

- Therapeutic Collaborations Consultation & Training**
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DEFINING THE PROBLEM: DETERMINING WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

What things would you like to see change with yourself or in your life?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Next, if you haven't already done so, translate each of the different things that you would like to see change into "action-talk." Action-talk means that we take our vague descriptions of our concerns and change them into clear, behavioral ones. This allows us to understand the "doing" of the problem. Remember to specify what you want to have happen instead of the problematic behavior(s).

Example of vague description: "I want to be more in control of my anger."

Translation to action-talk description: "I want to make better choices such as talking to others or leaving the scene when I become angry."

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Now, list in order the action-based descriptions of things that you would like to see change. All of your concerns are important but it's important to start with the ones that you want to see change first. These will represent the goals of therapy.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

HOW WILL WE KNOW WHEN THINGS ARE BETTER?

There is an old saying, “If you don’t know where you’re going you’ll probably end up somewhere else.” If you were going on a vacation to a far away destination would you just choose a flight to anywhere or jump in the car and start driving and hope that you arrive at your destination? Probably not. This exercise will help you to determine your preferred destination so that you will know when the change you are seeking has been achieved.

To complete this exercise, refer back to the goals that you established during the exercise, “Defining the Problem: Determining What Needs to Change.” Next, write those goals down in the spaces provided.

Example: I want to make better choices such as talking to others or leaving the scene when I become angry.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Next, ask yourself, “How will I know when the problem I’m/we’re facing is no longer a problem?” Then, for each of the goals previously listed, write down a corresponding preferred outcome. Be as specific as possible and use action-talk means when creating these outcomes.

Example: I will know I am making better choices when I talk to others or walk away 8 out of 10 times when I become angry.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

EXPLORING CLIENTS' ORIENTATIONS TO CHANGE

Although your therapist has a lot of training, you know more about yourself. You know what hasn't worked, what has worked (to any degree), and what might work in the future. You also have preferences about how your concerns might best be approached. The more your therapist knows about you, the more helpful therapy can be.

There are two parts to this exercise. In Part I, please take some time to think over the following questions about your past experiences with learning and change. Then, for each question, circle the answer or answers that best fit you. You may choose more than one answer for each question.

Part I

1. I tend to learn best...

By having something told to me over and over.

By reading as much as I can on a subject.

From the experiences of other people.

By being realizing rewards when I succeed.

By making mistakes and learning from them.

By being shown where I am wrong.

Other (please list): _____

2. My therapist can be of greatest assistance by...

Telling me what I should do.

Asking me questions and encouraging me to look deeper into my own ideas.

Sharing his or her ideas.

Suggesting reading.

Suggesting actions for me to experiment with.

Just listening.

Other (please list): _____

3. I expect change to happen...

All at once.

Step by step.

In increments.

Quickly.

Slowly.

Not at all.

Other (please list): _____

4. I expect change to happen in my therapy...

By gaining insight into how I got this problem.

Through trying new things until we find something that works.

Other (please list): _____

5. I think that I need to change...

Something deep in my personality

The way I think about or look at things

Some thing(s) that I do

Someone else

Other (please list): _____

Part II

Oftentimes people have a pretty good hunch not only about what is causing a problem, but also about how to resolve it. Here we'll explore your ideas related to these areas. To complete Part II of this exercise, please review the questions and in the spaces provided write down your responses.

1. What ideas do you have about what is causing the concern/problem(s) that you're facing?

2. What ideas do you have about how change is going to happen with your concern/problem(s)?

3. Given the ideas that you have about the problem you're facing, what do you think would be the first step in addressing it?

4. What else might you do differently as a result of the theory you've developed?

Once you've finished, take a moment to review your responses. Consider what you have learned about yourself, the concern/problem(s) you're facing, and how you might achieve the change that you are seeking.

WHO ARE YOU? EXPLORING THE QUALITIES WITHIN

This exercise will assist you in two ways. First it will help you identify the qualities that you possess or those that exist within your relationships with others that allow you to manage the adversity that you face in your life. These qualities can be of assistance to you in resolving your concerns or problems. Next, it will help you to identify what those qualities allow you to do to stand up to adversity.

