

Strategies that AID US

Affirm



Yes

This is saying “yes, you have a valid opinion, point, feeling...” before you shift to a structure or process.

Inquire



Ask

You ask the person (or group) direct questions to help shift to a structure or process, or to get more information to help you know where to shift the person or group.

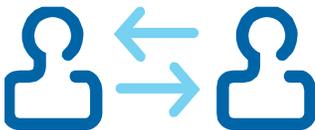
Direct



Tell

You tell someone what to do, or what you are going to do, or what you want the group to do, in a gentle way.

Understand



Feel

Express respect for their feelings: frustration, confusion, resistance. Understanding statements often start with comments like, “It’s hard...” or “It can be really difficult...”, before shifting.

Support



Join

You support the person’s position or help it along. “I, too...” or “Sometimes many of us...”

Strategies that AID US: Agenda

Affirm:

- Ex** “This is exactly what trauma is about; you push a button and it all floods out. Tell us where you are now.”
- Ex** “It is a long, hard story you have. Tell us what’s happening currently.”

Inquire:

- Ex** “Let me ask you; what’s going on right now?”
- Ex** “In the minute left, can you tell us what’s happening now?”

Direct:

- Ex** “The sand timer has run out and we have to move on to the next person for now. We will come back to you at the end to follow up.”
- Ex** “Excuse me for interrupting, but I have to call time to be sure we hear from all our group members today.”

Understand (Commiserate):

- Ex** “It’s hard to do this in just one minute, but tell us what’s going on right now.”
- Ex** “This time limit thing can feel awkward, but we’ve got to do it. Tell us what’s happening now.”

Support (Joining):

- Ex** “I know how easy it is to get lost in our stories. Tell us what you’re dealing with now.”
- Ex** “It took me a long time to learn how to do this. Tell us what’s going on right now.”
- Ex** “Let’s see if I can help steer you to the here and now.”

Facilitator Guide 1: Agenda

Use the Agenda When:

- Every meeting
- Someone's Check In goes on too long

Why the Agenda Is Important:

- Familiarizes group members with the support group structure and core values
- Allows the group to focus primarily on group work
- Allows participants to get their one to two minute stories in with no questions or interruptions

Steps: Welcome

1. Introduce facilitators and acknowledge new people. Ask them how they found out about the group and point out the resource table/membership information.
2. Let them know that this group is for individuals ages eighteen and older.
3. Give out Principles and Guidelines Handout (or place on chairs before the meeting).
4. Point out the Agenda that will be followed for the meeting.
5. Read the Group Guidelines description and ask group members to do a read-around of the Group Guidelines Chart or Handout. Read the Principles of Support description and ask group members to do a read-around of the Principles of Support Chart or Handout.
 - a. Say, "By a show of hands, can we agree to observe these Group Guidelines and accept these principles during this group?"
6. If one of the facilitators is a trained/certified mandated reporter they should disclose this to the group at this time. This is to inform group members so that they can determine what they want to share in the group. (You may skip this step if neither facilitator is a mandated reporter, or there are no new participants.)
 - a. Say, "Group safety and confidentiality are of chief importance in our group. Confidentiality is only broken if someone's safety is at risk."
 - b. Then describe the requirements of your licensure/certification. For example, "I am a licensed social worker in our state and it is a requirement of my licensure to report any suspected risk of harm to the appropriate authorities. I want the group to know that I do have a dual role here, and for everyone to feel safe."
7. Introduce Check In
 - a. Say, "We're going to go around the circle and ask you to briefly tell us your name, and what is happening in your life right now."
 - b. "We've set a time limit of [one or two] minute[s] each using sand timers, so we will have plenty of time left to talk together. I'll be taking a few notes so we make sure to discuss the issues that you all brought today."
 - c. "Remember that we have a pass rule; anyone can pass for any reason. I'm going to start."

Transition from Check In to Group Work/Discussion

1. Address any crisis scenario first.

Ex “_____, it sounds like you are struggling right now. Let’s focus on your situation first.”

2. Ask if anyone in the group has a pressing dilemma.

Ex “Does anyone have something urgent they need time for tonight?”

