Tearful

Behaviours
Not going out
Not wanting to talk to friends
Angry outbursts - shouting and fighting
Eating more/less
Changes in eating
Use/misuse alcohol and other drugs

Bodily Changes
Tense muscles
Heart pounding
Can’t sit still
Can’t get moving
Can’t sleep
Fatigue
Not feeling like eating
Breathless
Dry mouth
My Problem Clues

Thoughts

Feelings

Behaviours

Bodily Changes
Third: Turn a Problem Clue into a Problem

So you know from your problem clues there is a problem. But you still might not know what it is. How can you work out what the problem actually is?

A good start is to talk with your RE:SOLVE guide. Tell them about what was going on when you first remember the problem clues starting. As you talk, you will probably figure out a number of possible reasons for the problem clues. This is great. You are on your way to turning those clues into a concrete problem you can understand and solve.

You could also talk with a close friend, a parent, a school counsellor, or write in your journal if you keep one. These are all good ways to work out the problem/s behind the problem clues.

**ACTION:** Write down the reasons (underlying problems) for your problem clues on the problem list you started on page 16.

Final Check

On the next page you will see a problem checklist. You can use this problem checklist to help you, in two ways:

1. If you feel stuck with understanding your problem clues, just look at the list and see whether any of the problems listed are the cause of your problem clues.
2. Or you can just check to see whether there is anything you have forgotten to add to your problem list.

**ACTION:** Take a few moments to read the problem list.

Are there any problems on this list that are in your life, but not yet on your problem list?

If so, add them to your list now.
A Checklist of Potential Problem Areas

1. Relationship with family (parents, siblings, or anyone else in your family)
2. Pressures / expectations / stress
3. Parents divorcing or separating
4. Loss or bereavement (someone you care for died or left)
5. Isolation / loneliness
6. Study / school / teacher problems
7. Friendship issues
8. Money problems
9. Relationship problems
10. Sexuality
11. Harassment / bullying / abuse
12. Alcohol or / and drug problems
13. Low self esteem
14. Physical health
15. Sexual problems
16. Eating difficulties
17. Difficulties with mood e.g. low mood, angry, depressed
18. Home environment
19. Discrimination
20. Sense of belonging
21. Body image

Or anything else you experience as a problem...
Problems on My Mind at the Moment: Lydia and Michael

When Michael and Lydia had gone through all the above steps, their problem lists looked like this. Your list may have more things on it, or it may have less.

Lydia
Whatever my brother needs takes over the household
Never get time with my mum since the new baby
Don’t get on with my stepfather (I really don’t like him)
Dad’s new girlfriend is making him weird
Overloaded by my school work
Upset by rumours about my boyfriend
Angry at having to look after my brother
No one to really talk to
Stressed out by all my commitments at school

Michael
Don’t get to see my Dad
Don’t get to talk to Dad
Sad about Dad cancelling my visit
Scared of Mum’s boyfriend
Don’t have many friends
Home life all over the place
Finding school hard
Have to look after my little sister all the time
Feel lonely quite a bit of the time
Feel unsafe at home
First: Choosing a Problem

It is time to choose a problem from your problem list so you can have a go at sorting it out.

How do you choose?

If you start with an easy or practical problem, you can learn the RE:SOLVE pathway quickly. Successfully solving a problem makes you confident about doing more problem solving. So we think this is the best approach. Then you can try tackling something more difficult.

The problem I choose to work on is:

ACTION: Great! You have chosen a problem to start working with. Now have a look at the flow chart on the next page. The flow chart helps you check whether this is a problem you have control over and can actually solve. If it isn’t, you may have to problem solve about how you can manage your feelings and behaviour towards the problem.
The Problem

I can do something about the situation. I have some control.

I can’t do anything about the situation. It is out of my control.

This is a problem I have influence over. I can attempt to solve it.

I can focus on my feelings about and actions toward the problem situation.

Now continue on the RE:SOLVE pathway. Your problem statement will be about the whole problem.