To complete this exercise, take a moment to consider the following questions. Then, write your responses in the spaces provided.

1. What qualities do you possess that allow you to move through life? To be a child yourself? A brother or sister? A mother or father? A parent? A grandparent? An uncle or aunt? A friend? A coworker or colleague? A boss? Other role?

2. What would others say are the qualities that you have that keep you going?

3. What do those qualities that you possess say about the kind of person you are?

4. How do those qualities that you possess help you in times of trouble?

5. What have the qualities that you possess allowed you to do that you might not have otherwise done?

When facing difficulties, consider how the qualities that you possess allow you to take action to get the upper hand with those difficulties.

SEARCHING FOR “COUNTER” EVIDENCE

When people are in pain, they tend to focus their attention on the pain they are feeling. The psychiatrist, Milton Erickson, used to remind people in pain that there were parts of their bodies that weren't feeling any pain at that moment. As soon as they would re-orient their attention to those parts of their bodies, they would often find that they would feel less pain. Why? Because when we have problems, part of how those problems stay the same is that we fixate our attention. For example, when we're depressed, we often focus our attention on all the horrible things we've done or felt or on our failures in the past. In searching for counterevidence we want to help clients to shift their attention to explore times in their lives when their problems have been less dominating.

1. What was different before the problem began to have such influence in your life?

2. Describe a time in the recent past (a few days, weeks ago) when the problem wasn't as dominating or disruptive in your life? What specifically happened?

3. If you had a difficult time with Question #2, how far back would you have to go to find a time when things went just a little better in regard to the problem you're facing? What happened? What did you do differently?

4. What did you learn from your answers to the previous questions that might be helpful to you in the present?

5. What might you do differently in facing your problem as a result of what you've learned?

HOW ELSE MIGHT YOU SEE IT? EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES

Oftentimes the explanations we have for the problems we're facing are part of the problem. In fact, our explanations may lead us in unhelpful directions without our knowing it. On the other hand, new explanations for the same problems can help us to approach them differently. This exercise will help you to challenge your current explanations and create some new ones. You can then determine how those new explanations might help you to change what you do to solve the problems you're facing.

1. What explanation do you have for the problem(s) that you are currently experiencing?

2. How does your explanation influence the way that you approach solving your problem(s)?

3. What other possible explanations might you consider regarding the same problem? List 5 alternative explanations for the problem you're facing. Be creative.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. Go through your list of alternative explanations and rule out those that a neutral person would judge to be less than 50 percent likely.

5. For each alternative explanation, list three ways that your behavior would change if you were to adopt that explanation.

1. _____

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

2. _____

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

3. _____

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

6. For each behavior change in item 5, write down what would be the effect of changing your behavior in that way right now?

1. _____

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

2. _____
- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
3. _____
- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

As a way of experimenting with and testing out alternative explanations, for the next few days or week, select one new explanation and try acting “as if” that explanation were true regarding your problem. For example, if you believed that a partner was manipulating you to get his way and that explanation wasn’t helpful, you might consider that she was wanting more attention from you. By trying out the latter explanation or theory you might get a different result with the problem you’ve been facing. If one explanation doesn’t lead to the outcome you desire, try another. Be sure to pay close attention to those explanations that lead to the results for which you are looking.

STANDING UP TO PROBLEMS

When problems are present it can seem as if they have become problems. In actuality, the person is never the problem. The problem is the problem. This exercise is designed to help you to identify the problem that has intruded upon you and its effects on you. This can allow you to learn more about the tactics of the problem and times when things have gone differently. This exercise will require some creativity on your part. Are you ready?

To complete this exercise, take a moment to consider the following questions. Then, write your responses in the spaces provided.

- 1. Name the problem.** Either as an individual or as part of a group, give the problem a name that accurately depicts it.

*Examples: Bickering – Bickering
Laziness – The Big Oversleep
Insomnia – Lack of Sleep*

Name of the problem:

- 2. Personify the problem and attribute bad intentions and tactics to it.** Consider how the problem has made its way into your life.