3. Listen for themes.

Ex “Several of you are concerned about living arrangements for your loved one. Let’s start with that.”

4. Generalize a specific situation.

Ex “You’re facing a problem that’s come up for a lot of us. Tell us a bit more.”

5. Do the quick fix.

Ex “I think _____’s situation can be helped right away. Let’s hook him/her up with some immediate resources from NAMI and our NAMI Affiliate.” **[Give out phone numbers or written materials at the end of the meeting.]**

Group Work

Use the charts and your Facilitator Guides to move the group in an active way. Point to the charts and follow the Facilitator Guides step by step; they are all there for a reason.

Steps: Closing

1. Five minutes before the end of the meeting, start to signal the end of the meeting.
2. Thank everyone and recognize the bravery of the participants in getting through tough times.
3. Thank those who came even while things are going well; their contribution to the group discussion was invaluable.
4. End the meeting on an upbeat, positive note. Optional endings:
 - Take turns reading the Principles or a motivational reading (materials provided should be non-religious in nature).
 - Ask everyone to take turns and one thing that they will do for themselves in the next week. You start.

Cardinal Rules

- Have all four structure charts on the walls
- Always start with facilitators to model the time limit for Check In
- Use the note-taking sheet to prioritize the order of topics during group work

Strategies that AID US: Group Guidelines

Affirm:

- Ex** “It’s easy to get overwhelmed by past events. Let’s move to the present as the Group Guidelines on the wall suggest.”
- Ex** “Your point of view is certainly clear, but our Group Guidelines ask us to empathize even when we don’t understand.”
- Ex** “Each person’s way of doing things is absolutely valid. The Group Guidelines suggest respect for everyone’s ways of coping.”

Inquire:

- Ex** “Our Group Guidelines ask us to focus on the present. Can you tell us how this is affecting you right now?”
- Ex** “Remember the pledge we made in the Group Guidelines about confidentiality?”
- Ex** “The Group Guidelines remind us about mutual respect. **[To the group:]** Why is that so important?”

Direct:

- Ex** “Let’s remember our Group Guidelines and try not to monopolize time when we have the floor. I see (another participant) wants to add a comment.”
- Ex** “Let’s get back to the Group Guidelines and keep it in the here and now.”
- Ex** “Our Group Guidelines include no cross talk. It’s hard to hear and contribute when more than one person is talking.”

Understand (Commiserate):

- Ex** “It’s so hard to summarize traumatic events and focus on now!”
- Ex** “It’s sometimes really difficult to understand another person’s reaction to mental illness.”
- Ex** “Empathizing can sometimes be tough, but our Group Guidelines ask us to try.”

Support (Joining):

- Ex** “I do the same thing when I get into my story. Just try and stop me! But our Group Guidelines remind us to focus on what’s happening now.”
- Ex** “I get judgmental too, particularly with my own family. The Group Guidelines remind us to be respectful and we need to accept others for where they are.”
- Ex** “I remember having exactly the same reaction. The Group Guidelines are really helpful when they remind us to be mindful of others.”



Tip: Affirm is the best strategy in situations where a facilitator must first signal respect, but also enforce the group rule that has been broken. This initial response can be followed by using the understanding or support strategies. It is important to have a firm, assertive leadership response when challenges of this sort arise in the group.

Facilitator Guide 2: Group Guidelines

Use the Group Guidelines When:

- One of the Group Guidelines is broken, such as:
 - A group member (or the group) goes on and on or can't stay in the present
 - Someone is disrespectful or not empathetic (including side remarks)
 - Someone breaches confidentiality

Why the Group Guidelines Are Important:

- Helps manage time keeping, procedures and support group safety

Steps

1. Silently choose the Group Guideline that applies to the situation.
2. Intervene gently, using a strategy to direct the person or group to the Group Guidelines.

Ex Direct: "Let's make sure we keep what we discuss here confidential."

Ex Understand: "It can be hard to understand another person's response to this topic, but the Group Guidelines ask us to empathize with each other's situations."