Now continue on the RE:SOLVE pathway. Your problem statement will relate to dealing with your feelings about, and responses to, the problem.
Second: Making a Problem Clear

The next part of this signpost is to make the problem as clear as you can. This makes it easier to think of possible solutions.

Your problem might be vague at the moment, such as “my life is a mess”, or “I’m having trouble with my parents”. But what exactly is the “mess”? What exactly is the “trouble with your parents”?

To make your problem clearer, you need to be a detective again and gather more information. Use these questions to help. They will help you build a database about the problem.

WHAT is the problem?
WHEN does the problem happen?
WHERE does the problem happen?
WHO else is involved in the problem?
HOW often does the problem happen?
WHAT have I done to solve the problem in the past?
DO I have control over this problem?
WHY is this problem a problem?

Writing a Problem Statement

Now, take all this information and turn it into a problem statement. How?

1. Start your problem statement with “I”: It says this is something you can change. Even if you are not responsible for the problem in the first place.
2. Next, look at the data you collected. What are you finding difficult? It might be something you: don’t know how to do…
   find hard to do …
   are stuck with…
   are confused about…
3. Finally, finish the sentence by describing the actual situation.

The problems above might become:

“I … don’t know how to… keep track of all the work I have to do for different subjects” OR
“I … don’t know what to do … about my parents because they are fighting a lot lately and it is upsetting me.”

Are you still stuck?
Ask yourself “If someone was filming you with this problem, what would they see?”
Then write a sentence to describe the scene.

ACTION: Use the guide sheet on the next page to help you make your problem clear.
Making a Problem Clear

Problem I Want To Work On:

Problem Defining Questions:
- What is the problem?
- When does the problem happen?
- Where does the problem happen?
- Who is involved in the problem?
- How often does the problem happen?
- What have I done to solve the problem in the past?
- Do I have control over this problem?
- Why is this problem a problem?

Clear Problem Statement:
Lydia

I decided to work on my problem of feeling overloaded by schoolwork. OK, at first I just wanted to sort things with my boyfriend Liam because I was so upset. I couldn’t think about anything else. But then, talking it over with my RE:SOLVE guide, I realised I didn’t even know if the rumours were true. So I am going to talk to him about it—Liam, that is. And then, if they are true I will definitely have a problem to work on! But school is also really bugging me. So I am going to work on the schoolwork problem.

Lydia’s Worksheet

Problem I want to work on:

Feeling overwhelmed by my schoolwork.

Problem Defining Questions

WHAT is the problem?

Lots of work due, with assignments due around the same time. I end up staying up late every night to try and get it done and getting muddled about which one to focus on first and how to divide up my time. I’m getting really tired from staying up working and don’t feel I’m making much progress.

WHEN does the problem happen?

Often at the moment as I have a lot of work due plus I have other commitments at school that are taking up time.

WHERE does the problem happen?

At home.

WHO else is involved in the problem?

No one really—just me.

HOW often does the problem happen?

Most days at the moment.

WHAT have I done to solve the problem in the past?

This is new for me. The workload last year was not so full on and I found it ok. Plus I didn’t have so many commitments at school.

DO I have control over this problem?

Yes.

WHY is this problem a problem?

It’s important for me to do well at school because I want to go on to uni and I really like doing all the different things outside classtime that I do at school. I figure if I can’t sort my workload now, how will I cope at uni?

Clearly defined problem statement

I don’t know how to manage the workload from school better so I am not feeling so stressed out.
Michael

When my Dad cancelled my trip to stay with him, it made me realise how much I miss him because I was so gutted by not going. I’ve always just thought there was nothing I could do about things with my dad so what was the point even thinking about it. I see other guys with their dads and with some of them, it’s like their dads help them with stuff. And I want that. And maybe talking to dad would help with feeling lonely too. When I went through the chart to see whether I could do anything about this problem, I thought I probably could do something. It isn’t all up to me but I could have a go at solving my part.

