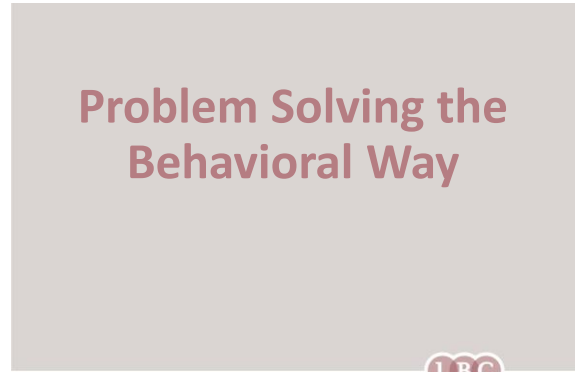




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### Expect to have Problems

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- Problem behavior
- Accident at work
- Upset family member
- Therapist did not arrive for session on time
- Poor progress in programs
- Sudden resignation



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### How will you handle it?

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- Hoping won't help!
- Have a plan to handle problems – stay calm
- A mind like water puts you in a better position to problem-solve!



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### Structured Problem Solving

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### Structured Problem Solving

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- To the rescue . . .!!!
- You don't have to have answer . . . you just have to start problem-solving



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## Our Agenda



- What is a problem??
- The Steps of Effective Problem-Solving
- A Behavioral Approach to Each Step
- A problem-solving activity

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## What is a problem?



- No immediate response that is likely to work
- Multiple options and it isn't clear which is better
- Environments that foment unhappiness, unproductivity, and negativity

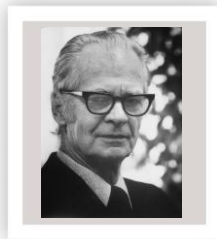


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## What is problem – solving?



- **Skinner (1953)**
- “any behavior which, through the manipulation of variables, makes the appearance of a solution more probable”
- “generating stimuli to supplement what is already present and generating a response that is likely to be reinforced”



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## What is NOT problem – solving?



- Responding quickly without a likely solution - impulsivity.
- Waiting and doing nothing- problems get worse with inaction.



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## Structured Problem Solving Steps



- Detect/identify the problem
- Define the problem
- Generate some possible options
- Evaluate the possible options and pick one
- Evaluate how well that worked and change course if needed

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## DO each step!!



- Structured systematic approach
- Critical to fully ENGAGE each step
- Don't skip ahead or skimp on the steps
  - Increases risk of missing something or impulsive responding
- Monitor your self during the problem-solving process

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## Detect/Identify the Problem



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- The crisis is a **RESULT** of the problem rather than the problem itself



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## Detect/Identify the Problem



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- Notice the smoke rather than waiting for fire
  - Detect subtle indicators of a problem or the conditions that produce problems.
- “Nuanced Noticing” – are your hackles raising soon enough



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## Notice the subtle and missing



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- Lack of praise, change in communication, change in pattern of Earned Leave/call outs, suddenly more or less busy
  - Something is up and it already causing some distress in the system
- Create systems and environments that detect and bring changes and small problems to you early – bring smoke!
  - Teach everyone to detect subtle change and “something missing” as a yellow alert to explore

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## Find the real problem



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- ALWAYS praise bringing a problem forward!
- Investigate and get all sides of the story
- Ask a trusted colleague to get a different perspective – YOU might be part of the problem



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## Reflect and Notice



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- What has been bugging you - seeming a bit off?
- Have you named it as a potential problem?
- Have you spoken to someone?



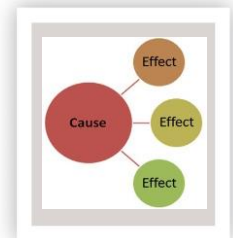
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## Define the Problem



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- The CRISIS isn't the **cause** - it is the **effect**
  - Problem isn't problem behavior, it is the contingencies
  - Problem isn't turnover, problem is some mismatch between person and workplace



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## Define the Problem



- Look for function rather than just the form/topography
- Define the problem at the “right depth” so you can also find related problems

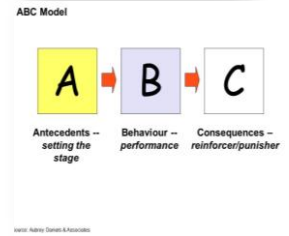


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## Analyze the A, B, Cs



- Behavior occurs in an environmental context – the “problem” seems like a good option or the only option
- Figure out the antecedents and consequences and change those!



