

## Five New Ways to Think About Your Old Problems

### Sample problems:

- How can we improve our volunteer – professional partnerships?
- How can I reduce my stress at work?
- How can I communicate more compassionately with my children?

### Techniques:

#### **1) Do a reverse brainstorm.**

E.g. How can we make our volunteer – professional partnerships worse? Then check to make sure you're not already doing those things – and begin to implement the opposite of what came from your “negative” brainstorm.

#### **2) Eliminate barriers of time and money, temporarily.**

E.g. If time and money were unlimited, how would I reduce my stress at work? While you may not be able to take that year-long trip around the world, or quit your job altogether, you can bring your ideas down to earth and make them realistic, such as taking more vacations, or beginning to look for a new job if the stress cannot be reduced in your current position.

#### **3) Interview an Expert (in Your Head)**

E.g. What is “compassionate communication” according to Supernanny? According to your parents? According to Anne Sullivan (The Miracle Worker)? According to the movie Juno? According to... Come up with your own list and take into account your best guess of other experts' opinions.

#### **4) Take One Step Back**

E.g. Picture yourself engaging in the most satisfying volunteer professional partnership imaginable. What happened right before you felt this level of contentment? What did you say or do? What did your partner say or do? And what happened right before *that*? And then right before *that*? Build the scenario backwards to see what steps you may be inclined to miss in real life.

### **5) Look through Four Lenses**

E.g. Look at your workplace stress through a **magnifying glass** to bring one or more small details into focus. Then look through a **microscope** to see “invisible” factors that impact your stress level. Then look through a **telescope** to see how workplace stress fits into the bigger picture of your life. Finally, look through a **prism** to see different facets of stress that you might not have thought about before. After viewing the problem through Four Lenses, you can begin to decide what to deal with first.

**Would your team, department or organization benefit from a facilitated session on creative problem solving? Do you think that your personal or professional life could use some creative perspective to generate new solutions to old problems?**

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