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Personal Problem-Solving Strategies

This activity was created to be used primarily with:

2. Problem Solving and Critical Thinking

Secondary skills include:

1. Creativity and Innovation
4. Integrity
12. Career and Life Management
14. Efficiency and Productivity
22. Workplace Safety

Students should read through the following from the Purdue Fort Wayne University Family Outreach site. Ask students to write about at least one of the common personal problems and either use their actual experience to mitigate solutions for these problems or envision what they would do in the future if faced with these issues. Students should describe the problem-solving strategy or strategies they used. Use Suzanne Kane's [10 Problem Solving Strategies that Work](#) from Psych Central to help guide them.

Common personal problems:

This list comes from the [Purdue student website](#) and is focused on adjusting to college life. However, many of these issues will be encountered by anyone functioning independently or outside of their family home for the first time. These are also problems encountered by young adults entering the workforce.

1. Homesickness
2. Not eating right or staying healthy
3. Poor sleep habits
4. Not resolving relationship issues
5. Skipping classes/being irresponsible
6. Failing to network
7. Failing to manage money
8. Not studying or reading enough
9. Wasting time/procrastinating
10. Disorganization/feeling overwhelmed

What follows are interventions or solutions. Not all solutions totally solve a problem, especially ones related to socio-emotional issues, but they are meant to help mitigate the problem or ease the related stress and help to stop bad situations from worsening. Red text is added to Purdue's.



Interventions:

1. Reducing feelings of homesickness may be difficult for some but may be accomplished by remaining on campus during the week and on weekends. This may help students to get to know their campus and become more involved in athletic and social events. Students learn more about campus resources and make friends with other students, with whom they may find common ground. Stay in touch with those back home through phone, mail and email but force yourself to become part of the culture within your new academic world. **If you feel a particular social phobia, counteract it by attending structured events like art openings or lectures at which you might only observe. Force yourself into the public sphere, even when or especially when you don't want to. Go to the library. Take a walk in a public park. Play a pick-up game of basketball. Get away from the computer and your phone and interact.**
2. Eating right and staying healthy will help you accomplish your academic goals and make your college experience much more fun. Get enough exercise and monitor the amount and quality of your food and drink consumption. This will increase the odds of staying physically and mentally healthy. **Diets can be influenced by lack of funds, transportation, time and simply making poor choices. Therefore, choosing a place to live, making the right decisions about groceries, budgeting, and schedule for shopping and possibly cooking are all important. The big mistake is settling for easy junk food that temporarily satisfies hunger. Knowing your community is crucial in finding the right resources.**
3. Poor sleep habits will leave you ineffective in your work and play as a college student. Take this challenge and read a current study related to the need for sleep and the effects of sleep deprivation on our health, both our physical and mental health. **Poor sleep can be caused by stressors, such as anxiety. Meditation strategies, as one example, might help relieve stress, as can your attempts to reduce procrastination, to make good food decisions, or to address conflict or challenges. Regular sleep and wake times can also help. See WRS module for [skill #22, Workplace Safety](#).**
4. Unresolved relationship problems commonly cause bitterness, resentment and anger. Any of these feelings can cause us to lose focus on the goals we are attempting to achieve independently. Even if we must move, separate, or even just “agree to disagree,” successful attempts at relational conflict resolution are necessary in each of our lives. **Intimate relationships and our failure to manage them or ourselves correctly can be frightening because we don't really have a chance to train ourselves for them and we don't have resources to know how to improve them. Because they are often dependent on positive interactions which we cannot demand, the key is managing yourself emotionally. Self-esteem and mutual respect are the keys. Understand the difference between self-respect and selfishness. Healthy relationships are balanced, communicative, and honest. But remember, we are not fixed in our identities, especially when we are younger. Our experience is limited. We may not fully know ourselves.**
5. While the temptation to skip classes may be high at times, you are spending your money to gather information given during class times. When you are not there, you are not receiving the benefit of the instruction as well as information regarding grading, future assignments, and opportunities outside the classroom. You may also be failing to spend time with professors and classmates who may, upon graduation, become part of a valuable network for you. This takes us into problem six (below). **Time management problems are one of the key problems facing new**



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workers and employers. Employers are less likely to hire or retain workers who cannot prove their time and task management skills. See WRS module for [skill #14 Efficiency and Productivity](#).

6. When we do not get to know and spend time with classmates, professors and other academic advisors, we lack support and a place to go for ideas and answers when a problem does arise. Practical experience and internship opportunities should always be taken advantage of, in order to provide maximum networking opportunities for students. See WRS module for [skill #13, Continuous Learning and Adaptability](#).
7. Know what your resources are and develop an appropriate spending plan. Seek the advice of a financial planner or counselor. Don't spend money unnecessarily or borrow money that may be difficult or even impossible to repay. Be careful about being drawn into credit card opportunities offered to college students. "Easy cash" is never easy and may also come with high interest rates. See WRS module for [skill #12, Career and Life Management](#).
8. Facing considerably more freedom than the high school years, coupled with a lack of accountability it becomes easy to fall short of completing the necessary reading and studying to increase your odds of academic success in college. Failure to dedicate the appropriate time to studying and reading is likely to have a negative impact on grades. Some ideas to increase your odds of success are to be in class, every class if possible, be accountable to others for your academic performance, know each course, the syllabi, the requirements and the professor along with his/her expectations. **The one thing all successful people have in common is that they continue to learn. Their personal and professional curiosity are intertwined and they have learned how to learn, quickly and efficiently. Learning may not come easily for you, but like many things, the more you do it, the more you are likely to continue doing it.**
9. While college is a mixture of social as well as an academic experience, the two must be balanced in order to maximize success in both areas. Procrastinating may have been an acceptable exercise in high school but will likely become problematic in college. While getting to know other students/faculty, establish deadlines for assignments that minimize your stress level. **Accountability may not be a natural driver, but it can become your strongest trait. Limiting short-term distractions is important.** See WRS module for [skill #14, Efficiency and Productivity](#) and WRS module for [skill #5, Work Ethic](#).
10. In as much as college is a time when many people feel overwhelmed with the requirements of life, don't let this go on for long. Consider seeing a professional counselor to help you organize, prioritize and better manage the demands being placed upon you. **Rely on your personal network of friends and family if stress is interfering with your happiness or progress to achieve your goals. Or seek additional health and well-being resources available in your community. Career and life balance are fundamental to personal happiness and many succumb to stress because they either fail to take advantage of resources or do not know they exist. If stress is due to workplace conflict, see WRS module for [skill #6, Conflict Resolution](#).**