Questions to consider:

- *How long has _____ been trying to convince you to lead a life you don't agree with?*
- *When did _____ first come over to visit without permission?*
- *When did you first notice _____ lingering around and making noise?*

3. Investigate how the problem has been disrupting, dominating or discouraging you. How have you felt dominated or forced by the problem to do or experience things you didn't like. Be sure that each person who is involved has the opportunity to speak about the effects of the problem on him or her.

Questions to consider:

- How has _____ come between you and your family/friends, etc?
- When has _____ recruited you into something that you later got in trouble for?
- What intentions do you think _____ has for you?

4. Discover moments when you and/or your family hasn't been dominated or discouraged by the problem or have not been disrupted by the problem. Describe moments of choice or success that there have been in regard to the problem. These moments represent times when you and/or others haven't been dominated or cornered by the problem and experienced things you didn't like.

Questions to consider:

- When have you been able to stand up to _____?
- When has _____ whispered in your ear but you didn't listen?
- Tell me about times when _____ couldn't convince you to _____?

5. Find evidence from the past to support a new view of you as competent enough to have stood up to, defeated, or escaped from the dominance or oppression of the problem. Search for stories and evidence from the past to show that you were actually competent, strong, spirited, but didn't always realize it.

Questions to consider:

- *What qualities do you think you possess that help you to stand up to _____ plans for you?*
- *Who are you such that you were able to reject _____ taunting?*
- *How do you explain that you are the kind of person who would lodge a protest against _____?*
- *What do you think _____ would say if he/she could hear you talk about standing up to _____?*
- *Who is someone who has known all along that you had the wherewithal to take your life back from the grasp of _____?*

6. Speculate about what kind of future is to be expected from you. Speculate on what future developments will result now that you are seen as competent and strong, and what changes will result as you keep resisting the problem.

Questions to consider:

- *As _____ continues to stand up to _____, how do you think that will affect her relationships with family members?*
- *As you continue to keep the upper hand with _____, what do you think will be different about _____, compared to what _____ had planned for you?*
- *How do you think your strategy with _____ will help you in the future?*

7. Find or create a way of sharing your new identity and new story with others. Using letters, asking for advice for other people suffering from the same or similar problems, arranging for meetings with family members and friends, or through other means, consider ways that others can experience the new story that has evolved.

Questions to consider:

- *Who else needs to know about the stance you've taken against _____?*
 - *Who needs to know that you've made a commitment to keep _____ from hanging out without parental permission?*
 - *Who could benefit from knowing about your enlistment in the _____ club?*
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-
-
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WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

We've long held the belief that what ever has happened to you in the past will directly effect what happens to you in the future. This exercise challenges that myth by helping you to see how your vision of the future can effect what you do in the present. For example, if you knew that you were going to be given \$10,000,000 tomorrow would you go to work? If you knew that someone you cared about was going to get hurt and you could save them would you? By knowing the future your actions in the present can be determined. This exercise will help you to identify what you want for yourself in the future and how you can begin to move in the direction of your goals and preferred outcomes.

To complete this exercise, take a moment to consider the following questions. Then, write your responses in the spaces provided.

1. Find a Vision for the Future

What dreams did you or do you have for yourself in upcoming days/weeks/months/years/life?

What are you here on the planet for?

What area do you think you could you make a contribution in?

What would you try to do with your life if you knew that you could not fail?

2. Deal with and dissolve barriers to the preferred future

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What, in your view, stops you from getting to where you want to be with your life?

What, in your view, stops you from realizing your dreams or getting to your goals?

What do you believe must happen before you can realize your dreams/future?

What are the actions you haven't taken to make your dreams and visions come true?

What things stand in your way of realizing your dreams and visions?

What would your heroes, models, or people you admire do if they were you in order to make this dream or vision happen?

3. Make an Action Plan to Reach the Preferred Future

What could you do in the near future that would be steps towards getting you to where you want to be?

What could you do in the near future that would be steps towards realizing your visions and dreams?

What would be a first step toward realizing your dream/future?

What would you do as soon as you leave here?