Michael’s worksheet

Problem I want to work on:
Really upset by Dad cancelling my trip to visit and don’t have very much contact of any sort with Dad

Problem Defining Questions

WHAT is the problem?
I hardly ever hear from my dad or have any contact with him and I really miss him but also I find it hard to know what to say on the phone sometimes.

WHEN does the problem happen?
No particular time

WHERE does the problem happen?
Not really relevant

WHO else is involved in the problem?
My dad

HOW often does the problem happen?
Sort of all the time

WHAT have I done to solve the problem in the past?
Nothing

DO I have control over this problem?
I have some control but not total control

WHY is this problem a problem?
Because it was my first chance in ages to see dad and maybe get him to help me out with things.

Clearly Defined Problem statement

I don’t know how to have more contact with my dad.
The Fourth Signpost: Generating Ideas

“Think left and think right and think low and think high. Oh, the thinks you can think up if only you try!”

Dr Seuss

It is easy to get stuck when you are trying to solve problems. You might keep trying the same thing over and over, even when it isn’t helping. Generating ideas is about getting creative and getting out of “stuck” thinking. Brainstorming is the way we do this.

The rules of brainstorming

**Numbers matter most** – so come up with as many ideas as you can. The more ideas you have, the more likely it is you will be able to solve the problem.

**Put judgment on the shelf** - don’t judge any of your ideas at this time. Write them all down without thinking about whether they are a “good” or “bad” idea. If you judge them too early, you might throw away an excellent solution.

**Be creative** - however far-fetched some ideas seem write them down anyway! This can help you to get out of “stuck” ways of thinking and it can open the door to even better ideas.

**Imagine what will help** - think about how you have successfully solved similar problems in the past OR what you would advise a good friend to do OR what someone you really admire would do OR what someone you know tried in a similar situation OR ???

**ACTION:** All you need to do to start a brainstorm is write down the problem on the next page. Then jot down the first idea that comes into your mind. Then jot down the next one, and so on. Keep going until you have run out of ideas. Aim for as many as you can!
Generating Ideas: Brainstorm here!

Problem:
Generating Ideas: Brainstorm here!

Problem:

Ideas:
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
Generating Ideas: Lydia and Michael

**Lydia**

*Feeling overwhelmed by my schoolwork.*

1. Make a timetable
2. Resign from some other commitments
3. Ask for extensions on some things
4. Not watch TV during the week (record what I want to watch or watch TV on demand)
5. Dedicate one weekend day to school work
6. Get a study buddy to help me focus
7. Go and see the Dean to get help sorting it out
8. Ask other people what they do to keep up
9. Think up some rewards for study time
10. Schedule time that is absolutely non study time (so I don’t think about it then)
11. Go to the public library and work there to avoid distraction
12. Give up school

**Michael**

*I don’t know how to have more contact with my dad.*

1. Ring him once a week
2. Skype
3. Facebook
4. Text
5. Email
6. Write to dad and ask him if we can have regular contact of some sort
7. Play an online game together
8. Exchange photos of cool things we do
9. Ask if I can live with him
10. Ask if I can make another date to visit
The Fifth Signpost: Decision Making

“Keep your face to the sunshine and you cannot see a shadow.”
Helen Keller

Well done on your brainstorm!
You have now reached the fifth signpost which is decision making. This is about choosing the best ideas from your brainstorm. The ones most likely to solve your problem.

First: At First Glance
Look over your brainstorm. Check whether there are any ideas that probably won’t work.

- Does this idea break the law?
- Does this idea involve harm to yourself or anyone else?
- Is this idea likely to create any other negative side effects?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, then cross the idea off your list.
Second: Weighing the advantages and disadvantages
Look at the ideas you have left.
Pick two or more ideas that you think could help with the problem.
Write down the advantages and disadvantages of these solutions on the next page.
Think about:
- How will it affect me (physically, emotionally, psychologically)?
- How much time and effort will I have to put in?
- Are there any financial costs or benefits?
- How does it fit in with my other goals and commitments?
- How will it affect the people who are close to me?
- Is the solution practical?