Cardinal Rules

- Don't scold; keep it light
- Always model respect for the person being disrespectful
- Remember, it's normal for people to forget rules in groups
- Refer to the charts/handouts; blame the Group Guidelines!
- Move the group to the Group Guidelines and then back to positive group work
- Be prepared to move on to someone else or go back to the topic at hand

Group Guidelines

The Group Guidelines tell us how we are going to care for each other in the group. They provide the mutual consideration, acceptance and protection that are often hard to find in the real world. We will follow these guidelines at each meeting to create the sanctuary and safe place we need.

1. Start and stop on time
2. Time limit for Check In
3. Absolute confidentiality
4. Be respectful
5. Be mindful of others; no interrupting or monopolizing
6. Keep the conversation in the present
7. Empathize with each other's situation

Strategies that AID US: Principles of Support

Affirm:

- Ex** “You’re right. Stigma often paralyzes us. Let’s look at the Principles of Support chart on the wall...”
- Ex** “I see you feel very strongly about your son not taking medication. Let’s see if there is a Principle which might offer guidance here.”

Inquire:

- Ex** “Do you see a Principle that applies to what you’re dealing with?”
- Ex** “Do a lot of us here struggle with that issue [**raise your hand**]? What Principle might guide us?”

Direct:

- Ex** “Let’s hold off on the negative commentary and see what our Principles tell us.”
- Ex** “Let’s go to the Principles chart and find something we can we strive for when everything seems so hard.”

Understanding (Commiserate):

- Ex** “What you’re going through is terribly difficult. Maybe there is a Principle that would provide some guidance.”
- Ex** “It’s really frustrating to be in situations where we have no control and feel so powerless. A Principle might be helpful to you.”

Support (Joining):

- Ex** “Yes, that can get me down too. I think a Principle may help here.”
- Ex** “A lot of us struggle with this particular issue. What Principle might guide us?”

Facilitator Guide 3: Principles of Support

Use the Principles of Support When:

- Someone or the group is negative or hopeless about an issue over which he or she has little or no control
- Someone's personal issue can be connected to a universal goal that we are all striving for

Why the Principles of Support Are Important:

- To connect us to our highest aspirations in dealing with mental illness
- To get everyone talking about their reflections on these Principles



Tip: If the group begins talking about stigma, guilt, difficulties in coping, treatment resistance, shift the group to Principles of Support.

Steps

1. Use a strategy to direct the person to the Principles of Support Chart on the wall.

Ex Direct: "Let's take a look at the Principles of Support and find something we can strive for when things get tough."

Ex Support: "A lot of us struggle with that particular issue."

2. Ask the person what Principle might apply to his/her situation.

Ex "What Principle might guide you in this situation?"

3. Ask the group members what applied to or helped them when they were in a similar situation.

Ex "What applied to or helped you in a similar situation?"

4. Get a group discussion going about the Principles.

Ex "Why don't we discuss this for a minute?"



Tip: If the group starts naming the Principles and not discussing them, ask, "How do we do that?" about one of the Principles mentioned. Remember to get a discussion going.

Cardinal Rules

- Never choose a Principle for someone else
- Never lecture or instruct the group about Principles
- Call on the quiet person (the only time you can); everyone has something to say about these higher goals
- Do not circle back and summarize the discussion

Principles of Support

The Principles of Support represent what we are striving for as we struggle to come to terms with mental illness. This is our belief system regarding universal, necessary truths that guide and strengthen us when life deals us this particular challenge.

1. We will see the person first, not the illness.
2. We recognize that mental illnesses are medical illnesses that may have environmental triggers.
3. We understand that mental illnesses can be traumatic events.
4. We aim for better coping skills.
5. We find strength in sharing experiences.
6. We reject stigma and do not tolerate discrimination.
7. We won't judge anyone's pain as less than our own.
8. We forgive ourselves and reject guilt.
9. We embrace humor as healthy.
10. We accept we cannot solve all problems.
11. We expect a better future that is ours to shape.
12. We will never give up hope.

Strategies that AID US: Emotional Stages

Direct:

Ex “Let’s take a minute here to look at the Emotional Stages chart.”

Ex “It sounds like the Emotional Stages chart might be helpful here.”



Tip: There is only one strategy that should be used with Emotional Stages. Just be direct.

