BRIEF PROBLEM-SOLVING INTERVENTION

Manual for delivery of a brief face-to-face problem-solving counselling programme in schools

English

For counsellors, non-specialist guides/coaches or intervention facilitators

Sangath

The problem solving counselling programme is part of the PRIDE adolescent mental health research programme.

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TECHNICAL GUIDE

This guide is designed for counsellors and intervention developers. It uses technical terms where needed. Within this guide, the person in receipt of the intervention is referred to as the 'student', this being shorthand for an adolescent with mental health concerns. The person delivering the intervention is described as a 'counsellor'.

Context

Problem-solving (PS) is the initial step in a two-step intervention system to promote student mental health designed by Sangath. It is part of a stepped-care programme. Stepped care is designed in such a way that the most effective yet least resource intensive treatment is delivered first; only 'stepping up' to intensive/specialist services as clinically required. This intervention has the following general characteristics:

- It was originally designed to be delivered in-person within schools, during school working hours.

- It is suitable for a broad range of mild to moderate range of mental health difficulties.

- It can be delivered to students with limited reading ability and minimal theoretical understanding of mental health and disorders.

- It can be delivered by a non-specialist "counsellor" with no previous experience of providing psychological interventions and no prior knowledge of mental disorders. The counsellors may be required to complete a brief training program.

- It includes the provision of supplementary resource booklets, posters and a few other resources depending on the mode of delivery.

  - Within schools, it would require a private/ semi-private space for the intervention sessions.

  - **Remote delivery** would additionally require access to a phone/laptop, private space and steady network/ internet connection, for both student and counsellor.

- It includes a shared decision-making process where the counsellor and student are able to decide the length of the PS intervention and need for additional intervention.

  - This process ensures that students who show significant improvement early on in the intervention have an option for early discharge.

  - This also ensures a smooth transition for students who need to be stepped up to the high-intensity intervention.

- This intervention was evaluated in a randomised controlled trial in 2018 (Michelson et al., 2020) [1]. We found that this programme was effective in reducing the severity of adolescents' prioritised problems.

Intervention goals

The PS Intervention is designed to address common mental health difficulties in secondary school students aged 12 to 18 years . It is also intended to enhance their coping and resilience against the development of mental health difficulties in the future. The intervention is not suitable for students with reading and writing difficulties, those with high-risk suicidal behavior, and those with substance use problems.

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[1] Michelson D, Malik K, Parikh R, Weiss HA, Doyle AM, Bhat B, et al. Effectiveness of a brief lay counsellor-delivered, problem-solving intervention for adolescent mental health problems in urban, low-income schools in India: a randomised controlled trial. The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health [Internet]. 2020 Jun 22 [cited 2020 Jul 13];0(0). Available from: https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanchi/article/PIIS2352-4642(20)30173-5/abstract

Conceptual model

'Common mental health problems' refer to depressive and anxiety disorders and are distinct from the feeling of sadness, stress or fear that anyone can experience at some moment in life. Common mental health difficulties are caused by a combination of biological, psychological and environmental factors. Individuals predisposed to developing mental health difficulties and experiencing multiple challenging situations in their lives, are likely to develop chronic stress reactions. Along with this, young people with limited adaptive coping mechanisms, namely, problem-solving skills, are particularly susceptible to experiencing mental health symptoms (see diagram).