Third: Making your pick
Look at the advantages and disadvantages of each solution. Decide which column outweighs the other. Do this by thinking about:
- How many items are in each column?
- How important are the items in each column?

Sometimes you will pick the column with less items in it because they are more important. Sometimes a single advantage can outweigh several disadvantages.

Finally, choose which solution or solutions you want to try out!
Advantages And Disadvantages of Solutions (1)

Problem

Potential Solution

Think about:

- How will it affect me (physically, emotionally, psychologically)?
- How much time and effort will I have to put in?
- Are there any financial costs or benefits?
- How does it fit in with my other goals and commitments?
- How will it affect the people who are close to me?
- Is the solution practical?

Advantages

Disadvantages
Advantages And Disadvantages of Solutions (2)

Problem

Potential Solution

Think about:

- How will it affect me (physically, emotionally, psychologically)?
- How much time and effort will I have to put in?
- Are there any financial costs or benefits?
- How does it fit in with my other goals and commitments?
- How will it affect the people who are close to me?
- Is the solution practical?

Advantages

Disadvantages
Decision Making Lydia and Michael

Lydia

Well, when I looked at my brainstorm, I guess I knew I wasn’t going to give up school – as if I’d be allowed anyway. But it was kind of nice to imagine it for a bit. I also decided not to resign from any of the other stuff I do just yet. I think that would have quite a bad effect on quite a few people. But I do think I could probably be better organised so I might start there. I’m going to look at the pluses and minuses of making a timetable and thinking up rewards for studying.

Potential solution: Make a study and life timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Schedule set out in advance</td>
<td>Potential to not be very flexible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easy to follow</td>
<td>Hard to stick to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can plan around it</td>
<td>It will take quite a bit of time to set up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can change it as study requirements vary</td>
<td>Might miss out on things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will stress less</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It will save time in the end though</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Potential solution: Think up some rewards for getting study done

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gives me something to look forward to</td>
<td>Might cost money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makes me want to study so I get the reward</td>
<td>Hard to think of things I couldn’t just do anyway</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Lydia looked over her two lists. She decided that creating a study timetable looked most likely to help her solve her problem. So she decided to pick that idea to start with.
Michael

When I first looked at my brainstorm, it just seemed like the ideas were all the same. I mean, not exactly the same but like different ways of getting in touch with dad. I felt a bit dumb actually because I thought I had done a bad brainstorm. But then I remembered my RE:SOLVE guide saying you could use more than one idea and maybe they would all come in handy. So I just left them all there. But I decided to look at the pluses and minuses of writing to my dad to ask about having regular contact, and also to ask about making another date to visit.

Potential solution: Write or talk to dad and ask him if we can have regular contact of some sort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dad will realize how I feel and that I miss him</td>
<td>Dad might say no and I don’t know how I would deal with that</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I write, I can say things I find it hard to say when I talk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad might say yes and then we can make plans</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If it goes well, I might be less lonely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Potential solution: Ask if I can make another date to visit and stay

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It would be great to know I was going to see my dad</td>
<td>Dad might say no and I would be upset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something to look forward to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wouldn’t feel so bad about him cancelling this time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two options came out pretty even so Michael thought about which one would be the most helpful in solving the overall problem. He decided he would try out the first option and try out the second one later if things went well.
The Sixth Signpost: Making an Action Plan and Carrying it Out

“An idea that is developed and put into action is more important than an idea that exists only as an idea.”
Edward de Bono

At this point, it is time to make an action plan to carry out your solution. An action plan tells you what you need to do and when you need to do it. Put in a lot of detail if that is helpful for you.

The solution you chose is WHAT you want to do, the action plan is HOW you are going to do it.