Facilitator Guide 4: Emotional Stages

Use the Emotional Stages When:

- A group member has intense feelings such as confusion, anger, grief, etc.
- Two related participants in the group are in different emotional stages

Why the Emotional Stages Are Important:

- To normalize overwhelmingly intense or painful feelings in order to help the person determine what they need and how to get it

Steps

1. Use the direct strategy to move the person to the Emotional Stages Chart on the wall.
Ex “Let’s take a moment to look at the Emotional Stages Chart.”
2. Describe the chart.
Ex “This chart describes a series of emotional reactions to the trauma of mental illness that are absolutely normal and predictable. Since our experiences may be cyclical, we can fluctuate among the stages as things change.”
3. Ask the person to identify where he or she is on the chart and to talk about that briefly.
Ex “Where do you think you are on the chart?”
4. Ask the group members about their needs.
Ex “Where you are on the chart may help determine what you need. Can someone tell me what they needed when they were in this same stage?”
5. Ask the individual about his or her needs.
Ex “What need can the group help you with right now?”
6. Ask the group how this individual might get this need met by coming up with concrete, practical resources that will help the person right now.
Ex “What do we know that would help _____ to meet this need?”

Cardinal Rules

- Never tell a person where they are on the chart; ask them
- Use this structure sparingly
- Always move the group to what a person needs in that stage

Emotional Stages of Recovery

NAMI is here for you at every stage.

I. Dealing with the Catastrophic Event

Crisis/Chaos/Shock
Denial; “Normalizing”
Despair; Detachment

Needs

Support
Comfort
Empathy for current situation
Help finding resources
Crisis Management
Reassurance
Empathy for pain
Hope

II. Learning to Cope

Anger/Guilt/Resentment
Recognition
Grief

Needs:

Permission to vent feelings
Education
Self-care
Networking
Skill training
To let go
To learn the system
Hope

III. Moving into Advocacy

Understanding
Acceptance
Advocacy/Action

Needs:

To restore balance in life
Responsiveness from the system
To find meaning
A sense of empowerment
Activism
Hope

Strategies that AID US: Hot Potatoes

Direct:

Ex “Let’s talk about this. This is the really hard stuff.”

Ex “Let’s not shy away from this. This is a really difficult problem.”

Ex “Let’s not avoid this really tough topic.”



Tip: Only the direct strategy should be used with the Hot Potatoes Process. Here again, the facilitator must make the shift and stay in charge of the process that follows.

Facilitator Guide 5: Hot Potatoes

Use the Hot Potatoes Process When:

- A group member relates a traumatic event, such as suicide, violence, arrest, restraint, involuntary commitment, traumatic loss

Why the Hot Potatoes Process Is Important:

