

Introducing PST to the Patient in Session 1

1. Structure of PST

- a. Up to 6 visits
- b. Today 1 hr, then 30-45 min per session
- c. Teach problem solving skills
- d. Try to work through 1 problem per week
- e. Practice activities between sessions

2. Establish link between Distress and Symptoms

- a. Assure understanding that distress can cause many symptoms
- b. Discuss specific symptoms (e.g., insomnia, fatigue, low appetite, pain, cognitive)
- c. Use 'Mind-Body' explanation, if needed
- d. Explain that we'll track symptoms during treatment

3. Establish link between Problems and Distress

- a. A cancer diagnosis increases and amplifies one's problems
- b. Unresolved problems worsen distress (loss of control, feels overwhelming)
- c. PST strengthens problem-solving skills (increases sense of control)
- d. Improved problem-solving lifts mood
- e. Emphasize that improvement follows action

4. Facilitate a problem-solving orientation (which combats avoidance behaviors)

- a. Problems are a normal, predictable part of life
- b. They should not be unexpected
- c. Problems are a challenge to be addressed, not avoided
- d. Negative mood is a sign that problems exist and cue to action
- e. 'Stop and Think.' Look for problem areas and start problem-solving

5. Describe the 6 Stages of PST

- a. Assess – define, clarify and break down problems; establish achievable goals
- b. Brainstorm – generate multiple solution alternatives
- c. Consider & Choose – implement decision-making guidelines, pros & cons; choose the preferred solution(s)
- d. Develop & Do – develop an action plan, and implement it
- e. Evaluate – evaluate the outcomes; adjust the plan if needed and try again
- f. Flex & Fight on! – don't give up, ask for help if you run into road blocks

6. Activity Scheduling (similar to Behavioral Activation)

- a. Distress causes people to stop doing enjoyable things
- b. Planning enjoyable activities helps treat distress, combat isolation
- c. We will focus on increasing pleasant events for each day

7. Compile a Problem List

- a. Focus on current problems
- b. Allow patient to spontaneously report before cueing with Problem List Worksheet

Worksheet 1: Sorting Out Problems for PST

1. Problems with relationships: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Spouse or partner• Family members: children, other• Friends, caregivers• Other:	7. Problems with mood: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sadness or depressed mood• Irritability/ anger
2. Problems with work or school:	8. Problems with anxiety/stress: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Worry• Stress• Nightmares• Panic
3. Problems with money and finances:	9. Problems with religion or spirituality:
4. Problems with sleep:	10. Problems with self-image, sexuality:
5. Problems with alcohol, drugs or tobacco:	11. Problems with thinking/concentration/ memory/problem solving:
6. Problems with health: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fatigue• Pain• Vision or hearing• Other:	12. Other:

Date: _____

Worksheet 2: Steps of Problem Solving Worksheet			
Skill	Action & Notes		
A: Assess the Problem	<u>Problem:</u> <u>Set Goal:</u>		
B: Brainstorm Solutions	<u>Solutions:</u>		
C: Consider & Choose: consider pros/cons and choose (circle) a solution you want to work on Consider these factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effort • Time • Money • Emotional impact • Involving others 	<u>Solutions</u>	<u>Pros (+)</u>	<u>Cons (-)</u>
	a)	a)	a)
	b)	b)	b)
	c)	c)	c)
	d)	d)	d)
	e)	e)	e)
	f)	f)	f)
D: Develop & Do: Develop an Action Plan and Do It	<u>Steps:</u> <div>Completed (v)</div> <div>a)</div> <div>b)</div> <div>c)</div> <div>d)</div>		

	e) f) g)
E: Evaluate	How well did the plan work? (<i>0 = not at all, 10 = perfectly</i>) 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
F: Flex & Fight On List steps to modify and improve your Action Plan <i>If you need to change your solution, go back to step "B"</i>	<u>Additional Steps:</u> a) b) c) d) e) f) g)

Information Sheet: More About the Steps of PST

A – Assess the problem at hand. It's important to get all the facts about the problem to figure out solutions. What exactly is the problem? How often does it occur? What triggers the problem (who, what, where, and when does it happen)? How important is it to you or others (urgent, important, or just annoying)? Is this a problem that is feasible to solve, that is, a problem that you, yourself, can have some control over?

Sometimes it's important to break up a big problem into small pieces. Then you can tackle one small piece at a time. You'll want to define the problem in a way that's easy to measure your progress.

It usually helps to be clear on how you want the problem to change. It should be realistic; something you can really do or make progress on between now and our next visit. For instance, if someone is having trouble sleeping, his (her) goal in working on that problem might be to sleep 7 hours a night. So, when you set a goal, think of 2 things. One, you have to be able to **measure** whether you've reached the goal successfully (something like "I want to sleep 7 hours a night" is easier to measure than "I want to sleep better"). Two, your goal has to be **realistic**. Most of us are not going to sleep uninterrupted for 8 hours EVERY night.

B – Brainstorm possible ways to reach your goal or solve your problem. There are usually several ways to solve a problem. The more creative ideas you come up with when you are brainstorming, the better. This way you have more potential solutions. The more ideas you come up with, the better – don't cross anything out just yet. Lay all your ideas out on the table – no matter how silly they may sound – you can figure out after you have a list of ideas which ones are better than the others. I'll bet you've done this sometimes at work.

C – Consider and Choose a strategy to try out. The first step in choosing is to list the **pros and cons** of each solution; that is, what part of each solution that would make it easy to do, and what would make it hard to do. What are the things that would help the solution and what are the obstacles or barriers? Other things to consider are time commitment, cost, effort, consequences and effect on others, and other factors such as needing others to help.

After comparing the pros and cons of all the possible solutions, pick one out to try. This should be the one that seems to have the best chance for success, the one that has the fewest negatives, and something you feel that you would really be able to do. It is often easy to toss out the strategies that are just not usable. For instance, if having money to pay a bill is the problem, probably robbing a bank is not the best solution due to all cons, although it may be on the list. Remember, the solution you pick may not be ideal, but doing something about the problem is likely to be better than doing nothing.

D – Develop a Plan and Do It. Figure out a plan of action. What are the **steps** of your chosen solution? What am I going to do? When will I do it? Where will I do it? Are there any obstacles or barriers that might be in the way? You get the idea. The more **specific** you are in planning, the more likely it is that you will be able to carry out your plan of action.

When you finish the plan of action, then try it out. Remember, you may need to try it more than once. Most changes take practice to get results.

E – Evaluate your plan of action. We'll review this next time we talk, but you can review your progress on your own. Did your solution work completely or partially? What did and didn't work so well? Did something get in the way? What could you do differently to make it work better? How did it feel to try out the plan? You may need to adjust the plan and try it again. OR, you may decide that this just didn't work and go back to your list of possible solutions to choose another plan of action. Remember, with an **experimental attitude**, there is always something valuable that is learned and there is no such thing as failure!

F – Flex & Fight on!! Develop alternative strategies, if needed. Don't give up. Maybe you need some help in solving a particularly sticky problem or overcoming an obstacle. And remember to **congratulate and reward yourself** when you make progress and when your solution works!!! Sometimes we forget to take credit for smart thinking and persistent action.