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                                              ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
                                              │ Stress reactions                 │
                                              │                                  │
┌────────────────────────┐                    │ Unhelpful feelings: Feeling bad, │
│ Life difficulties/     │  Ineffective       │ sad, anxious, angry or stressed  │
│ problems (e.g., at     │────coping─────────▶│ Unhelpful thoughts: worrying,    │
│ home or school)        │                    │ feeling hopeless or helpless     │
└────────────────────────┘                    │ Unhelpful behaviours: Difficulty │
        ▲                                      │ concentrating in studies,        │
        │                                      │ withdrawing from others          │
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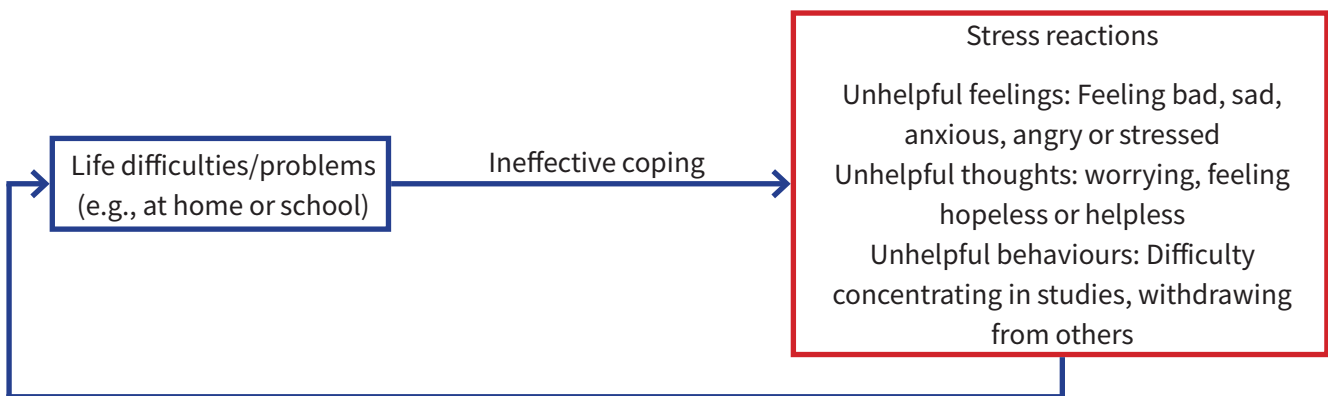
Therefore, the broader goal of the intervention is to develop an individual's ability to better cope with their concerns. Students will be introduced to a structured problem-solving heuristic ('Problem-Option-Do it' or 'POD') through a printed booklet. This is supported by brief counsellor inputs in learning and applying problem-solving skills for distressing psychosocial problems. Using POD, a student's effort at solving problems will be directed towards altering one of three processes described below:

- The nature of the situation, such that it no longer represents a problem (referred to as **problem-focused coping**; for e.g., dealing with bullying with the help of teachers, improving communication with parents to address parental pressure)

- Their stress reactions to such problems (referred to as **emotion-focused coping**; for e.g., reducing maladaptive emotional reactions such as anger, tension etc.)

- Both the situation itself and their maladaptive emotional responses to the problem (for e.g., dealing with bullying with the help of teachers and using anger management strategies)

Intervention structure

Students learn problem-solving skills with the counsellor's guidance, supported by a problem-solving booklet, called the POD booklet and two POD posters. The intervention comprises of upto five bi-weekly[2] sessions, lasting for approximately 20-30 minutes. In the initial session, students discuss their concerns, receive psychoeducation about counselling and the use of POD booklets. Over the next three sessions, students are supported to learn and apply the problem-solving skills through POD steps (Problem identification, Option generation, Do it plan). In the final session, the focus is on reviewing the progress, consolidation of what had been learned about problem solving followed by discussion on continuing practice of skills for current problems and other difficulties that may arise in future. The booklet includes stories and practice exercise sections to help

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[2] Where bi-weekly sessions are not possible a weekly session format can be used.

students understand and apply problem-solving skills in their lives.

A small proportion of students may insist on early termination of problem-solving intervention. If a student raises such a request, the counsellor should acknowledge their concern, explore reasons for wanting to end counselling, troubleshoot barriers to attending the counselling, and encourage the student to complete the full dosage of sessions. The final decision to continue or end should be made collaboratively by the student and counsellor. If early termination is deemed as a suitable option, in that case, the student can be moved directly to the consolidation phase (session 5), summarising what had been learned about problem-solving followed by a discussion on continuing practice of skills.