Making an Action Plan

When you write your action plan, it might help to think of it as a recipe or an instruction manual for setting up something like a cellphone. Recipes list all the ingredients you need; manuals list all the parts you need; and they both break the method down into small, easy to follow steps. Your action plan needs to be like this. So start by writing the detailed recipe or instruction manual of your action plan.

Think about:

What exactly is the plan?
What are all the steps in the plan?
What resources (e.g., people, money, equipment) are available/needed?
Who is going to carry out each step of the plan?
When will each step in the plan be carried out?
Where will each step take place?
Are there any obstacles that need to be overcome first?
When will the plan be reviewed to see how it went? Make a review date.
It is REALLY IMPORTANT to make sure you can actually achieve everything in your plan. The best way to do this is to break it down into small steps that are achievable.

It is also REALLY IMPORTANT to make a date and time to get started and a date and time for each step to be carried out and a date and time to check your progress.

ACTION: Write your action plan on this sheet.

My Action Plan

Problem

Solution

Plan
Making an Action Plan: Lydia and Michael

Lydia

Problem
I don’t know how to manage the workload from school better so that I am not feeling so stressed out.

Solution
Make a study and life timetable

Plan
1. Find or create a blank calendar for the next four weeks (TOMORROW, LOOK ON THE INTERNET AND PRINT IT OUT).
2. Enter in due dates for assignments/assessments in various subjects for the next four weeks (TOMORROW).
3. Enter in other regular commitments for home/school (WEDS AFTER SCHOOL).
4. Allocate spare spaces for study time (WEDS AFTER SCHOOL).
5. For each assignment/assessment, make a list of what needs to be done with estimates of how much time will be needed (START ON WEDS, FINISH ON THURS).
6. Prioritise according to due dates (THURSDAY).
7. Make a plan for two weeks according to these lists (THURSDAY).
8. Carry out the plan (START FRIDAY).
9. Review the plan after two weeks and see whether it is working.
10. Update the calendar every two weeks or as new assignments come in.
Michael

Problem
I don’t know how to have more contact with my dad.

Solution
Write or talk to dad and ask him if we can have regular contact of some sort

Plan
1. Write a list of all the things I want to say to dad about having more contact [AFTER SCHOOL ON TUESDAY]
2. Write a letter/email using the list as a guide [AFTER SCHOOL ON WEDS]
3. In the letter, ask dad to let me know he has received it [WEDS]
4. In the letter, ask dad to give me an answer by a certain date [WEDS]
5. Ask mum for dad’s email address [WHEN SHE GETS HOME FROM WORK AND HER BOYFRIEND ISN’T AROUND SOME TIME THIS WEEK]
6. Show the draft to someone (mum, RE:SOLVE guide, case worker, friend) before sending it [NEXT MONDAY, BRING IT TO THIS APPOINTMENT]
7. Make any changes that might be needed [TUESDAY AFTER THE NEXT SESSION]
8. Send the email. [TUESDAY]
The Seventh Signpost: Checking Progress (How’s it Going?)

“There’s a reason you can learn from everything: you have basic wisdom, basic intelligence, and basic goodness.”

Pema Chodron

Here you are at the final signpost. So it’s time to check how you are going with your action plan. This way, you can see whether your plan is working out as you expected or whether it needs tweaking.

Ask yourself:

1. Did I get started on my plan?
2. Is the plan working out as I thought it would?
3. Has it solved the problem?
4. Is there anything else that needs to be done about the problem?
5. Do I need any extra support?

If you did carry out your plan and it solved part or all of the problem, good for you!!

If your plan didn’t go as expected, OR you didn’t get started or complete your plan, OR your solution didn’t solve the problem, think about the following:

Was your plan too hard to achieve?
Try breaking it down into smaller steps and ask for any help you need.

Did something unexpected crop up?
Maybe you need to change your action plan.

Did you get started and follow the plan?
If not, what got in the way? How can you fix this?

