

—How to Solve Any Problem—

What if what you thought was a problem wasn't a problem at all? What most people think are problems aren't.

Most all of our problems are due to our thinking.

Here is a six step guide to problem-solving. You won't always need all six. If you start with step one you might have it solved by step three. Understanding all six gives you a formula to tackle any issue.

Step One: Identify a Problem

First of all, we “separate out the facts.” What you do is you take any issue in your life and you separate the facts from the thoughts.

Facts have to be provable in the court of law. They have to be something that everyone would agree on. Saying something like, “My best friend is mean,” may or may not describe a fact, because someone may disagree. Not everyone agrees. It's not a fact that can be proven.

If your friend didn't invite you to her birthday party, you could say, “My best friend didn't invite me to her birthday party.” That is a fact. The statement, “My best friend is mean,” is a thought. The fact that she didn't invite you to her birthday party is not a problem at all for anyone until you have a thought about it. Your thinking about it is what creates the problem.

You have control over what is a problem to you and what isn't.

It's not a problem until you start thinking about it.

The way you think about it is what creates a problem.

Step Two: Ask Yourself Why It's a Problem

Most people don't own that they're the creator of their problems.

They think problems are outside of themselves.

There's a problem with that—a problem with that problem. The problem with that is you lose control over solving the problem.



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If you don't understand that you're the creator of it, it's very difficult for you to feel like you can solve it. But when you recognize that you're the one creating it and you can find peace with that knowing, solving it gives you access to your creativity and to your wisdom.

If we were in a one-on-one session and I was asking the questions, I'd clarify that I want to know why it matters. It is a powerful question. Think about the problem that you brought up to your mind's eye, and think about the answer to the question, "So what?"

How you answer that question is really your problem because it reveals your thinking about the problem.

If you want to know exactly what you're making the problem about, then you write down only the facts of the problem. How do you want to feel about the problem?

Step Three: Evaluate Your Reaction

The third part of the process is to evaluate what you're doing when it comes to your problem.

Are you reacting? Are you feeling out of control? Are you avoiding and not dealing with what's coming up? Are you paying attention to your thinking? Are you paying attention to your feelings, or are you just pretending it away? Are you blowing up at people and yelling at people? Are you walking around with intense anxiety all the time? What are you doing when it comes to your problem?

Remember, all of your actions are coming from your thoughts and feelings, too. Paying attention to why you're doing what you're doing will reveal your thoughts and your feelings to you. Your thoughts and feelings are the most important part of every problem because they reveal your thinking.

When you think about a problem a certain way, you're going to feel a certain way, and you're going to act a certain way.

Now think about your problem again. What are you doing in relation to your problem when you feel annoyed, curious, or focused? How do you react? How do you want to be reacting? By looking at your actions, you can see how your thoughts and feelings are affecting you.



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Step Four: Do the “Manual Work”

The fourth part of the process is called “Manual Work,” and it deals with people and our expectations of them.

People can seem like problems to us because we’ve created “manuals” for them of how we want them to behave.

We’ve tied our emotional life to whether or not they follow the manual, and we don’t even realize that we’re doing this.

Think about the people in your life for whom you have manuals. Do any of these manuals relate to the problem you want to solve? Think about whom you want to change and what you want them to do on a regular basis. It’s a little bit different if you have children because you are responsible for training them. Also, if you’re a boss, there are some things you need to do in terms of your expectations of training and guiding your employees.

You can make all the requests you want for as many people as you want. But when you tie your emotional happiness to whether they respond or not, that’s when you get yourself into big trouble.

When you start banging your head against the wall and trying to manipulate them so they’ll behave in the way you want them to behave so you can feel better, you’ve tied your emotions to their actions. That’s when you’re going to get yourself into a spiral of negativity. That’s the manual.

Step Five: Be in Charge of You

The fifth part of the process is about who is in charge of you. Are you being controlled by external circumstances or are you being controlled by your mind? Are you allowing yourself to be in charge of everything you think and everything you feel?