Refer to **Appendix E** for details on the process of shared decision-making.

What you need for delivery: Intervention material[3]

Material	Purpose
Profile of Student's Problems	The profile highlights the main domains of problems, symptoms and associated functional impairments. These can be collected at intake by a researcher or counsellor. The profile is reviewed by the counsellor with the student during the first session.
POD Booklet + Posters	The POD booklet explains problem-solving through illustrated stories and home practice exercises. The two posters summarise steps of problem-solving and plan for consolidation. The material is available in printed and digital formats, in both Hindi and English. The material is intended to encourage application of skills between sessions and generalisation of problem-solving across contexts.
Progress Journey Graph	An idiographic tool to monitor progress and changes in mood and the severity of the students' problem from session to session. The material is available in printed and digital formats, in both Hindi and English.
PS Intervention Manual	A session-wise guide for the counsellor delivering the problem-solving intervention to students. The manual is available in both printed and digital format.
Counselling Planner	A pictorial aid used to show the student the intervention structure visually. The material is available in printed and digital formats, in both Hindi and English.

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[3] It is recommended that at the start of the program/ training, counsellors receive a starter kit containing a sample copy of the materials mentioned above (printed, digital, or both) and the manual. The logistics of how a counsellor can access this material and how these can be shared with the student during face-to-face and/or remote counselling sessions may vary depending on the study site and study design and must be covered in detail during the training.

Formulation sheet	A pictorial aid to explain the link between problems, associated stress reactions and problem-solving skills. The material is available in printed and digital formats, in both Hindi and English.
Session Record Forms	Forms filled by the counsellor after the session to document clinical indicators, processes and issues. Electronic forms to be used where available.

Next Step of Intervention

After completion of PS intervention, through the process of collaboratively discussing and reviewing the student's progress, the counsellor may identify a proportion of students with persisting problems.

These students may benefit from learning additional coping skills and can be offered the Modular Behaviour Intervention (MBI) as the second intervention step (Refer to the MBI Manual for more details). Any decision to step up should be made collaboratively with the student by considering his/her progress, the perceived need for learning a new skill, and expectations from extended counselling. The student should be encouraged to actively participate in making this final decision. Refer to **Appendix E** for details on the process of shared decision-making.
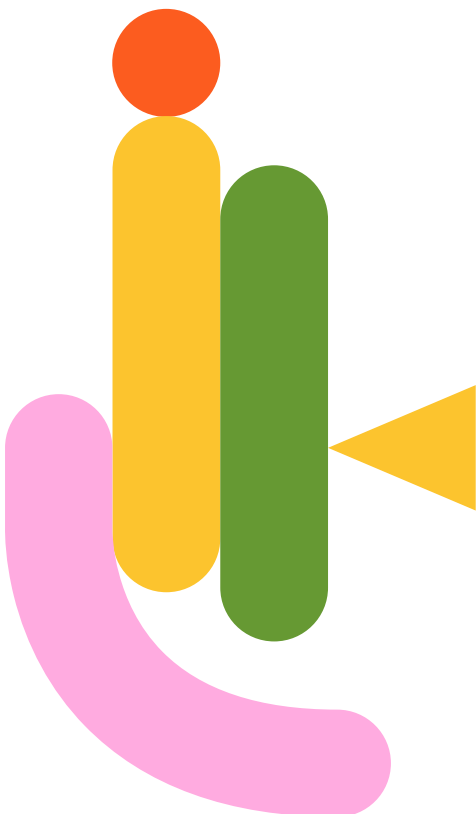
SESSION–BY-SESSION USER GUIDE

Session 01.