What would you be thinking that would help you take those steps?

With most clients who are stuck in their troubles, just getting them to turn their gaze from the past to the future is a major reorientation. This reorientation can provide information about directions for treatment, meaning and purpose in their life, and lead to the restoration of hope.

IDENTIFYING UNHELPFUL PATTERNS

Problems do not occur in a vacuum. That is, they occur at certain times, in certain places, with certain people, and so on. In order to determine the most appropriate method for solving a problem, it's first important to explore the patterns surrounding it. This exercise will help you, either alone or with your therapist, to identify those unhelpful patterns. Once this has been done, a variety of methods can be used to change, alter, and disrupt those unhelpful patterns of action and interaction.

To complete this exercise, write down your answers in the spaces provided.

How often does the problem typically happen (once an hour, once a day, once a week)?

What is the usual timing (time of day, time of week, time of month, time of year) of the problem?

Examples: Only on weekends? At night? After work?

How long does the problem typically last? Examples: Five minutes? An hour? A day?

Where does the problem typically happen? Examples: In the family room? In the car? At your desk?

What do you do when the problem is happening? Examples: Raise your voice at your coworkers? Leave the room? Pound on the table?

Who is usually present when the problem is happening? Examples: Coworkers? Family members? Friends?

What do others who are around do when the problem is happening usually do or say? Examples:
Blame you or someone else? Join in and argue with your partner? Give advice?

By now you have some ideas about the patterns that surround the problem you're facing. Next you can talk with your therapist or consider methods in this section of the book for changing, altering, and disrupting those unhelpful patterns of action and interaction.

IDENTIFYING SOLUTION KEYS BY CHANGING PATTERNS

Although it can seem as if some problems happen all the time, that idea is myth. That is, problems occur at certain times, in certain places, with certain people, and so on. On the other hand, they are absent or less intrusive at other times. There is a saying, “Problems don’t occur 24-hours a day.” This exercise will help you help you to identify situations or contexts when you have influence over the problem. This influence represents “solution keys.” Solution keys can help you to change aspects of problem patterns and essentially “turn off” problems or even prevent them.

Note: If you’ve already completed the exercise, “Identifying Unhelpful Patterns,” you may want to refer back to it as you complete this exercise.

To complete this exercise, write down your responses in the spaces provided. In thinking about your responses, consider that although it *seems* as if the problems you’ve been facing happen all the time, that’s just an idea. Pay close attention to the problem situation and notice that sometimes it’s not so intrusive. For example, consider that even though your son yells at you, he doesn’t yell at his teachers. Or, your daughter gets poor grades in English but does well in math. These are exceptions.

1. When does the problem rarely happen or not at all?

Examples: Not on weekends. Never in the evenings. Rarely after lunch. Not when her friends are around.

2. Where does the problem rarely happen or not at all?

Examples: Not at school. Never in the kitchen. Rarely in the car. Never at the grandparents’ house.

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-
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3. What constants are present when the problem doesn't seem to be happening or is happening less frequently?

Examples: If he ate breakfast then he usually has a good day.

If she went to bed on time the night before things go better the next day.

4. Who is present or not present when the problem isn't happening or is happening less? If present, what does that person(s) do to help? If not present how does that help? (Be specific about words, body language, voicing, and actions)
-
-
-
-
-

5. What are you usually doing when the problem is less noticeable or absent altogether? (Be specific about words, body language, voicing, and actions)

By now you have some ideas about what is different about the times that you have some influence over the problem you've been up against. Next, consider deliberately doing or building on those things that seem to aid in alleviating the problem to any degree or in holding it completely at bay.

CHANGE SOME ASPECT OF CONTEXT

Take a moment to consider that problems occur in context. That is, they take place at certain times, in certain places, and in certain situations. On the other hand, there are times, places, and situations where they do not occur. This exercise can help you to make small changes in a number of areas that can ultimately lead to the resolution of the problem you're facing with your son or daughter.

Note: Although this exercise can be completed independently, we've found it helpful to first complete the exercise "Identifying Unhelpful Patterns" before hand.

