

1. Shifting Your Thoughts



When we get stuck in thinking only about the problem and how bad it is - i.e., being '**problem-focused**', it makes it difficult to think of solutions and what we can do, or even the neutral or positive aspects of the situation. Instead, we can practise shifting our thinking to focus on generating solutions - i.e., being '**solution-focused**'.

For instance, if you're worried about getting sick - rather than thinking about becoming unwell (e.g. "What if I catch the virus?"), you could focus on what you can do to stay well (e.g., "I can self-isolate, keep my distance, and make sure to wash my hands really well after being outside"). Similarly, instead of ruminating about financial stress, you could focus on developing a detailed budget or look for other sources of income such as looking for available job openings or applying for government benefits.

Importantly, this strategy isn't intended to dismiss or downplay your worries - it's designed to help you feel more in control of these challenges.

Tips for shifting your thoughts:

- **Notice when you begin to dwell** - think over and over again - on the problem and/or how bad it is or will be.
- Ask yourself '**Is there anything I can do about this problem right now?**'
- If it is a problem you can do something about now, try to **start thinking through a variety of solutions**. Be creative here.
- Imagine what you might tell a close friend if they came to you with this problem.
- If it is a problem you can do something about but not immediately, tell yourself that you will **come back to thinking about this problem at a later time** - You can even think of a specific date and time when you'll come back to thinking about this problem and make a note of it in your calendar.
- If it is a problem you can't do anything about, acknowledge how that makes you feel and try to **shift your thoughts onto something else** entirely, like focusing intently on the activity you're doing.



References:

*The University of New South Wales
St. Vincent's Hospital, Sydney*

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