Session Objectives

1. Fostering engagement
2. Learning about the student's problems
3. Introducing problem monitoring
4. Educating the student about the intervention structure
5. Instilling hope

Materials Required

- Copy of Counselling Planner
- POD Booklet
- Problem profile
- Intervention Manual
- Session Record Forms
- Audio Recorder

✓ Session Components Checklist

- ☐ Engage the student
- ☐ Set the agenda and session guidelines
- ☐ Learn about the student's problems
- ☐ Introduce the 'progress journey graph'
- ☐ Explain the counselling journey
- ☐ Introduce the POD booklet and home practice tasks
- ☐ Address barriers to attending counselling
- ☐ Summarise and instil hope
- ☐ Wrap up the session

Session Components

Engage the student

The top priority is engaging the student in counselling. They may be feeling anxious about attending counselling and unclear about what the sessions will involve. Here are some helpful things to do in the session:

• Warmly greet them

• Ask how they got referred

• Acknowledge any discomfort that they may be experiencing

• Build rapport by asking about their interests

• Acknowledge any difficulties there may be in attending sessions

Set the agenda and share session guidelines

• Set the agenda

Orient the student to the process of agenda setting by making a list of items that will be covered in today's session. This can include the following items: asking about a student's problem, deciding what problem to work on during counselling, understanding what counselling entails and setting the next session date. Counsellors may use the following script.

"I'd like to start our session by discussing what we will be covering today. We call this the agenda. We will begin by understanding your problems. I will then explain the counselling journey to you, what it will look like, how it can help you, following which I will tell you about booklets and other materials. We will set an agenda every session to help us stay on track. At the end of the session, you can clear any doubts you may have and we can decide when to meet next. How does this sound to you? Is there anything else you would like to discuss?"

"I would like to inform you about a few important things about our sessions."

• Set the session guidelines

<u>Emphasise confidentiality:</u> It is important to reassure the student that all session content is kept confidential, unless there is some indication of harm to themselves or to others. You may use the following script:

"The information you provide will be kept confidential except if you tell me something that makes me concerned

about your safety. If I am concerned about this, then I might need to tell another adult (e.g. a parent) who can help to maintain your safety and well-being outside of our sessions. I will always tell you first if I need to share information in this way."

<u>Seek permission for audio-recording:</u> Audio recording of sessions is useful for supervision and quality assurance. Take permission from the student using the below given script. If the student does not give assent for audio recording, then the sessions can proceed regardless. You may use the following script:

"It is useful for me to audio record these counselling sessions so that I, along with my supervisor, can check back to see how they went, if anything was missed and how we can improve our counselling sessions. I will not share these recordings with anyone outside my team and your information will be kept confidential. Are you okay with me recording these sessions? If not, we can go ahead without recording them."

• Encourage the student to be an active participant in the intervention and validate any discomfort.

"We will be working together as a team. Although I am the counsellor and have knowledge about the issues we will discuss here, you are the expert in your own life. Please correct me if I misunderstand you, and please ask me questions as they come up. At first, it might feel uncomfortable to have this sort of relationship with me as a counsellor, but it will feel more natural with time and as we get to know one another."

Learn about the student's problems

- You can use the following script to explore details about student's problems:

"I would like to understand in detail the problems that are affecting you for which you would like help. These would be problems that are distressing for you, and that possibly interfere in different areas of your life. Can you tell me about any such problems you may have?"

- Obtain a detailed description of the students problems i.e.,

    i. what happened/what is happening (**life difficulty**)

    ii. how it affects the student's mood and how it interferes in their daily life (**stress reaction**)

    iii. what they have tried already to manage the problem.

- Below are examples of some probes that can be used to understand more about the problem:

"Can you explain more about the problems, with an example of a situation?", "For how long has this problem been persisting?", "I would like to know how this makes you feel?", "How does your problem interfere with your school work, your life at home, your relationships and your free time?", "Have you tried anything to reduce/ manage this problem?" [4]

- Ensure that identified problems are potentially changeable via problem-solving intervention, are broken down into manageable parts and are clearly described. The detailed guidelines are provided in **Appendix A.**

Introduce the progress journey graph

- Provide the student with a copy of the 'Progress Journey Graph'.

- Give clear instructions to document **upto three** problems that the student would want help with in counselling.

