Group Problem Solving

We all have problems for sure. No one is immune to some degree of struggle and occasional strife Therefore no one alive has a problem-free life. Some people are better than others at problem solving. We can all improve in our abilities to tackle our problems successfully or at least manage our problems that don't have available solutions. The fact is that our attitude and our effort toward our problems makes an enormous difference.

One benefit of being in a group program is that the group can be a valuable resource for ideas, inspiration, support and motivation for effective problem solving. Each one of us is responsible for taking the lead in facing our problems however, having help from others in the group can be a powerful asset in the problem-solving process. This opening exercise is focused on discussing problems openly as a group and then using the group as a resource for creative solutions and support in the problem-solving process.

Opening exercise – *Accept and Begin*

<u>Directions:</u> Take turns with one group member at a time sharing a personal life problem to start the session. The problem expressed can be about anything large or small. Try to share by making a problem statement and then let the rest of the group know what it is. Some examples of problem statements:

1. *"I have to stop using drugs and stay that way because of my legal situation"*

2. *"I am unemployed, and I don't even know where to begin to get a career going in my life"*

Then, as a group, give some feedback using the "**Accept and Begin**" format:

"***You may have to accept … but then you can begin….***"

Examples:

Based on Problem 1 above:

- "You may have to accept that you won't be able to use drugs anymore, but you can certainly begin to try to stop using for today and then take it one day at a time from there"

- "You may have to accept that it will not be easy but then you can begin to focus more on completing this program to see if it helps you to eventually resolve your legal situation"

Based on Problem 2 above:

- "You may have to accept starting at a crappy job that doesn't pay well but you can begin by sticking with it and working toward building experience and eventually getting a better job with time.

- "You may have to accept that you may need to go back to school by then you can begin to try to find a program that you are interested in and apply for financial aid so you can get an education in a career that interests you.

Take turns as a group sharing problem statements then listening to group feedback using the Accept and Begin format as shown in the examples above.
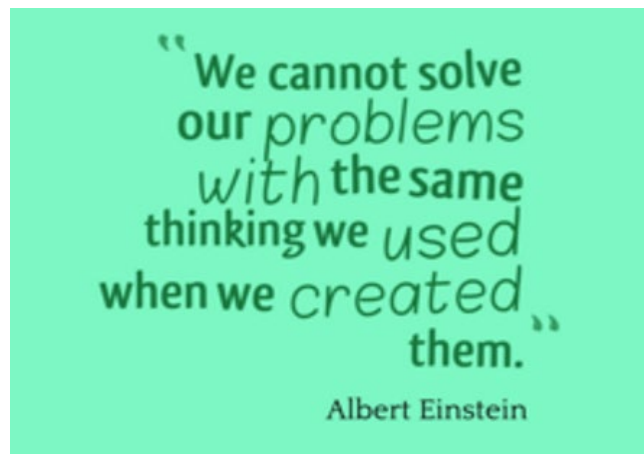
Skill Building: The Problem-Solving Process:

Keep in mind that there are many ways to go about solving problems, however this is just one outline for constructively strategizing to engage effectively in the problem-solving process with good outcomes:

1) **Attitude Shift** – Problem solving starts with escaping a negative attitude state and then getting into a positive and hopeful outlook.

   - *Get out of stuck mode*: It is important to end thoughts that can keep us stuck like "this is too hard for me to handle" and "what's the point in trying" Stuck mode can last many years, even a lifetime. It can be fueled by helplessness, hopelessness, self-pity, or fear. To get out of this mode we must believe that we can make things better.

   - *Get into problem solving mode* – Prepare yourself with thoughts like "I can do this" and "If I keep at it, things will get better" The previous exercise set the stage for problem solving mode which starts with <u>acceptance</u> of the problem then choosing to <u>begin</u> to do something about it – <u>Accept and Begin</u>

THE PROBLEM ISN'T THE
PROBLEM
THE PROBLEM IS YOUR
ATTITUDE
ABOUT THE PROBLEM
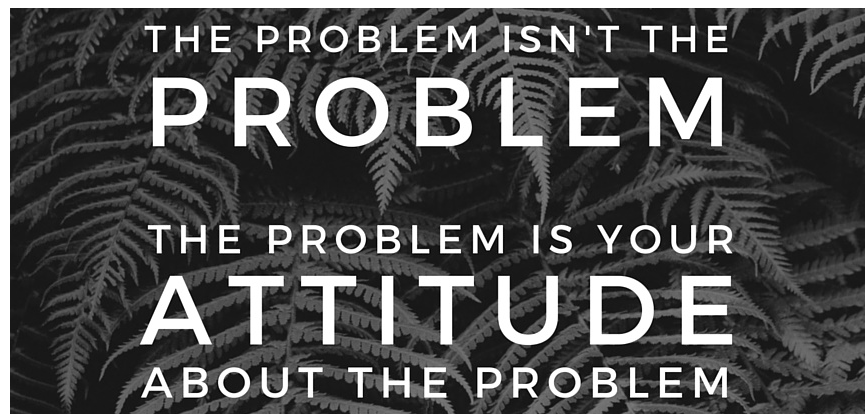
2) **Think and Plan** – Be creative and optimistic (but realistic too) Get Information and consult with reliable sources (Be careful with the internet and with people who gossip) Come up at least with a basic plan to get yourself started on your problem-solving journey

"We cannot solve our *problems* with the same thinking we *used* when we *created* them."

Albert Einstein

3) **Start small and go forward from there** – Problem solving often starts with baby steps in the right direction rather than big miraculous changes. Its okay to start by doing a little bit then increasing steadily from there

> Every small step
> in the right direction
> counts.

4) **Find Support and Encouragement** – It can be so challenging to solve problems alone. Any source of support and encouragement can be so valuable for problem solving. Seek sources for support and encouragement in your problem-solving quest.

Helping others,
encouraging others,
are often acts of kindness
that have more meaning
that you may realize.

Catherine Pulsifer

5) **Build momentum and keep going –** Once you get going keep going. Sometimes slow and steady wins the race. When you fall, keep getting up. Most people who successfully conquer a problem in life do so through patience and persistence over time

no matter what

JUST KEEP

GOING

your future self
will be proud

6) **Maintain –** Stay the course. When the problem-solving process is working for you, keep at it. Going back and making sure you are doing steps **1 – 5** in this process can be essential in maintaining satisfactory progress.

Set yourself up for success
from the very beginning
and then focus on
maintaining that success

How can you use this problem-solving process in your life to work through in important problem successfully?

Discuss