

Chapter 18: Maintaining a healthy lifestyle

Chapter 19: Maintaining close relationships

Problem solving: downloadable chart

Purpose of this chart: Takes you through a problem solving approach to resolving difficulties that can help to reduce stress.

Tips for using this chart:

- In identifying the problem (step 1) avoid blaming – try and be as objective as you can
- Don't rush the early steps of brainstorming and evaluation (steps 2 and 3) in trying to come to a solution
- If the solution didn't work out try not to be discouraged, chances are you now have more of a handle on the problem, so try working through the steps again with this additional information
- You can also use problem solving to help reduce stressful triggers of illness (chapter 9).

For more detailed instructions, explanations and an example of using this chart see pp. 246 and 251 of *Living with Bipolar*.

Problem solving steps

1. What is the problem? *(Be as specific as possible and see if you need to break the problem into a number of related problems. Prioritise which problem to tackle first).*

2 Brainstorm possible solutions *(think of as many as you can)*

3. Evaluate all possible solutions *(what are the steps in carrying out each solution? Is the solution practical, what resources do you need? What are the risks and consequences of each solution and the advantages vs. disadvantages)*

4. Select a solution(s)

5. Plan the solution (*What resources will you need? What time frame? What might you need to do first? What steps will you need to implement your solution?*)

6. Implement the plan (*This involves putting the plan into practise. If you find it hard to make a start, remind yourself about the benefits of solving the problem and schedule a special time to do step one towards implementing the solution. Once you have achieved the first step, you can consider the next until your goal is achieved*).

7. Did it work? (*Did it work? Assess if your solution (s) have been helpful and return to STEP two if you need to adjust the solution or find a new one Remember there is no passing or failing as solving problems is trying different solutions to find what works*).

8. Encourage yourself (*Working on problems is not easy and all efforts deserve to be acknowledged. Not all problems have immediate solutions and finding what works can take time*).