

# Week 8: Walk to Wellness

## Problem solving steps

### We All Have PROBLEMS!

Sometimes we run into problems when we try to change our eating habits. However, by taking the right steps, we can solve those problems.

When working on changing our lifestyle to healthy eating and physical activity, our problems can be as small as a schedule change or as big as an injury. No matter what the problem is, we can take steps to keep it from getting in the way of progress toward our goals.

### THE FIVE STEPS:

Five steps to problem solving:

1. Describe the problem.
2. List all your options.
3. Pick what seems to be the best option, and try it.
4. Make a plan for putting the option into effect.
5. Follow the plan.

### Why Do These Steps Work For Problem Solving?

Following these steps helps us to be more **in control** of unexpected setbacks. The steps also force us to be detailed in our search for solutions. Describing the problem helps us to see what we are truly dealing with. The steps also help us to break down the problem into **small pieces** that we can manage. Then we don't feel helpless to overcome the problem.

Thinking about and writing down all our options helps us to see the choices available to us. Picking the best option requires us to weigh the pros and cons and then to choose the option that we believe will work best for us.

### Give It a Try!

Making a plan to put the best option into practice and trying it out are the final steps we take to solve our problem. We might not make the right choice at first because many events can get in the way of our being more active and eating less fat and fewer

calories. But no need to panic! We can overcome our difficulties. We can lose weight and keep it off.



### Example: Sarah's Action Chain

- 1.** Did not eat lunch
- 2.** Boss was angry
- 3.** Felt stressed and anxious
- 4.** Came home tired, upset, and hungry
- 5.** Went right to the kitchen
- 6.** Saw cookies on counter
- 7.** Ate cookies

## Step 1: Describe the Problem in Detail

When describing the problem, do the following:

- Be specific.
- Look at what led to the problem.
- Find the action (or behavior) chain.
- Try to see the links in the action chain. Look for —
  - ✓ Cues that make you want to eat or be inactive.
  - ✓  People who do not support you.
  - ✓ Thoughts or feelings that get in your way.

## Example: Sarah's Action Chain

1. Did not eat lunch
2. Boss was angry
3. Felt stressed and anxious
4. Came home tired, upset, and hungry
5. Went right to the kitchen
6. Saw cookies on counter
7. Ate cookies

## Step 2: Brainstorm Your Options

Think of all the options you have for overcoming the cues you listed in Step 1. Pair them with each event in the action chain that led to the problem.

Events (Links) in Sarah's Action Chain	Some of Sarah's Options
<b>Did not eat lunch.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Pack a bag lunch.
<b>Boss was angry.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Talk with boss about solving the problems at work. <input type="checkbox"/> Quit job. (Just kidding, but not really.)
<b>Sarah felt stressed and anxious.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Take a break. <input type="checkbox"/> Get support from a co-worker.
<b>Came home tired, upset, and hungry.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Go for a walk after work to unwind. <input type="checkbox"/> Eat a healthy snack.
<b>Went right to the kitchen.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Enter house through different door. <input type="checkbox"/> Plan something to do immediately after arriving home. (For example, go out in the yard, clean a closet.)
<b>Saw cookies on counter.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Do not buy cookies. <input type="checkbox"/> If other family members have cookies in the house, keep them out of sight. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep fruit in sight.

## Step 3: Pick One Option to Try

You have thought about a lot of options, and now it is time to pick one. Follow these guidelines for picking the best option for you.

- Weigh the pros and cons of each option.
- Choose one that is likely to work and that you can do.
- Try to break as many links as you can, as soon as possible.

## Sarah's Example

- ✓ It will be much easier for me to control my eating in the evening if I eat lunch and do not come home hungry.
- ✓ I can avoid the cookies if I do not buy them in the first place.
- ✓ Even if I eat lunch, I may still come home hungry. If I do not buy the cookies, it will be easier to choose low- calorie snacks such as fruit when I get home.

## Step 4: Make a Positive Action Plan

Your plan should include each action you will take to make a change in your eating cues. See the example below of the actions Sarah will take.

Your Plan	Sarah's Plan
<b>I will...</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Pack a bag lunch.
<b>When?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Tuesday and Thursday of next week.
<b>I will do this first...</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Shop for food for the bag lunch. <input type="checkbox"/> Pack lunch the night before.
<b>Roadblocks</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> I might forget to pack or bring the lunch. If so, <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• I'll find a healthy lunch place with quick service.</li><li>• I'll order a turkey sandwich for delivery.</li></ul>
<b>I will do this to make my success more likely...</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Ask a friend who brings bag lunches to work to join me for lunch on Tuesday.

## Step 5: Try it!

This final step is to put your plan into action.