

## Work The Solution!

Write Down The Problem:



### Solution Steps

(Even if there isn't a 'solution,' you can choose how you act and react. Write down what you CAN do.)

I AM COMMITTED TO:

**Questions:** (use a journal page)

What kinds of things do I tell myself about this situation and my ability to cope?

What thoughts am I having? Are they positive and powerful or negative and debilitating? Am I numb, in shock? Other?

What can I control? What can't I control? If I can't control events, can I control my reactions to these events?

What are my strengths? What have I accomplished in the past that I can draw strength from? What can I gain from meeting this challenge?

Am I being kind to myself, and others, through this process? Am I being a friend to myself?

What resources do I have to meet this challenge? What people can I go to for support? Do I need help?

What is the timeline on this issue? Is there a day and/or time I need to do certain steps to keep my solution on-track? BRAINSTORM – write down what you CAN do!

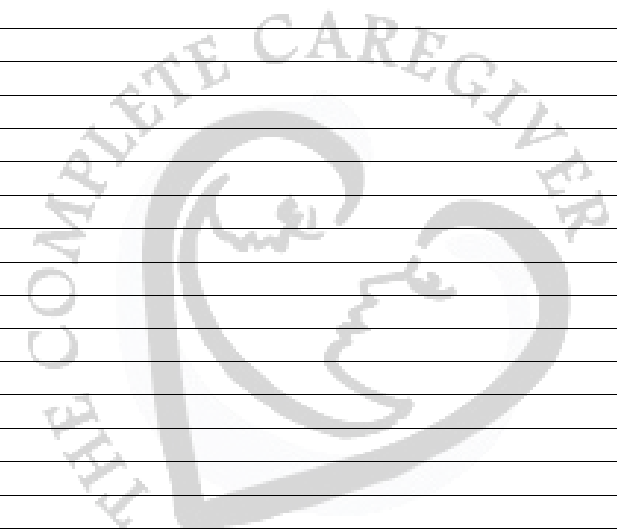
If you have dates/times to get things done, put them in your calendar or scheduled to-do list NOW!

## DIAGRAM IT! - Work The Solution!

Diagram the Problem:

Solution Diagram:





## INSTRUCTIONS

### For Work The Solution

“Work the Solution” is a process to help with problem-solving, especially when something seems overwhelming, or too complicated to figure out easily. The process is designed to look at both the ‘facts’ of the problem and how we are thinking about the problem. The goal is to see any negative thinking we might have that is contributing to the problem and our ability to act on it.

Examples:

**Fact – you are unable to find funding for a fence to keep your child from bolting and escaping the yard, endangering his life and others.**

*Negative ‘Problem’ Thinking – my son is in danger and I can’t help him. I don’t have the money and there’s nothing left to work with, he’ll probably get hurt and it will be all my fault! If something happens to him because I can’t make enough money and the funding is gone, I don’t know what I’ll do... Why do I always have money problems? Why can’t I make things work? I’m such a loser. I’m getting so frustrated and depressed. I never have enough...stupid State cutting funding like that – they always hurt the most vulnerable people. And my boss cut back my hours – there’s just nothing I can do...*

*Solution Thinking – okay – this is really scary, but there has to be a way to do something. I’m calling my son’s case manager again tomorrow and brainstorming with them. I’ve seen ‘caution, child with autism’ signs in other neighborhoods – maybe I can call the city about getting a couple of those put on our street. That doesn’t solve the fence issue, or the bolting, but it might make people slow down a little more. For the bolting, I’m going to start researching online to see what other people do. And didn’t I hear about a service team at my friend’s church that went to help build houses after Katrina? I wonder if they would do the labor as a service project? And if not them, another church? For funding, are there ANY resources, considering the safety issues? Could I hold a fundraiser myself, or get my friends involved? My sister is really good with her online page, maybe she would help me put out an appeal to some folks on her site, and I could get some help that way? I thought I saw a resource for some ID tags and temporary tattoos – that would help if he gets away from us. I need to research what kind of ID programs are out there, which would be good to do anyway. Now about a fundraiser, what could I do? We have a bunch of clutter, and my friends are always complaining about theirs – I could sponsor a big ‘garage sale’ and get someone to help me with the details. It would be tough to arrange with my schedule, but if I could get some of the junk out of this house and enlist some friends, it could even be fun...*

Notice the difference? Something else to notice – in the negative thinking example, the feeling of fear turned into frustration and depression and blaming of self and others for the situation (i.e. the State.) In the Solution Thinking, feelings were acknowledged, but the self-talk was focused on what CAN be done, instead of dwelling on what can’t be done and how bad one feels about it. The difference in thinking could make the difference in whether this hypothetical parent finds the resources to get a fence, or not.

### Step by Step Instructions:

1. Start by writing out your problem in the top section on the left hand side.
2. In the Diagram The Problem section on the right side, choose a word or short phrase to describe the problem. Circle the problem word(s). Draw a line away from the circle and write a word or phrase for something you’ve done to handle the situation OR something that hasn’t worked, etc. Each aspect of the problem gets a line and circle. (i.e. “No Funding For Fence” circle this and draw a line, then write– State cut funding. Then draw another line and write, ‘no personal funds,’ etc.)
3. Draw lines off the second circled items, to put details about that issue. (i.e. “no personal funds” – ‘hours cut at job.’ Draw another line from “no personal funds” and write – ‘savings gone.’)
4. Continue branching off with topics until you feel you’ve gotten a big picture of “the problem.”
5. Now go through the questions on the left hand side, using journal pages provided – print several per problem, if needed. Some may not apply to your situation, but at least look at all of them and write something down, even if it’s “does not apply.” Use the questions to check in with how you are thinking about the problem – are you limiting yourself with negative thinking, or are you empowering yourself to handle the problem constructively? Then Brainstorm!
6. When you have moved from thinking about the problem into working the solution, move to the Diagram the Solution portion of the page. Take ‘the problem’ and phrase it as a solution (i.e. “Funding for Fence” instead of “No Funding for Fence”). From there, begin brainstorming, drawing lines and circles away from the center just as you did for ‘the problem.’ (i.e “Funding for Fence” –fundraiser. From “fundraiser” – garage sale. From “fundraiser” – online to family. From “Funding for Fence” – labor for fence – local church)
7. On the left hand side in the section labeled ‘Solution Steps’ begin making a list of the first things you need to do to move forward – the action steps. Try to make the steps something you can start on that day, rather than vague directives. For example: “Email sister about online request to family,” is a strong objective that can be accomplished quickly. “Try to find funding source,” is vague and doesn’t give you anything to do, only reminds you of the problem. The first example is something that you can succeed at and track the success of, whereas the second example needs to be broken down into more steps – like ‘call case manager about all local charities for funding.’