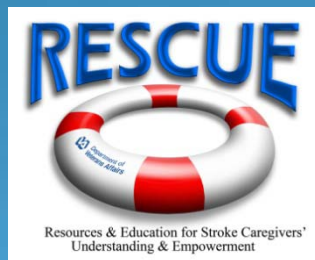


# PROBLEM-SOLVING MODULE



Using the RESCUE Website to Take  
Charge of Your Loved One's Care

## **Part 1: Introduction**

As a stroke caregiver, you will face challenges every day.

This module will help you work through these challenges using a problem-solving approach.

# Objectives:

1. Understand the problem-solving approach to caregiving.
2. Identify the problem-solving steps.
3. Explore the RESCUE Website to find health information.
4. Develop a personalized plan to help solve your problem.

# What is a Problem-Solving Approach?

A problem-solving approach refers to working through the details of a problem to find a solution.

# Components of A Successful Problem-Solving Approach

**C**reativity

**O**ptimism

**P**lanning

**E**ducational  
Information


**Creativity** is when you use your imagination to come up with ideas.

**Viewing the problem from a new perspective.**

- ❖ Take a step back from the problem.
- ❖ Try to view the problem through someone else's eyes.
- ❖ Think about how that person might solve the problem.

# Tips for Being More Creative

- Brainstorm a lot of ideas.
- Don't be afraid to try new things.
- Carry around a small notebook to write in. Creative ideas often strike when we least expect it.
- Talk to others. Listening to how someone else handled a problem may trigger new ideas for you.



Think of a time when you have been  
creative in solving a problem.



**Optimism** is having a positive attitude and being able to see good in things.

- Viewing caregiving as a challenge, not a burden.
- Thinking good thoughts about yourself and the job you are doing as a caregiver.
- Giving yourself a pep talk.
  - “I can handle it!”
  - “Good job!”

# Tips For Being More Optimistic

## Practice getting rid of negative thoughts

- Focus on things you *can* do
- Take it one step at a time
- Replace negative thoughts with positive thinking & good memories
- Forgive and forget your mistakes
- Relax about things you can't change



Think of when a positive attitude has helped you handle a problem.

Planning is when you lay out the steps it will take to reach a goal.



## **Step 1: Identify your problems**

Think of all of the problems you are facing as a caregiver. Write them down.

## Step 2: Prioritize your Problems

Number your problems from most challenging to least. Label the most challenging problem as #1.



## **Step 3: Identify Your Highest Priority Problem**

The problem you marked as #1 is your highest priority problem.

## **Step 4: Gather Educational Information**

Search for information related to your problem. Be sure you get your information from a trusted source.



# Good Sources of Information

- ❖ Healthcare providers
- ❖ Trusted Websites
  - ❖ RESCUE  
<http://www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue/>
  - ❖ American Stroke Association  
<http://www.strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/>
  - ❖ My HealthVet  
<https://www.myhealth.va.gov>
  - ❖ VA Caregiver website  
<http://www.caregiver.va.gov/>
  - ❖ National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM)  
<https://nccam.nih.gov/research/blog/caregivers?nav=upd>
- ❖ Medical Books
- ❖ Health care pamphlets or hand-outs



What resources for educational information have you used?

## **Step 5: Set Realistic Goals**

Choose a small, reasonable goal at first. Once that goal is reached, you will be more confident. You will feel better able to reach the next goal.

## Step 6: List All Possible Solutions

Write down all the strategies you can think of to solve your problem.

Along with creative new approaches, think of how you have solved problems in the past. Can a past solution help you solve your current problem?

## **Step 7: Choose the Best Solution**

Weigh the pros and cons of each solution. Select the solution(s) you believe are most likely to be successful.

# Step 8: Evaluate Your Plan

Pick a time to evaluate your plan after you have tried your solution. For example: 1 week, 3 weeks, 1 month.

Ask yourself:

Does my plan seem to be working?

Is the problem getting better?

Have I given my plan long enough to see improvement?

Do I need to make changes to my plan?

# Let's Review

How can creativity be useful in the problem-solving approach?

Answer:

- ❖ Creativity allows you to use your imagination to come up with new ideas on how to solve problems.