"This is called the Progress Graph. You can see that on the left side it asks you to fill in your problems. Based on our discussion, you can list up to three problems for which you want help. Write first problems under problem 1, second under problem 2 and so on. You can look at the sample graph [Help the student locate the sample graph]. *It also shows where to write your problems. Let me know when you are done or if you have any questions* [Wait for the student to complete writing his/her problems].*"*

"Now, can you look at the graphs on the right side? What do you see/ what does it look like? This graph will help keep track of how your problems are affecting you. First, you should fill in the session number and date for

today over the dash given at the bottom of the graph [if possible, Point to where the details need to be filled]. *Now, you should rate each problem on a scale from 0 'not at all a problem' to 10 'a huge problem'. Think about how big the problem is for you NOW. Draw a vertical bar to represent your rating, just as it is shown in the sample progress journey graph*. Remember to make this rating in the space provided for the first session. I'll give you a minute to complete ratings for all problems and let me know if you have any questions."*

A copy of the printed and digital sample graph is provided in Appendix B.

- Once the student completes the progress graph, ask the student to report verbatim what they have written and document the problem(s) and rating for each problem in the record form to keep track of the student's progress. This is followed by a detailed review of their response.

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[4] These are examples of probing questions that the counsellor can use to elicit details about the problems. The probes can be modified/ new probes can be added/ relevant ones can be selected based on the student's response.

"What did you write for problem #1? [Wait for the student to respond]. *What did you score for problem #1?* [Wait for the student to respond]. *That means it is a small/ somewhat/ very much a problem for you* [Refer to Appendix A for the scores and their corresponding conclusions]*."*

Enquire about other problems noted down by the student on the progress journey graph.

Following the discussion with the student about their problems, if need be, allow students to revise their problems description, ratings or both. The revisions need to be documented in the session record forms.

- Prioritize the problems with students, using the following script:

"Of all the problems you have mentioned, which is affecting you the most? [Wait for the student to respond]. *Is this one you would like to work on during counselling?"*

[Once the student selects the problem] *Okay, we will work with that one over the next few sessions. Does that make sense?"*

- Summarise this section and end with the following sentence:

"We will fill in this graph at the start of every session and this will help you keep track of your progress."

Explain the intervention structure

Briefly introduce the problem-solving approach and provide details about the counselling program.

"Thank you for seeking help and agreeing to participate in counselling. The counselling will involve learning new skills to manage difficulties you are experiencing. To start with, you will learn and practice a skill called 'problem-solving. It has three parts to it – P, O and D.

'P' stands for Problems: In this part, you and I will work on understanding your problems and choosing one to work on first. 'O' stands for Options: In the upcoming sessions, we will work together and devise options for you to cope better with the problem. 'D' stands for Do it: Here, you will implement what seems to be a good option for coping with the problem along with my support. We will then see how it goes and adjust things if necessary.

Practising the different parts of problem solving and trying new options for coping are important to overcome difficulties. By doing this, you will develop skills for coping with stresses and future difficulties of more or less any type. You will have learned useful skills that can help you in the future.

To learn problem-solving skills, we will have upto 5 sessions over 3 weeks. To get the maximum benefit from this, it is important that you attend all our sessions and do your best to finish some tasks between sessions. In our life, to learn anything new, regular practice is important!

We cannot become a great cricket player by playing just one time, right? Similarly, practising these skills is important if you want to master this skill. For any reason, if you wish to end your counselling early, let me know. We can discuss the barrier making it difficult for you to attend complete counselling and solve them. If required, we can also try and finish counselling sooner than 3 weeks.

Does this make sense? I know it is a lot to take in. Do you have any questions?" [Wait for the student to respond]

If after completing the steps of problem-solving you need more help with your problems, I can teach you additional skills, called 'act well skills'. Through these skills, you will learn to adopt more effective behaviours to manage your problems. There are multiple 'act well' skills to choose from for e.g., creating a schedule to keep ourselves active, communicating more effectively, facing your fears. We will pick up the skill that is most suitable for your problems.