Did the “solution” fail to solve the problem?
This is a time to choose another idea and make a fresh plan.
Checking Progress: Lydia and Michael

**Lydia:**
I found this quite hard at first. The planning took more time than I expected and I still had to fit in study while I was doing it! I found a calendar ok but when I printed it out and started trying to fill it in, there just wasn’t enough space. I got my step dad to take it to work and enlarge it on the photocopier so I had a really big one.

I also found it quite hard to think through everything I was going to have to do for each assessment. But it was actually quite good because it meant I had done some of the planning for the work already.

I ended up a bit behind schedule that first week because of the calendar being too small but I finished my timetable by the end of the weekend and started using it on Monday instead of the Friday.

It’s been going alright, I have been sticking to it pretty well. The hardest part has been when social things come up and I want to do them. But I am not stressing so much and I seem to be getting through the work so it feels worth it.

My mum thought it would be a good idea to schedule a day each weekend where I can have the whole day off so I am going to try that - that was on my brainstorm too. That helps me stick to the timetable better.

The other hard part is keeping up with the planning. I almost need a plan to make the plan! Actually that’s quite a good idea! Every second Thursday, I can have planning time on the calendar.

Also I have been recording tv programmes I like or watching them on TV on demand. That helps me stick at my study too. So I ended up using other things from brainstorm as well.

**Michael:**
When we first made the plan, I thought it looked like heaps of work for just one little letter. I really wanted to just write it and send it quickly. I thought it was a bit dumb to make such a big deal of it but I went along with it anyway. And it actually was quite good.

I really like writing and it was pretty neat to make my list of all the things I wanted to say. But then when I wrote the actual letter the next day, I didn’t put them all in. I didn’t like all the ideas. That’s different for me. Usually I would just do it all in a rush or not at all.

When I asked mum for dad’s email she asked what it was for and when I told her, she thought it was a great idea.

I showed my draft to my RE:SOLVE guide. We didn’t really make any changes but I felt better sending it after showing it to someone else.

My dad replied straight away and said of course we could have more contact and he’s really sorry about cancelling. So I don’t know exactly what will happen but hopefully something will come out of it all.

So now I have to figure out what the next step is. I’m pretty excited about it, actually.
The pathway completed!

“I thank you god for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes”

E E Cummings

Congratulations! You have completed the RE:SOLVE pathway for the first time! You deserve to be really proud of yourself.

The RE:SOLVE pathway works as a loop. So now that you have completed it once, it is time to start the loop again. Go back to your problem list. Choose something else to work on. Use the summary sheet on the next page to guide you through all the signposts.

With practice, you will remember the pathway more easily. You won’t always have to write everything down in so much detail and your skills are likely to improve.

Remember to add new problems to your problem list as you become aware of them. Also remember to cross problems off as you solve them.

Keep up the fantastic problem solving work.
The RE:SOLVE Pathway: In Brief

“Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”
Mary Oliver

The starting post: Problem Orientation.
Take a moment to stop and check your internal compass. If you need to, rehearse the characteristics of positive problem orientation to place yourself in the right direction for problem solving.

The second signpost: Recognising and Identifying the Problem?
Do you need to update your problem list with anything new that has cropped up? Are your problem clues telling you there is a problem needing to be solved? Add it to your list.

The third signpost: Choosing a Problem and Making it Clear
Pick a problem from your list. Make your problem as clear as possible. This makes it easier to generate ideas to solve it. Revisit the questions in your book to guide you.

My problem is:

The fourth signpost: Generating Ideas
Use this space to brainstorm as many ideas as you can that could help solve your problem.
**The fifth signpost: Decision Making**

Look at your brainstorm of ideas. Are there any ideas you can immediately cross off at first glance? Choose 2 ideas and list the advantages and disadvantages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solution 1:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solution 2:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advantages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The sixth signpost: Making an Action Plan and Carrying it Out.**

Use the space below to create an action plan for carrying out your chosen solution. Don’t forget to include a date for checking your progress.