- Allows the facilitator to address traumatic events

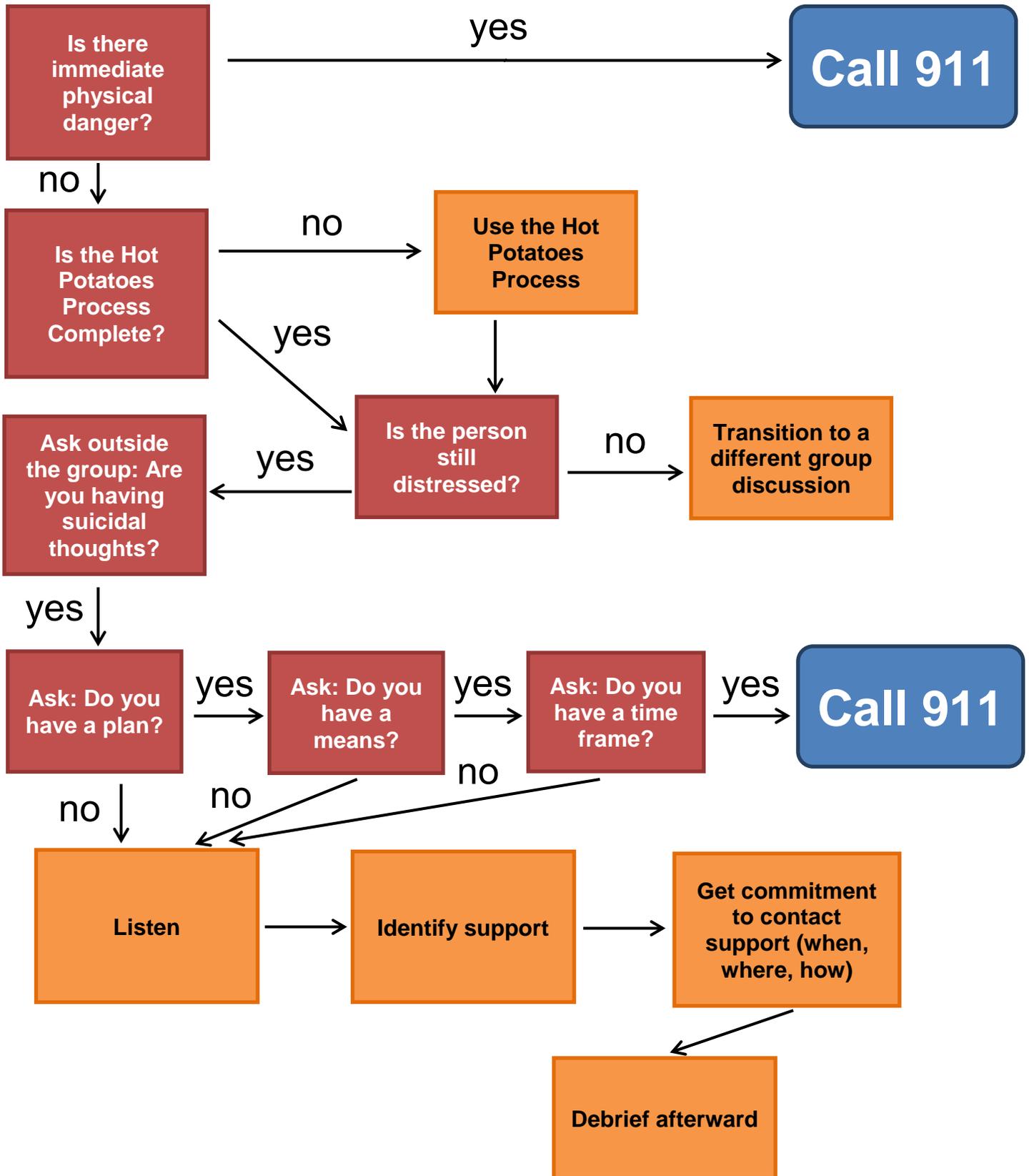
Steps

1. To get to the Hot Potatoes Process, direct with empathy.
Ex “Let’s talk about this. This is really hard stuff.”
2. Own the Hot Potato yourself.
Ex “I’ve had a similar experience of....”
3. Tune the whole group into the subject by asking for a show of hands (make sure to raise your hand as well) and then air out the situation by starting a discussion.
Ex “How many of you have experienced or felt something similar? **[Pause for a show of hands.]** Let’s talk about this. **[Pause for questions and discussion.]**”
4. Ask the person dealing with the crisis what his or her specific needs are right now.
Ex “What do you think you need right now?”
5. See what the group can do to help that is practical and constructive.
Ex “How can we help _____ to meet this need?”
6. Go to the Principles of Support Chart and ask the entire group which Principle they found most helpful in getting through their own difficult time.
Ex “I’d like to ask the group. Can you tell me what Principle you found most helpful in getting through your own difficult times?”
7. Ask the person dealing with the trauma, what Principle of Support might help?
Ex “Can you tell us what Principle might help you right now?”
8. Finally, underline strength and close the subject on a positive note.
Ex “The Principles of Support help us to focus on hope when times are tough. We recognize the courage and determination of each member of this group for getting through traumatic events like these.”

Cardinal Rule

- Never avoid a traumatic event when it comes up in a support group

Emergency Procedures Flowchart



Strategies that AID US: Group Wisdom

Direct:

- Ex** “Let’s use the whole group to help us. Does anyone have feedback that is practical and helpful in this situation?”
- Ex** “Time for Group Wisdom!”
- Ex** “Boy, I hear an awful lot of wallowing. Let’s see what we know about this, collectively, that would be constructive.”