To complete this exercise, review the different aspects of context that are listed below. Consider which one, two, or three you believe apply to the problem you've been facing. Then, write your response to each inquiry on the spaces provided.

1. Notice the usual timing of the problem—when it happens, how long it lasts, or the frequency. Next, make a small change in the timing. For example, if you procrastinate about completing a task after dinner, begin the procrastination before dinner. Or, if a client refuses to look for a job, tell him or her that he or she can refuse, but that he or she must verbally refuse for no less than 15 minutes. Record how you changed the timing and the results in the spaces provided below.

2. Notice the usual location of the problem or the spatial arrangements of it (e.g., where it occurs, the distance between you and your son/daughter when you argue, etc.). Next, change the location or spatial arrangement. For example, if you argue with a coworker in the office, move the argument into another room or completely outside. Record how you changed the location or spatial arrangement and the results in the spaces provided below.

3. Identify your usual way of relating to others. Pay close attention to your voice tone, the words you use, and your nonverbal behaviors. Next, make a small change in your pattern of relating. For example, if you typically stand up with your arms folded and use a stern voice when talking with supervisee, consider sitting down, relaxing your arms, and using a calm voice. Remember that oftentimes only one or two small changes are necessary. Record how you changed your way of relating and the results in the spaces provided below.

Now that you have completed this exercise, select one aspect of context and during the next week make the change that you wrote down. Be sure to track how it works for you and what results you attain. If changing one aspect of context does not bring about the results you were seeking, try modifying your idea or changing another aspect.

SOMETHING DIFERENT, SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING UNPREDICTABLE, SOMETHING ELSE TO DO

There's an old saying, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." Despite this we all find ourselves repeating patterns that we believe will bring about problem resolution, only to find that nothing has changed. In some instances our attempts at solution actually keep the problem going and sometimes make it worse. This exercise will help you to change those patterns that you sometimes replicate and do something else. It's important that you use your creativity with this exercise. In addition, bear in mind that if something doesn't bring about the results you desire, try something else.

To complete this exercise, be sure that you are clear on the problem that you want to see change. Next, review the different ways of changing patterns offered below. Then, choose one or two that you believe might work with your situation. Last, write your response to each inquiry on the spaces provided.

1. Interrupt or prevent the occurrence of the problem. For example, before your daughter has the chance to refuse doing her homework, beat her to the punch by saying, "I bet you're going to refuse to do your homework." Or, with the same example, if your daughter refuses, put her books away and leave the room, thereby preventing the argument that usually follows with her. Record how you interrupted or prevented the occurrence of the problem and the results in the spaces provided below.

2. Add a new element to the problem. For example, if your son uses profanity or calls you names when addressing you, use a small hand-held tape recorder to tape his tirades. Or, with the same problem, contact your spouse or significant other, a teacher, friend, or some other person so that they can listen in on the tirade. Record how you added a new element to the problem and the results in the spaces provided below.

3. Break up the problem into smaller elements. For example, if you and a coworker or other argue each time you try to discuss an issue, get a timer and allow one person to speak for two minutes. Then reset the timer and let the other person speak for the same amount of time. Do this until the issue is resolved. Or, if a client doesn't seem to complete tasks, chart out each task and assign them one at a time. Record how you broke up the problem into smaller elements and the results in the spaces provided below.

4. Create an ordeal by linking the problem pattern with some burdensome activity. For example, with a person who goes and drinks too much alcohol after work, have that person walk from pub to pub having only one drink at each venue. Record how you created an ordeal and the results in the spaces provided below.

IDENTIFYING AND UTILIZING PAST SOLUTIONS AND SUCCESSES

When facing problems it can seem as if things are “always” going poorly and will “never” change. Even though problems vary in intensity, in the midst of difficulty it can seem as though nothing works or ever will work. This exercise will help you to identify times when you had some influence over the problem. This includes times when the problem was happening but it didn’t have the usual impact and times when you expected the problem to happen but it didn’t. These represent exceptions to the problem pattern, including past solutions and partial solutions/successes.