**The seventh signpost: Checking Progress (How’s it Going?)**

Take the time to check your progress with carrying out your action plan. Did you get started? If not, figure out what got in the way. Then update your action plan, and carry on. If yes, is the problem solved? Start working with a new problem if you are ready!
The Last Thing: Reviewing The Pathway

Nothing in life is to be feared. It is only to be understood.
Marie Curie

In your final RE:SOLVE session, there are two more things to work on.

**First: Pathway review**

The first thing is to run through all of the signposts with your RE:SOLVE guide. This is to make sure you feel confident with the RE:SOLVE pathway and can explain it in your own words.

**Second: Revisit your arrival**

The second thing is to revisit the self harm that brought you here. You can use the RE:SOLVE pathway to work through the problem/s you were facing at that time. You may have already done this during your sessions, but if you haven’t, now is a good time!

**With your RE:SOLVE guide, start by:**

- Identifying the problem/s you were experiencing
- Write them down as clear problems
- Work through the pathway until you have a plan in place for the problem/s.

This way, you have a plan prepared, should the problem crop up again.

Some people feel a bit anxious and stressed out about this final part. They worry that talking about what happened might upset them. But most people feel relieved to realise those problems are not as hopeless as they thought. Looking back on things can show you how much you have learned and how much more positive your problem orientation has become.

Which reminds us! Let’s check in with Lydia and Michael one last time.
Revisiting Problem Orientation: Lydia and Michael

Final Comments from Lydia

When I first used the RE:SOLVE pathway to work on my study problem, I was really surprised at how well it worked. The hardest part for me was really breaking things down step by step, and sticking with the plan. It was great to have someone helping as I learned the process. There’s no way I would’ve been patient enough to do it myself. I do feel more confident about my problem solving skills, I think my whole attitude has improved. I mean, this study problem felt really huge and it turned out to be solvable. I also used the process to help me work through the problem with my boyfriend. I was so upset at the time I couldn’t think clearly. But going through the pathway really helped me get it in perspective and look at it in a different way. Even just writing the problem list and talking it through was great. I would say my problem orientation has definitely improved.

Final Comments from Michael

What do I think of my problem orientation now? I guess it is a bit better. Starting to be, anyway. I still feel like I would rather not face problems if I didn’t have to. But I think I am starting to get that problems aren’t actually always my fault and don’t mean something is wrong with me. And I can see how avoiding doesn’t make the problem go away. Or make me feel better. I mean, I have only gone through the whole pathway once so far but it’s pretty cool how it’s been working. I would never have thought of going about the stuff with my dad in this way before. But now, you know, we’re hopefully going to be in touch more and I’m pretty happy about that. So, yeah, I think I am more confident about being able to solve problems and more hopeful.

Final comments from you

Jot down a few words about your first time of travelling the RE:SOLVE pathway. You might like to look back at your earlier thoughts about your Problem orientation and comment on any change you notice.
This is the end of the RE:SOLVE book.
And just the beginning of your continuing resolve.
We wish you all the best with your future problem solving.

“Never, never, never give up.”

Winston Churchill
Post Script: About the Quotes (from Joanne)

I love reading quotes. Reading quotes can inspire me, touch me, help me, teach me, move me, amuse me, and many other things besides. So when I was working on this book, I decided to try and find quotes that would reflect the idea behind each signpost. The quotes are from people whose names you may not have heard. After all, they are all either quite old or already dead! So in case you are interested, I have written a little something about each person I have quoted in this book.

I picked a number of them because they had experienced some sort of suffering in their own lives and they found ways to endure and carry on and sometimes achieve amazing things. I find this a helpful thing to be reminded of over and over again. To be able to look at people who really know what it is like to have bad times and to see they got through. Sometimes these people have acted as guides or mentors for me when I have experienced a difficult time.

You may not relate to the people I have chosen but maybe you can find your own inspirational people? And maybe you could email me and let me know who they are so I could include them in a future book?