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## Examples



- People feel like no one will actively address personnel problems, so it isn't worth it to bring up problems
  - Doesn't have to be accurate to suppress bringing problems forward and leading to turnover
- Seeking help is on extinction or help is too delayed, so the options seem like
  - try something (could be a bad idea) to solve it yourself
  - leave the problem behind for a different job and boss

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## Ask 5 Whys



- Define the problem at the “right depth” so you can also find related problems
- Ask “5 whys”



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## Example



- Staff resigns without providing ample notice resulting in an unforeseen lapse in client/family care
  - Q1: Why did they resign? Couldn't get enough pay (rate/hours?)
  - Q2: Why couldn't they get enough hours? All of their clients get same hours, cancellations
  - Q3: Do ALL of our clients get same hours? No – there were other options for hours
  - Q4: Why was the resignation sudden? They had actually mentioned hours twice before – maybe not sudden
  - Q5: What is the process for reviewing hours?

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## Example



- Need additional space, resources, equipment
  - “Why do you need additional space?”
    - Need to have a center
  - “Why do you need to have a center?”
    - Decreases travel and increases ability to supervise
  - “Do families want center-based services?”
    - Why wouldn't they?
  - Do you know for certain that you have enough family interest to fill the space you are asking for?
    - No

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## Define the Problem



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- **DON'T** move forward until you have **REALLY** done this!!!

- You wouldn't do a treatment plan with out knowing the function



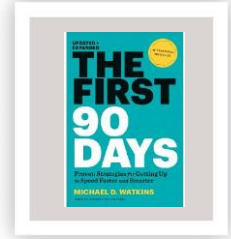
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## Generate possible solutions



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- We repeat strategies even when they aren't suited to the current situation
- Get yourself thinking **DIFFERENTLY**
- Recruit fresh eyes and ideas – universe of possibilities



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## Generate Solutions



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- Prompt yourself to “**behave variably**” and thoughtfully

- Try to describe how this situation is DIFFERENT than prior ones
- Link your solution ideas to the causes from the prior step
- New environment for brainstorming – disrupt stimulus control

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## Generate Possible Options



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- Set a rule: write down all thoughts **EXCEPT** your fallback
- Name something you would try if you had the resources
- Notice things and people in your environment to provoke new ideas
- **DON'T** evaluate yet!!! No jumping ahead

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## Pro-Con Evaluation



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- Do a thorough pro-con analysis of each option

- ALL pros and ALL cons that you can think of.
- THERE ARE ALWAYS BOTH!! If you don't have cons you have looked downstream!!
- Determine if you need more data and EXACTLY what that is and how to get it
  - This is like saying we need an FA before we move forward

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## Careful analysis



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- **Immediate** pros and cons will occur to you as long as you use a written stimulus to prompt each
- The **longer term** pros and cons are less likely to occur to you unless you prompt yourself to think about long-term (i.e., downstream impact)

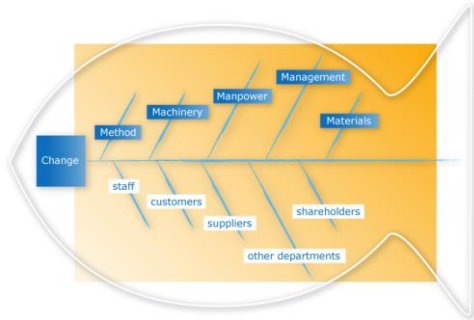


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## Downstream Impact



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## Evaluate and Pick One



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- **PICK one or more options or choose to come up with better ones**

- No “analysis paralysis”
- If reasonable confidence about the link to CAUSE, try and fix as needed



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## Evaluate How Well it Worked



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- Be honest and forward looking
- Be willing and eager to learn from your own successes and mistakes
- Don't avoid data that suggests that the strategy didn't work well
- Recognize an ill-suited strategy quickly so you can change course and choose better next time

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## Structured Problem Solving Steps



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- **Detect/identify the problem**
- **Define the problem**
- **Generate some possible options**
- **Evaluate the possible options and pick one**
- **Evaluate how well that worked and change course if needed**

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### PROBLEM SOLVING ACTIVITY

#### Directions

With a collaborator, choose one of your recurrent problems and engage in each step of the problem-solving process. Use this form to document your work. Make sure you fully engage in each step and DO NOT jump ahead 😊

Who are the problem-solvers?

What is the targeted problem (general description)?

Step I: Identify the Problem: Provide a specific description and indicate how you knew it was a problem – were there earlier indications that you did not notice?

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#### Step II: Define the Problem (Ask the 5 whys and get at functions)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Create a summary statement that defines the core cause or causes of the problem.

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Step III: Generate Possible Solutions (Think differently; behave variably)


Step IV: Evaluate Possible Solutions and Pick One

Solution	Pros	Cons



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Step V: Evaluation...How will it work? How will we know if it worked?

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**Thank You**  
Contact me at [Linda@LBehavioral.com](mailto:Linda@LBehavioral.com)

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