Note: If you’ve already completed the exercise, “Identifying Unhelpful Patterns,” you may want to refer back to it as you complete this exercise.

To complete this exercise, write down your responses in the spaces provided.

Think about your experience with the problem. Recall a time when the problem happened and you were able to get somewhat of a handle on it and it didn’t overwhelm you as it usually does. What specifically happened?

What was different about that time that you were able to have some influence over the problem? What did you do? (Be specific about words, body language, voicing, and actions) How was that different than what you usually do?

Who else, if anyone, was present during that time? What did that person(s) do?

What does your experience with having some influence over the problem tell you about yourself? About your son or daughter? About the problem?

By now you have some ideas about what is different about the times that you have some influence over the problem you've been up against. Next, consider deliberately doing or building on those things that seem to aid in alleviating the problem to any degree or in holding it completely at bay.

WHY ISN'T THE PROBLEM WORSE?

When problems don't seem to be getting any better and in fact, seem to be getting worse, it's important to remember that more often than not things can get even worse. Despite this, many families have unique qualities and have taken action to keep things from "bottoming out." This exercise is designed to help you to identify those qualities that exist within yourself or your social system that have kept the problem you've been facing from completely taking over and sinking the family ship.

To complete this exercise, write down your responses in the spaces provided.

Think about your experience with a specific problem that you've been facing. How come things aren't worse with your situation?

What specific action have you taken to prevent things from getting worse? Be as specific as possible.

Despite all that you've been through, how have you or others managed to take steps to keep things from deteriorating further?

What have others done to prevent things from getting worse? (Be specific about words, body language, voicing, and actions)

What does your and other family members' ability to prevent things from deteriorating further say about you and others individually, and your family as a whole? How is it helpful for you to know that?

By now you have some ideas about what it is that you do to keep things from getting worse. You may even have multiple ideas. Now consider how you might use what you've learned and build it. This may help you to turn things around and get change going in the direction of problem resolution.

WHAT'S IN A PROBLEM? IDENTIFYING CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES

Because you have spent much time with the problem you've been facing you know more about it than anyone else. Your expertise is important in determining what kinds of things have influenced the problem and what might help to solve it. For example, you may see the problem as being influenced by physiology, genetics, cognitive processes, culture, ethnicity, social factors, nutrition, gender, religion/spirituality, behavior, relationships, or some other propensity. This exercise will help you to clarify in your mind and your therapist to learn more about what you see as influencing the problem you've been trying to solve.

To complete this exercise, first think about your experience with a specific problem that you've been facing. Then, for each question check the corresponding space(s) or write down your response in the spaces provided.

1. Which of the following influences do you feel have contributed to the problem you're facing and/or may be helpful and solving it? (Check as many boxes as you feel are applicable)

Physiology/Biology _____

Genetics _____

Cognition/Thinking _____

Culture/Ethnicity _____

Social _____

Nutrition _____

Gender _____

Religion/Spirituality _____

General Relationships _____
(*friends, etc.*)

Family Relationships _____

Behavior _____

Other _____

2. Transfer the influences that you checked in Question #1 into the spaces provided below. Next, for each influence place a "-" next to those influences that you feel have contributed to the problem and a "+" next to those that you feel may be helpful in solving it. For those influences that fit both categories use a "0".

After you have assigned each influence a value, write down your explanation of how you think each particular influence has contributed to the problem, can assist with resolving the problem, or how it fits both categories.

Influence _____ Value _____

Influence _____ Value _____

Influence _____ Value _____

Influence _____ Value _____

Influence _____ Value _____

Influence _____ Value _____

3. Take a moment to review your responses for Question #2. Where did the idea come from that these influences are contributing to the problem, can help with resolving the problem, or both? What is most important for your therapist to know about these influences?

You have now articulated your ideas about those factors that you think have had an influence on the problem you're facing as well as solving it.

TAPPING RESOURCES: CREATING A PERSONAL INVENTORY

In the exercise, “What’s in a Problem: Identifying Contextual Propensities,” you identified those influences that you believe have contributed to the development of the problem and may be of help in resolving it. This exercise will assist you in creating an inventory of all of your resources. These resources can be within you (internal) or in your environment (external). Some of these resources you may not have considered in the past as being just that, resources.