When you have thoughts like, “People hurt my feelings. When they act this way it upsets me. It’s their fault I feel sad. They cause my misery,” you’re not being in charge of you. You’re delegating your emotional responsibility to someone else you have no control over. I’d say probably half of our problems could be solved if we stopped doing this because we cannot change other people’s behavior.



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When we take back responsibility for our own problems and when we give ourselves the responsibility for being in charge of ourselves and our feelings, then our problems become much less intense because we recognize that we are the ones in control.

Step Six: Change Your Thinking about the Past

The final piece of the process is deciphering the difference between whether you want your future or your past.

A lot of our problems come from thinking about our past and trying to renegotiate our past. We want to rewrite it. We want it to be different.

You can't change how your parents brought you up or how they disciplined you or whether they got divorced or not. But you can change the way you're thinking about it now.

Your current thought may be about your past, but there's nothing in your past that's currently affecting you. The only thing that's currently affecting you is the thought you're having right now about your past.

Focus on the Future and on Solutions

Solutions can be found in our future.

When you think about your future, are you thinking about it in a way that excites you?

Are you even thinking about it?

Many people don't have their heads turned toward the future. When you start thinking about your future and you start getting excited about it, there's no limit to what you can create.

What is the solution to your problem? When you ask this question, your thinking will change automatically. This will change your feelings and actions. The actions you take from a solution-oriented thought will be much more productive and useful in solving any issue in front of you.

Try It Out

Now that you've learned the steps, you can start applying this tool today. You can start changing your life in small ways—in the ways that you're looking at things and the way that you're dealing with your problems—that can be mind-blowing.



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Next time your boss comes in and starts talking to you about problems, you can come right back with solutions. When somebody's acting in a way that you don't want them to act, you can know that you get to act the way you want to act. You can think about your "problems" in a way that's serving you—that's helping you access the solution instead of just focusing on the negative thoughts.

Practicing this process rocks my world when I apply it.

When problems arise, remind yourself, "Hey, it's not the problem; it's how I'm thinking about it. And that, I can change."

Use my worksheet at the front of this file to put this problem-solving guide into practice!

If you're getting overwhelmed as you read this, I have extra materials that I use in my one-on-one coaching that can help. I use these tools on myself daily.

If you want extra help applying these and many other tools, go ahead and sign up for a consult here to see if we'd be a good fit for coaching:

<https://LindsayPoelman.as.me/consult>

Xxx my friends!

Lindsay



LINDSAY POELMAN
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Adapted from *How to Have a Better Life*

HOW TO SOLVE ANY PROBLEM



1 - IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM. LAY IT OUT, WITHOUT JUDGEMENT.

2 - WHY IS IT A PROBLEM? THINK ABOUT ALL THE REASONS. DON'T HOLD BACK.



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3 - EVALUATE YOUR REACTION. ARE YOU RESISTING? REACTING? AVOIDING? PAY ATTENTION TO YOUR FEELINGS, DON'T PRETEND THEM AWAY.

4 - DO YOU HAVE A MANUAL FOR THIS PERSON? HOW DOES IT FEEL? IS IT SOMETHING YOU WANT TO CHOOSE TO KEEP? REFER TO GUIDE IF NEEDED.



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5 - ARE YOU BEING CONTROLLED BY EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES OR ARE YOU BEING CONTROLLED BY YOUR MIND? ARE YOU ALLOWING YOURSELF TO BE IN CHARGE OF EVERYTHING YOU THINK AND EVERYTHING YOU FEEL? WHY OR WHY NOT? IS THIS WHAT YOU ULTIMATELY WANT?

6 - WHAT IF NOTHING CIRCUMSTANTIAL HAS TO CHANGE FOR YOU TO FEEL BETTER ABOUT THIS PROBLEM? HOW DO YOU WANT TO KEEP THINKING ABOUT IT? HOW WILL YOU PRACTICE IMPLEMENTING THIS THOUGHT WHEN THE OLDER THOUGHTS ARISE?

