FEM 3107/PEM 3501

Problem Solving and Decision Making
Problem solving and decision-making are important skills for life. Problem-solving often involves decision-making, and decision-making is especially important for management. There are processes and techniques to improve decision-making and the quality of decisions.
problem-solving and decision-making are closely linked, and each requires creativity in identifying and developing options, for which the brainstorming technique is particularly useful
Brainstorming:

- The creative art of generating the greatest number of ideas in the shortest possible time.
- Acceptance of every idea uncritically
- Aim for quantity not quality
- At this stage do not initiate any discussion
- List the ideas
- Set a time limit
"We know what happens to people who stay in the middle of the road. They get run down."

(Aneurin Bevan)
Problem solving:

- has an agenda
- is task oriented
- has two distinct phases
  - a problem definition
  - a problem solution
Problem solving

- Problem-solving has a time and a place.
- Problem-solving has an agenda.
- Problem-solving is task-oriented; it is not a power struggle.
- Problem-solving has two distinct phases: a problem definition phase and a problem solution phase.
When defining a problem:

- Be specific (refer to what is observed)
- Be brief
- Express your feelings about the behavior which is the subject of the conflict
When solving problems:

- Brainstorm solutions
- Evaluate their costs and benefits to
- Decide on the best solution
- Be willing to compromise; problem-solving involves give-and-take
"In any moment of decision the best thing you can do is the right thing, the next best thing is the wrong thing, and the worst thing you can do is nothing." (Theodore Roosevelt)
GOAL : Help client to identify problem

- Help client to identify range of problems
- Knowing the range of problems will facilitate client progress
- Client may have difficulty confiding or even selecting which problem to begin with.
GOAL: Help to prioritize

- Help to rank order
- Why is more important?
- Why one to handle first
- In couple/family counseling: whose problem to begin with?

- What if there is more than one problem?
If there is more than one problem

- Begin with the presenting problem. Feeling of comfort and ventilation achieved will motivate clients to continue with the counseling process.
- Begin with the ‘easiest’ problem that can be settled within a shortest time – to give sense of achievement and motivation.
- Begin with the root of the problems.
- Begin with the ‘severest’ problems which could cause the most distress.
GOAL : Help client to decide

- Help client look into his/her pattern of decision making
- How it was made?
- Learn other ways of decision making
- Help client to be aware that all decision involves risk
- Help client to look into contingencies plan
Categories for defining problems

- Problem definition purposes – rationale
- Identify and select problem concerns – general concerns, set priorities, pinpoint situation of concern
- Identify present problem behaviors – overt and covert that compose the problem
- Identify antecedent contributing event
- Identify consequences contributing events
- Identify client coping skills
- Identify problem intensity – extent of problem, severity, frequency/duration
GOAL : Help client to look for solution

- Help brainstorm a way out
- Motivate clients to look for alternatives
- Present scenarios of other people
- Motivate client that he/she has the potential to generate alternatives
GOAL: Help client to understand sources of problem – antecedents

- Help identify ‘antecedents’ prior to or during problem behavior manifestation
- Ask client what is experienced in term of the 6 aspects, before the problem manifest itself, and/or during
- Help clients identify locations or surroundings which provoked the problem behavior to occur
The Method III approach – Gordon (1974)

Method III - ‘no one loses’ strategy

- Determine the problem – from exploring and understanding stage
- Generate possible solutions – brainstorming, no evaluation
● Evaluate possible solutions – priorities, combine

● Make a decision on one possible solution – encourage to commit to one

● Implement the decision – client actually puts the solution into operation

● Assess result – follow up
Glasser (1965)

- Relationship stage - Acceptance and openness
- Presentation - What are you doing now?
- Value judgment - Is your behavior helping you?
- Making a plan
- Client make a personal plan
- Obtain client commitment – form of contract
Don’t except excuses if commitment is broken. If fails, make a new commitment

Don’t interfere with consequences. Ask for value judgment and make a new plan

Continuous support and motivation

Note: The goal of therapy is to help people learn more responsible and effective ways of meeting their needs.
What is DM

- DM can be defined as a process in which a person selects from two or more possible choices.
- A decision does not exist unless there is more than one course of action, alternative or possibility to consider.
- Philosophy: the decision maker is more likely to be satisfied with his decision.
Decision: A conscious choice among alternative courses of action.

Therefore the 3 elements are:
- A conscious choice among alternatives
- A specific purpose
- A course of action
Approaches to Decision Making

- Rational (Logical Approach)
- Intuitive Approach
- Unable to decide (Indecisive Approach)
- Impulsive Approach
Eight-stage model of decision-making counseling

- generating a list of all possible courses of action
- gathering relevant information about each feasible alternative course of action
- estimating the probability of success in each alternative on the basis of the experience of others and projections of current trends
considering the personal values which may be enhanced or diminished under each course of action

deliberating and weighing the facts, probable outcomes, and values for each course of action are the appropriate activities

formulating a tentative plan of action subject to new developments and opportunities

generalizing the decision-making process to future problems.
Carkhuff (1973) DM process

- Carkhuff specifically addresses the topic of decision-making counseling with a four-step process:
  - developing the problem
  - breaking down the problem
  - considering courses of action
  - and developing courses of action.
The first step is called "developing the problem." Counselor's focus should be on exploring the problem and trying to understand the client's frame of reference.

The second step "breaking down the problem." At this time alternative courses of action are generated and values are ordered into a hierarchy.
The third step is called "considering courses of action." This step involves a close examination of those values and alternatives that promise the highest degree of fulfillment.

The final step in helping clients reach a decision "developing courses of action." Both choosing and implementing courses of action are involved.
DM has risks

- CERTAINTY
  each choice leads to one outcome known to be certain

- RISK
  Each choice leads to several possible outcomes with known probability

- UNCERTAINTY
  Each choice leads to several possible outcomes with unknown probability

- UTILITY
  Combination of risk and uncertainty
Strategy in DM

- The wish strategy: Choose what you desire most. Gather information. No need to know probability.
- The safe strategy: Choose the most likely to succeed. Know probable outcome.
- The escape strategy: Choose to avoid the worst. Minimax – minimize the maximum disaster. Escape misfortune.
- The utility strategy: Choose both the most likely and most desirable.
Four kinds of outcome model

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<thead>
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<th>Gains</th>
<th>Losses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
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Decision Tree

My decision:

My desired outcome:

Information I need:

alternatives       Outcomes       Desirability       Probability

A
B
C
Solving Peoples Problems

- Personal problems are not yours to resolve but LISTENING can help.
- Keep your own emotions out of it.
- Try to identify the real problem.
- If possible eliminate friction (ex. Food Expeditor).