To complete this exercise, study each of the areas listed, and consider what resources you may have that could be of assistance with the problem you’re facing. Be as creative as possible. Then, in each area write down your responses in the spaces provided.

Note: This exercise will take some time. There are many possibilities for completing it. For example, you may choose to do it all at once, break it into smaller parts, or approach it in some other way. You may also choose to talk with your therapist about how to approach it.

1. **Self** – This is about you. Ask yourself, “Who am I?” Then consider: What is it that makes you unique? What qualities do you possess? What aspects of yourself can you draw on in times of trouble? (If you already completed the exercise, “Who are You? Exploring the Qualities Within,” you may want to refer back to it.)

How can who you are as a person be a resource for you?

How can who you are as a person be of help with the problem you’re facing?

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2. **Religion/Spirituality** – This includes, but is not limited to: attending church, praying, meditation, singing, chanting, belief in a higher power, remembering that each person is a child of God, imagining your connection to Universal Love, having a sense that Jesus, Mohammed, Allah, Zoroaster, or Buddha is with you, and so on.

How is religion/spirituality a resource for you?

How can religion/spirituality help you with the problem you're facing?

3. **Culture and/or Ethnicity** – *Culture* is sort of “mental blueprint” of patterns including shared thoughts, symbols, beliefs, values, customs, behaviors, and artifacts that you and your family members use to cope with the world and with one another, and that were learned in society and transmitted from generation to generation. *Ethnicity* is a culture within a culture. In other words, you and your family may be part of smaller group of people with a common or shared identity, living within a larger, mainstream group. Although you are part of it, you may have some ways of thinking and doing things that differ from the mainstream group.

How is your cultural and/or ethnic background a resource for you?

How can your cultural and/or ethnic background help you with the problem you're facing?

4. Gender – Consider: What is it like for you to be a man or woman in this world? What does being a man or woman allow you to do? (It is acknowledged that gender inequalities exist and oppress people, women in particular. What is important here is to view gender a resource. For example, perhaps being a female who grew up in a family with five males helped you to better understand and deal with the behavior of males.)

How is your gender a resource for you?

How can your gender help you with the problem you're facing?

5. Relationships – This includes but is not limited to: family, friends, coworkers, colleagues, teachers, religious or spiritual guides, scout leaders, coaches, and so on.

How are your relationships a resource for you?

How can your relationships help you with the problem you're facing?

6. Employment/School – This includes, but is not limited to: being employed in a specific type

of job, working at a specific company, business, or agency, practicing or learning a trade, taking classes, and so on.

How is your employment/school a resource for you?

How can your employment/school help you with the problem you're facing?

6. Community – Community can include any resource at a local, county, state, or federal level. It can also include, but is not limited to: cultural surroundings, social networks, clubs, associations, boards, and so on.

How is your community be a resource for you?

How can your community help you with the problem you're facing?

Now that you have compiled an extensive list of resources, take some time to make sure that you have included everything that you can think of. Include others' perspectives if necessary. Then, consider how you can begin to utilize your resources to solve the current problem you're facing and perhaps future ones as well.

REVIVING YOUR SOUL: TAPPING SPIRITUAL ENERGY AND RESOURCES

For many people a consistent resource in their lives is spirituality. Whether it's attending to church, praying, meditating, chanting, reading scripture, or through other means, having a connection to spirituality can provide support, comfort, renewed energy, direction, and even help with problem solving. This exercise is designed to help you to tap into spirituality to increase your energy and perhaps gain a new perspective on and finding solutions for the problems that you're facing.

There are three ways in which we approach spirituality during this exercise. To complete this exercise, take a moment to review each method for finding your spiritual pathway. Then consider the questions that follow and write your responses in the spaces provided.

1. Remember Past Spiritual Experiences and Connection. One of the most effective ways of solving problems is to recall previous times when things went well or when you solved problems, and reuse those skills.

Have you ever had religious or spiritual beliefs or followed religious or spiritual practices? If so, how have they been helpful to you in any way?

