



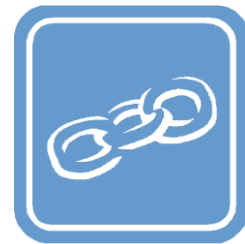
Session 7: Problem Solving

Many things can get in the way of being more active and achieving your healthy eating, physical activity and weight goals. But problems can be solved.

The five steps to problem solving:

1. Describe the problem *in detail*, as a chain of actions.

- Give a **specific example** of one time you have had that problem.
- Try to **find “the action chain”** — a series of actions (or “links”) that led up to the problem. Look for:
 - Things that “cued” you (made you want) to eat or be inactive.
 - People who didn't support you.
 - Thoughts or feelings that got in your way.



Example:

- Sarah says, “I’m a mess. I seem to end up eating sweets every afternoon. And then I don’t care about my food choices the rest of the day.”
- A specific example: Last Saturday afternoon she ate a lot of cookies.

Sarah’s action chain:

- Skipped lunch while running errands. Traffic was bad.
- Said to herself, “I have no energy to go for a walk today”. Came home tired, stressed, grumpy and hungry.
- Went right to the kitchen.
- Talked with her son on the phone. He was critical, which upset her.
- Saw cookies on counter.
- Ate cookies.

2. Brainstorm your options for each link in the chain.

Links in Sarah's Action Chain	Some of Sarah's Options
Skipped lunch while running errands. Traffic was bad.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Never run errands again. (In our dreams....)• Pack a healthy snack.
Skipped her walk. Came home tired, stressed, grumpy and hungry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Go for a walk to unwind.
Talked with her son on the phone. The conversation upset her.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take a few deep breaths.• Remind herself not to take what he said personally.• Try to avoid difficult conversations when she's tired, stressed, grumpy or hungry.
Went into the kitchen. Saw cookies on the counter.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid the kitchen. Go out in the yard or sit in a favorite chair for a few minutes to calm down.• Don't buy cookies.• Keep cookies out of sight.• Keep fruit in sight.

3. Pick one option to try.

- Weigh the pros and cons.
- Choose one that is very likely to work and that you can do.
- Try to break as many links as you can, as early in the chain as you can.



Let's say Sarah chose to pack a healthy snack.

4. Make a positive action plan.

Example for Sarah:

She will:

- Pack a 200-calorie snack.

When?

- The next time she runs errands.

She will do this first:

- Shop for the healthy snack foods.
- Put one in her purse.

Roadblocks that might come up:

- Might forget to pack her snack.

How she'll handle them:

- Will go to a healthy quick-serve place.
- Will buy a light and healthy meal or snack.



She will do this to make her success more likely:

- Brainstorm with her group about healthy snacks that work in these situations and fit her lifestyle.

5. Try it. See how it goes.

Did it work? If not, what went wrong? Problem solve again.

Problem solving is a process. Don't give up!



Practice: Help Sam Solve His Problem

To practice problem solving, help Sam (this page) or Sadie (next page).

Sam's problem: Nighttime snacking

Sam has been working hard to lose weight. He has lost 7 pounds since Session 1. He takes a brisk 40-minute walk, three or four times a week.

At today's session, he told the group that he's frustrated. "Here's one of my biggest problems," he said:

- I eat pretty healthy most of the time, and I feel good.
- But for the last couple of nights, I've been back into my old habit of snacking at night. I'm worried I won't be able to stop.
- I eat dinner around 6. By 8:30 I'm prowling around in the kitchen, looking in the cupboards and the refrigerator. Sometimes I go back to look two or three times.
- The more I try not to do this, the more I seem to want SOMETHING.
- If I just let myself go, I can end up eating over 600 calories.
- It's really discouraging. I want to stop but I'm not sure I can.

Help Sam solve his problem. Turn to the attached worksheets.

1. In the left column of the **Problem Solver for Sam or Sadie**, write down some of the important "links" in the chain of Sam's day. You can "make believe" and fill in details from your own life. The goal is to spell out more about what might be going on with Sam.
2. In the right column, **brainstorm options for each link**. What could Sam do differently along the way? The more ideas you have for each link, the better. Be creative and have fun.
3. Choose one option. Fill in the blanks on the **Make a Positive Action Plan for Sam or Sadie** worksheet.





Practice: Help Sadie Solve Her Problem

Sadie's problem: Too tired to exercise

On most weeks, she walks for about 20 minutes on the weekend.

"At least part of the problem," she says, "Is not getting enough exercise."

- I've never liked to exercise, even when I was young.
- One of the reasons I joined GLB4Me was to get help fitting in exercise. I know I need to be more active. But it's a real struggle for me.
- It's not that I do nothing. I'm always busy! I spend a lot of time visiting friends and family. I love to cook—it seems like I'm cooking all the time. And I work part-time and do a couple of volunteer jobs too.
- At the end of a busy day, I'm bushed. I get home and fix dinner and then have a glass of wine to relax. The idea of going back outside to take even a short walk is not very appealing. I like to read after dinner too because it's a quiet time just for me.
- This is a long-standing pattern. But I really do want to find a way to fit in more exercise.

Help Sadie solve her problem. Turn to the attached worksheets.

1. In the left column of the **Problem Solver for Sam or Sadie**, write down some of the important "links" in the chain of Sadie's day. You can "make believe" and fill in details from your own life experiences. The goal is to spell out more about what might be going on with Sadie.
2. In the right column, **brainstorm options for each link**. What could Sadie do differently along the way? The more ideas you have for each link, the better. Be creative and have fun.
3. Choose one option. Fill in the blanks on the **Make a Positive Action Plan for Sam or Sadie** worksheet.





The Lifestyle Balance Problem Solver for Sam or Sadie

Describe the problem in detail. Be specific.

Find the action chain. Links	Brainstorm your options. Options

Pick one option. Is it very likely to work? Can you do it?



Make a Positive Action Plan for Sam or Sadie

Pretend to be Sam or Sadie

I will:

When?

I will do this first:

Roadblocks that might come up: I will handle them by:

I will do this to make my success more likely: _____

How can I get the support I need? _____



To Do:

Check the boxes when you complete each item:

- ☐ **Keep track of your weight.** Weigh yourself at home at least once a week. Record it.
- ☐ **Record everything you eat and drink every day.** Come as close as you can to your calorie and fat gram goals.
- ☐ Choose a **problem of your own** that is getting in the way of meeting your weight, calorie, fat gram, and/or activity goals.
- ☐ Complete the **"My Lifestyle Balance Problem Solver"** and **"My Positive Action Plan"** worksheets (pages 10 and 11). Follow your action plan.
- ☐ **Be active for 150 minutes this week.** Record what you do.
 - The target is 150 minutes a week.
 - If you reached **150 minutes or more**, great work. Keep it up.
 - If you were active for less than **150 minutes**, that's okay. Start at your current activity level and try adding 30 minutes more.

Look for blocks of time when you could be active. Have these blocks of time last for 10 minutes or more. Plan activities you LIKE to do.

	What I Will Do	When	Minutes
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Saturday			
Sunday			
Total minutes for the week (My goal: ____ minutes)			

Session 7: Resources

Page

My Lifestyle Balance Problem Solver & Action Plan

10-11



My Lifestyle Balance Problem Solver

Describe the problem in detail. Be specific.

Find the action chain. Links	Brainstorm your options. Options

Pick one option. Is it very likely to work? Can you do it?



My Positive Action Plan

I will:

When?

I will do this first:

Roadblocks that might come up:

I will handle them by:

I will do this to make my success more likely: _____

How can I get the support I need? _____
