

Adopt a Solution-Oriented Attitude

Objective

To review your problems and discover new ways to address them.

You Should Know

If you're like most teens, you probably feel like you have many problems—and you're probably right. A problem can be something that frustrates you, makes you stressed or upset, causes difficulty for others, or increases your anxiety. Life is full of problems for all of us, but teens do seem to have more problems than either children or adults because they are caught between these two different worlds with very different expectations.

However, that doesn't mean you can't learn to solve your problems or at least cope with them better. When you learn to cope with a problem, you are aware of it, but you don't let it affect other areas of your life. For example, imagine two people, each of whom has injured themselves.

Ryan:

- Stays in bed for a week until he can walk without pain.
- Stops talking to his friends until he feels better because they get on his nerves.
- Drinks alcohol when his parents are away because it helps with the pain.
- Doesn't bother doing any schoolwork because his knee bothers him too much to concentrate.

Larissa:

- Gets crutches so that she can continue her life as normally as possible.
- Takes aspirin for the pain.
- Finds a gym with a whirlpool because the doctor said it might heal the muscle quicker.
- Keeps up with her friends and her schoolwork because it takes her mind off her physical problem.

As you can see, the problem is the same for both, but each person copes with it differently. Ryan probably creates even more problems for himself. Larissa minimizes the effect of the problem. These same principles apply to psychological and interpersonal problems as well. The way you choose to cope with them is entirely up to you.

Reflections on This Exercise

Do you cope better with easier problems or harder problems? Some teens are surprised to learn they actually have an easier time solving difficult problems and they let the easy ones really bother them. Explain.

Write down five ways you already cope with or solve problems.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Describe additional ways to solve your problems. Include resources, tools, or people that can help you.

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

What did you learn from this exercise?