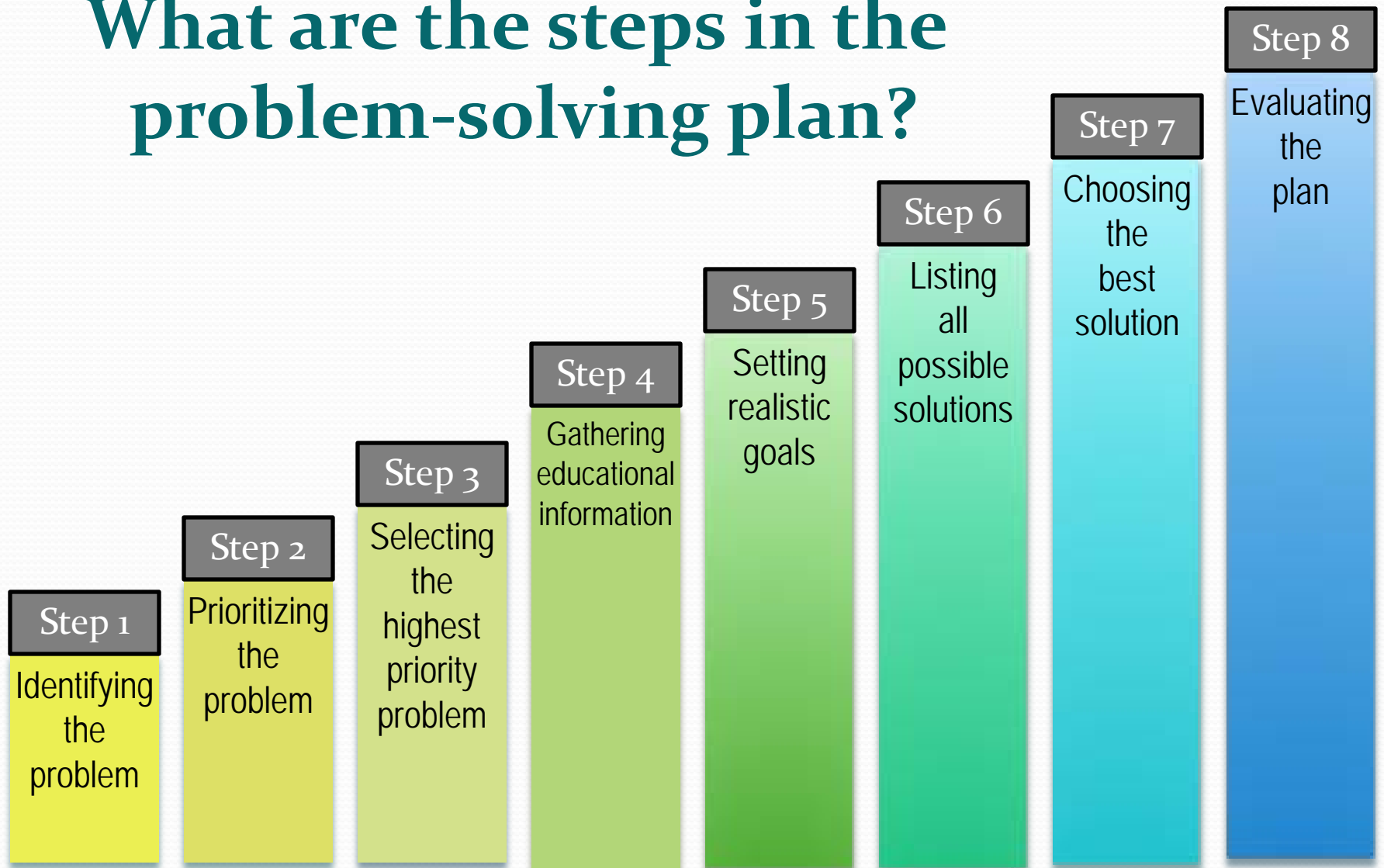
# Why is optimism important in the problem-solving approach?

## Answer:

- ❖ A positive attitude will help you to approach caregiving as a challenge, not a burden.



# What are the steps in the problem-solving plan?



# REMEMBER

**C.O.P.E.** can help you face the challenges of caregiving with Creativity and Optimism.

You can create a successful Plan by using Educational information.