Affirm:

- Ex** “You’re right. Sometimes the system doesn’t work. Let’s see what the whole group can tell us about this topic that is constructive and practical.”



Tip: These two strategies, direct and affirm, work very well to shift the group, but you can certainly use others of your choice.

Facilitator Guide 6: Group Wisdom

Use Group Wisdom When:

- The group or individual has an issue or common problem for which practical suggestions or actions are possible
- People start to wallow in their problems (“nothing works, nothing ever will...”)
- The lived experience of people in the group could assist another member

Why Group Wisdom Is Important:

- To tap into the lived experience and acquired knowledge of the group



Tip: Do not use Group Wisdom for illness-related issues over which families have little or no control.

Steps

1. Guide the person or group to clarify and focus on a single issue before discussing options (ask questions to clarify the issue).
 - Ex** If an individual: Say, “Can you say more about what is going on before we move to solutions?”
 - Ex** If the group: Say, “Let’s clarify the issue at hand before we move to solutions.”
2. Restate the issue to make sure it is the real topic.
 - Ex** “It sounds like you are asking the group **[restate the issue]**.”
3. Once the issue is clear, ask the whole group to help come up with constructive, practical and helpful information to address the challenge.
 - Ex** “What do we know about this subject and what information do we have that is constructive and helpful?”
4. Ask the individual if there is a specific help or resource that is needed now that the group has shared from their learned experience.
 - Ex** “Now that we’ve heard from the group, is there a specific help or resource that you still need information on how to access?”
5. Ask the group what they know about accessing that help or resource.
 - Ex** “What do we know that will help ____ with this need?”

Cardinal Rule

- If the group members start to wallow, remind them to offer wisdom that is constructive and helpful

Facilitator Guide 7: Problem Solving

Use Problem Solving When:

- A person keeps coming back to the group with the same problem (they are stuck)
- A person keeps coming back to the group with multiple problems and cannot focus or break them down into manageable pieces
- When problems pile up and become unmanageable for an individual

Why Problem Solving Is Important:

- To address a problem that someone feels they have exhausted all options for solving



Tip: Do not use Problem Solving for illness-related issues over which a family member has little or no control.

Steps

1. Set up a flip chart and have black and red markers available.
2. Ask the person for permission to use the Problem Solving Process.
 - a. “_____, do you mind if we focus on your issue using a structured problem solving process?”
3. Ask the person to state the problem he or she is coping with. Expect to hear a number of different problems. Write each part of the problem down separately as a list on the easel pad.
4. Ask the person to select the single, most pressing item on the list. Make sure it is one problem, not several.
5. Get the problem worded as a problem statement and write it on the easel pad in black marker. Offer a suggested problem statement but make sure the person agrees. (e.g. “How can I....” or “What can be done so that I can...”)
6. Ask the person for all the specifics relevant to the problem. Start with the reporter’s questions (who, what, when, where, how). You and the group will need to know everything about the problem that the person is willing to share.
7. Ask the group if they have questions about the circumstances around the problem.
 - a. Tell the group, “At this time, we are only trying to understand the problem. We will move into solutions next.”

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8. Ask the person about their past experiences. What solutions has he or she tried in the past? List these on a new sheet of paper. When all are listed, have the person identify which one has not worked and cross them off with a marker. Leave any solution that has been somewhat successful on the list.
 - a. Tell the group, “The worst way to handle a problem is to keep doing what doesn’t work.”
9. Ask the group members for specific new options. This is a brainstorm and no options should be discussed. All are valid in this process. Work together to brainstorm many options. List them on another page of the easel pad. Ask group members to make options as specific as possible.
10. Ask the person to pick a first choice option. Underline this option with a red marker.
11. Ask the person, “What if that doesn’t work?” The person then makes a second choice from the option list to use as a backup. Star this option on the list. Give the entire option list to the person to take home.



Tip: Keep control of the discussion, e.g. “Okay, now group, let me ask ____.” and “Okay _____, it’s time for me to ask the group.”

Cardinal Rules

- Always get the person’s permission first
- Problem Solving requires a clear, leadership directive style throughout