

# Creative Process Problem Solving

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

*I often write in this space about ways to deal with problems as a new life stage begins. This article offers a step-by-step recommendation.*

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Through this column, we hope that practitioners in general medical settings will gain a more complete knowledge of the many patients who are likely to benefit from brief psychotherapeutic interventions. A close working relationship between primary care and psychiatry can serve to enhance patient outcome.

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**E**ach day we use creative thinking to solve problems as they arise in our daily lives. Research and study have shown that there are 4 steps that allow us to be effective in critically solving problems throughout our lives. This is called the creative process.

The creative process begins by *searching for a challenge*.<sup>1</sup> The search for challenges is constant and ongoing. Problems are around each of us every day, but we must keep our eyes open to see the challenges. In my case, which we will look at in more depth later, the challenge came to me, and I didn't have to search it out.

Once you identify a challenge, the next step in the creative process is to *express the problem*.<sup>1</sup> This is a vital part of solving the problem with which you are dealing. In this step, you must find the best way to describe the problem. Stating the problem correctly opens up different avenues of ideas that will help in solving the problem. Expressing the problem correctly is like building the foundation for a house. If the foundation is weak and vague, the walls and the roof will be weak and not defined clearly. Without this definition of the problem, there cannot be an adequate solution.

The third step in the creative process is the *investigative phase*.<sup>1</sup> Here, you will gather information to aid you in better understanding the problem's causes and effects. This search for information must be in depth, and you should attempt to find sources of information that are not the norm. As you gather your information, you should verify the source to make sure that the data are reliable.

The final step of the creative process is the *production of ideas*.<sup>1</sup> It is in this step of the process that your objective is to generate ideas that will shape your beliefs and convince you about actions to take in regard to the problem facing you. Two common problems tend to surface during this process. There is the tendency to stop generating ideas too early in the process, as well as a tendency to limit your ideas to common, habitual responses while blocking out uncommon, unfamiliar ones.<sup>1</sup>

A personal challenge that I face daily is how cancer limits me from doing things that I was once able to do. In step 1, I identified the challenge that I faced. I observed the things that I could no longer do and others with which I had numerous difficulties. I noted how dissatisfied I was with my limitations. I also noted that my last 2 employers were unhappy with my performance to the extent that I was fired from both jobs. I was sensitive to how my limitations affected those around me. I realized that what I do or don't do physically affects other people's lives besides my own. My wife and stepson are affected by what I do and say because they take my situation into account when trying to decide things as simple as a meal or vacation idea. I also considered how the way I view my limitations imposed by cancer can cause controversy with others. I needed to take into account the perspective of people who don't agree with how I approach my disease.

I used step 2 to arrive at an expression of the problem in its most true sense. I listed a series of questions that might lead to the possibility of a successful outcome:

1. How can I deal with my cancer so as to decrease my physical limitations?
2. Should I increase my physical activity?

3. How can I find other ways to feel active without being physically active?
4. Should I accept that I can no longer be physically active?
5. Can I force myself to be more active physically?

I tried to take others' best interests into account while allowing myself to gain a feeling of self-worth and independence. I refined the question: How can I learn to feel active with cancer without being physically active and still be a contributing member of society and my family?

To begin investigating the problem (step 3), I again listed questions, along with a source for answers:

1. What activities can a person who is disabled with cancer do? Answer: write a book, invest in business, create businesses.<sup>2</sup>
2. Is it important to your mental health to be active? Answer: yes.<sup>3</sup>
3. Is it important for a person with cancer to be physically active? Answer: yes.<sup>4</sup>

Many times in our lives we face challenges that appear to be simple and straightforward, only to discover that there is more beneath the surface once we pursue the root cause

of the problem. Through this process I have learned that there is much I can do to remain active in daily life. Being active gives your attitude toward life in general a healthy boost.<sup>3</sup> There seems to be a direct correlation between level of activity of cancer patients after diagnosis and diminished likelihood of recurrence.<sup>4</sup>

My ideas for a solution range from very simple to extremely personal and complex. I decided to partner with a previous employee to build our own pest control business. This allowed me to use my knowledge as well as to contribute to the household budget. I am also trying to set specific times to do things with my family. If my family wants to go out to eat, for example, but my stomach is bothering me, I try to pick a place to eat that offers something for everyone so that we are all satisfied. My final idea is to work to develop a cure for my cancer.

## REFERENCES

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