## Part 2: Illustrative Example

Alice became a caregiver when her father suffered a stroke two months ago. Over the last month, Alice has become increasingly stressed. She admits to feeling resentful of her new role. She is unsure if she can continue to care for her father.

# Step 1: Alice Identifies Her Problems

Problem	Priority
<i>1. No time for myself</i>	
<i>2. Dad is agitated and yells at me frequently</i>	
<i>3. Solicitors call all day long for overdue bills</i>	
<i>4. Dad is incontinent, have to change the bed frequently</i>	

## Step 2: Alice Prioritize Problems

Problem	Priority
1. No time for myself	#1
2. Dad is agitated and yells at me frequently	#3
3. Solicitors call all day long for overdue bills	#4
4. Dad is incontinent, have to change the bed frequently	#2

# Step 3: Alice Identifies Her Highest Priority Problem

My priority problem is: No time for myself

# Step 4: Alice Gathers Educational Information using the RESCUE website

Alice looks at the RESCUE Fact sheets:

- Getting Help from Family, Friends and Community
- Caregiver Stress & Depression
- Taking a Break from Caregiving (Respite Care)

## Step 5: Alice Sets a Realistic Goal

My Goal is to: set aside 1 hour each day  
to do something for myself, like doing  
my laundry, taking a walk, or  
reading a book



# Step 6: Alice Lists All Possible Solutions

Alice lists information found on the RESCUE website:

Possible Solutions	Best <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1. Make a list of what tasks you need and who you can ask. Getting help with household chores like laundry and cleaning can free you up for “Me Time”.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Remind others that your loved one enjoys friendly visits. During these visits, you can get a short break to go for a walk or have lunch with a friend.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Check with the social worker at your local VA medical center about Respite Care. A number of local VA and community resources are available.	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Step 7: Alice Chooses the Best Solution

Possible Solutions	Best <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
1. Make a list of what tasks you need and who you can ask. Getting help with household chores like laundry and cleaning can free you up for “Me Time”.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Alice decides to ask a family member to help do the dishes and wash their own clothes. This will free up extra time for Alice.

# Step 8: Alice Evaluates Her Plan

Questions	Answers
1. Does my plan seem to be working?	<i>In the last 4 weeks, my family members are helping with the dishes and the laundry.</i>
2. Is the problem getting better?	<i>With the additional help, I'm now able to enjoy one hour to myself each evening.</i>
3. Have I given my plan long enough to see improvement?	
4. Do I need to make changes to my plan?	

## **Part 3: Individualized Practice Exercise**

Now it is your turn to make a Problem-Solving Plan.

**RESCUE WEBSITE**

<http://www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue/>

**Print out the problem-solving diary found on the RESCUE website, or use the one in your workbook**

### Step 1: Identifying the problem

Take a moment to think of the problems you are having related to caregiving, and write them down.

### Step 2: Prioritizing the problem

Number your problems from most challenging to least challenging.

**Remember: Try to think of your problems as challenges. Positive thinking is an important part of the problem-solving approach.**

Step 3: Selecting the highest priority problem

Identify your highest priority problem.

Step 4: Gather educational information

Look on the **RESCUE** website to gather information.

Step 5: Setting realistic goals

Using the information that you just found, set a realistic goal for solving your problem.

## Step 6: Listing all possible solutions

List all possible solutions that you can think of.

## Step 7: Choosing the best solution

Pick the best solution(s) to make your plan.

**Remember:** Try to be creative when solving problems.

## Step 8: Evaluating your plan

Pick a time to evaluate your plan.

For example: 1 week, 3 weeks, 1 month

At that time, ask yourself:

- How is it going?
- Is your plan working out?
- Do you need to alter your plan?



# References

Houts, P.S. (Ed.). *Eldercare at Home*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York, NY: The AGS Foundation for Health in Aging; 2004.

Houts, P.S., Nezu, A.M., Nezu, C.M. & Bucher, J.A. (1996). The prepared family caregiver: a problem-solving approach to family caregiver education. *Patient Education and Counseling*, 27, 63-73.

You have successfully completed  
the problem-solving module!