E.E. Cummings
Edward Estlin Cummings was born on 14 October 1894 and died on 3 September 1962. He was a poet, essayist, playwright, novelist and painter. Apparently he wrote his first poem at age 3. He is well known for his unusual use of grammar, punctuation and language. Actually some of his poetry is quite hard for me to understand! E.E. Cummings also had a strong sense of spirituality which shows up in his work.

Dr. Seuss
The chances are pretty high you will have heard of Dr. Seuss! Born Theodore Seuss Geisel in 1904, he was famous for his children’s stories. I chose quotes from "Oh the Places you'll go". I think this story is a wonderful parable about the ups and downs of life. When I read it, I thought it was really clever and wise.

Thich Nhat Hanh
Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk who established and lives in a spiritual community in Plum Village, in France. He lives in France because he spoke out against the Vietnam War and was exiled from his home country for this. He lost students and friends he really cared for in the Vietnam war. Yet he is the most amazing example of someone living exactly what he teaches. He is an elderly man now and has been a monk since he was 16.

Winston Churchill
You will probably have heard of Winston Churchill. Sir Winston Churchill is best known for being the Prime Minister of Britain during the second world war. He made some very famous, inspiring speeches. One of the main reasons I included him was because throughout his life he suffered from depressive episodes which were quite severe at times. I find him and his words inspiring because he really knew what it was like to suffer and to find ways to solve problems and carry on and achieve his ambitions.

Roald Dahl
Roald Dahl is most famous as a writer of children’s books. And what amazing books he writes. They are funny, imaginative, and he really seems to remember and understand what it is like to be a child. He said he only became a children’s writer because of telling stories to his own children. He has had quite a few hard things happen to him. His dad and sister died when he was only three and he had a very difficult time at school. As an adult one of his own children died and another was brain injured. He dealt with these challenges in remarkable ways. I really love his language and the way he really invites you into the world of your own wonderful imagination.
Pema Chodron

Pema Chodron is an American woman who decided to become a nun in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Before being a nun she had been a teacher and had also been married and had children. For many of us it is pretty hard to imagine life as a nun or a monk. Their lives seem pretty different from ours. What I love about Pema Chodron is that she really understands about difficult times in life. Her teachings are all about finding the courage to face our difficulties and learn from them, even though that is a very hard thing to do.

Carl Jung

Carl Jung was a famous psychiatrist who was best known for his ideas about things like dream interpretation, and the collective unconscious.

Helen Keller

If anyone knows about problem solving it would have to be Helen Keller. She became blind and deaf at the age of 19 months, after an illness of some kind. Her story is amazing! Helen Keller was the first deaf/blind person to gain a Bachelor of Arts degree. She was also a political activist, and a lecturer and used her abilities to try and better the lives of others. I think she is pretty inspirational.

Edward de Bono

Lots of people are familiar with the Six Thinking Hats – you might be too. Edward de Bono is the person who came up with them, and with the idea of lateral thinking (thinking “sideways”). He believes that thinking is a skill that can be taught and he has designed ways to teach thinking. He really believes in our ability to learn to think more creatively. Edward de Bono thinks we need to learn to think things through thoroughly before we act.

Mary Oliver

Mary Oliver is a wonderful poet. She is in her 70's now and she still writes. A lot of her poetry is about her experience of nature, and seemingly small details of every day life. I think her poetry invites us to be amazed and in awe of the things around us which are so easy to overlook. Sometimes I have found that reading her poetry has helped me get a better perspective on problems and to feel more hopeful.

Marie Curie

Marie Curie was a scientist known for several significant scientific discoveries. She won a Nobel prize in both physics and chemistry, and is the only woman to have done so. She was also the first woman professor at the Sorbonne University. Her family were poor, so she worked very hard to support herself through her education and this was at a time that education for women was not common. Her mother and sister both died when she was young and as an adult Marie experienced a period of depression. In her personal life, and her work life, a spirit of curiosity, and the perseverance needed for solving difficult problems, were strong characteristics.