Have you ever felt connected to something more than yourself, such as nature, humanity, the universe, or God? If so, how has that been a resource for you?

What, if anything, has been your most profound spiritual experience? What did you learn from it?

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- 2. Recognize Present Spiritual Resources and Solutions.** Search in your present life for ways to access spirituality.

What do you do or where do you go to recharge yourself when you get a chance? How does that help you?

How do you connect with other people?

Do you think you have a purpose for being alive? If so, what is it? What does that purpose do for you?

Is there any spiritual figure or activity that you think might be helpful to you giving what you're experiencing? If so, how might that figure or activity be a resource for you?

3. Create Future Spiritual Hopes and Intentions. If it's been difficult for you to access spirituality in the past or present, it can be helpful to look the future to create some new possibilities in the present.

What kind of spiritual or religious activities would you like to do in the future, if any? How might that help you?

Is there any area of your spiritual life that you would like to develop more? If so, what is it?

Is there any spiritual or religious figure that you would like to use as a model for yourself? In what way?

If spirituality were to become more of a resource for you in the future, what difference might that make in your life? With the problem you're facing?

Keep this sheet nearby as a reminder of how spirituality might be a resource for you.

IDENTIFYING AND AMPLIFYING CHANGE

Even though change is happening all the time, we don't always notice it. It can become especially difficult to notice positive change when life seems to present one dilemma after another. Yet if we take the time to notice what and how things are changing in relation to the problems we are facing, oftentimes we notice that much is different. This exercise will help you to identify positive changes that have occurred with the problem you've been facing with your son or daughter and how that change came about. You can then work to build upon these changes until the problem is more manageable or it is no longer a problem.

To complete this exercise, write your responses to the questions in the spaces provided.

1. What have you noticed that has changed for the better with the problem you've been facing? Be as specific as possible, listing each behavior, action, or interaction by using clear, action-based descriptions.

2. Who first noticed that things had changed? Who else noticed?

3. When did you first notice that things had changed? What did you notice happening at that time? Be as specific as possible, listing each behavior, action, or interaction by using clear, action-based descriptions.

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4. How did the change happen? What did you do? What did your son or daughter do? What did others do? Be as specific as possible, listing each behavior, action, or interaction by using clear, action-based descriptions.

5. How did you get yourself to do what you did?

6. How was what you did different that what you've done in the past?

7. How has the change been helpful to you? To others?

8. What will be different in the future as these changes continue?

9. Who else might benefit from these changes? How so?

IS IT ENOUGH? REVIEWING CHANGE

When change has occurred, it's important to determine how that change relates to the problem you've been facing as well as the goals and preferred outcomes that you've established. This exercise will help you to figure out whether the change you've experienced is sufficient enough to consider the problem resolved and if not, what else needs to occur for to feel that the problem is no longer a problem.

To complete this exercise, write your responses to the questions in the spaces provided.

1. How are you benefiting from the changes you've experienced?

2. How does the change that's happened relate to the goals that you set?

3. On a scale of one to ten, with one representing "not at all" and ten representing "totally," to what degree have the goals that you set been met? Be specific by listing a number and describing how well your goals have been met.

4. What else, if anything, needs to happen to fade this problem from your life?

5. What would be a first step fading this problem further from your life?

RECOVERING FROM SETBACKS

Even when we have made progress toward goals there are times when we have temporary setbacks. These setbacks or lapses do not necessarily mean a return to the old, full-blown problem. Instead they are indications that some of what we are doing is working while other parts are not. Setbacks mark times of adjustment and tweaking. This exercise will help you to recover from any setbacks you are facing and to get back on track.

To complete this exercise, fill in your answers in the spaces provided.

1. When the problem reappeared, how did you manage to keep it from getting any worse?

2. How did you think to do what you did?

3. Who else, if anyone, was around to help bring the setback to an end? How did he/she/they help?

4. What have you learned from this setback? How can that be helpful to you in the future?

5. How can that be helpful in the future should use face a similar or different type of setback?

6. What needs to happen for things to get back on track? What specifically will you do?