We will make these decisions together as a team. I will guide you on what I think will be beneficial for you/ benefit you. However, it will ultimately be your decision about the number of sessions you want to attend and the number of skills you would like to learn.

I understand this is a lot of information. Do you have any questions?" [Wait for the student to respond]

Use the pictorial representation of the intervention steps as an aid to explain the instructions above. **Introduce the POD booklet and assign home practice tasks**

• Explain that a crucial part of the intervention is the practice in between sessions. The POD booklets are designed to help students practice in between sessions what they learn during counselling. Ask the student to set aside 15-30 minutes each day to finish tasks on the home practice, which may include reading stories, completing the practice sheet and implementing steps of POD. You may use the following instructions to help the student navigate the booklet for planning home practice activities:

"This booklet is called the 'POD booklet' [show the booklet]. *It has three parts in three different colours. Each part introduces you to a step in problem-solving through stories and practice exercises*[handover the booklet to the student]. *I would like you to go through part 1(red colour) of the comic booklet before our next session. Can you open the page to [Insert page number]and tell me what it says?* [Wait for the student to read aloud the title/sentence from the page]. *Yes, this introduces the story of students just like you and what they do when they face problems in their lives. Now can you move to the end of part1 i.e., page number*[insert page number]. *What does it say?* [Wait for the student to read aloud the title/sentence from the page]. *Please write down your problems in detail on this page. Do complete it before the next session because it will help us decide which problem to move ahead with. How does that sound? Do you have any questions?"*

"Like I mentioned earlier, it has short stories of students just like you and what they do when they face problems in their lives. I hope you will find it enjoyable to read! You can make this booklet your own by writing your name on the first page and drawing/sticking a picture of you here – have fun with it but at the same time, I hope you learn something from it too!"

• You may use the following probes to facilitate the student's plan for their home practice:

"How much time do you think you can keep aside to read the booklet and then complete the writing task?", "Would you prefer to write in the booklet or a separate sheet?", "If you don't understand something or need help with an activity, is there anyone who can help you?", "Do you anticipate any difficulties in completing these activities?", "What will make it easier for you to try out the activities?" [5]

• Emphasize the importance of practice in learning skills.

"To get the maximum benefit from this, it is important that you practice. In our life, to learn anything new, regular practice is important! We cannot become a good cricket player by playing just one time, right? Similarly, by practicing, you will develop skills to cope with your current and future difficulties."

• Identify a safe place for the student to store the materials carefully and inform them the importance of doing so.

"It is important to store the material carefully, so it doesn't get torn/ lost/ deleted[depending on if they are using printed materials or a digital device]. *Sometimes, you may write down things in the booklet that you may want to keep private from others, so it's important you store them in a safe and private place. Do you have a place to keep the material safely?"*[Wait for the student to respond, troubleshoot any concerns the student may have about storing booklet]

"Remember to get this booklet for all of our sessions."

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[5] These are examples of probing questions that the counsellor can use to elicit details about the problems. The probes can be modified/ new probes can be added/ relevant ones can be selected based on the student's responses. The detailed probes are provided in Appendix E

Address barriers to attending sessions

- Introduce barriers as things that get in the way of attending or participating in the intervention consistently.

"We spoke about what to expect in counselling, and you expressed willingness to commit to the counselling. I am excited for us to work together toward your goal. It is also important to acknowledge that sometimes things get in the way of coming to counselling consistently. We call these barriers. Let's spend some time thinking about what barriers might interfere with your commitment to counselling."

Encourage the student to ask questions and raise concerns so they can be addressed together.

Common barriers include difficulty attending sessions regularly because of scheduling conflicts with classes, exams or other home-related responsibilities, stigma, not completing homework due to limited time, poor understanding of concepts taught in sessions, feeling that the skills taught do not address the problem, or concerns from parents/ teachers about attending sessions.

- Inquire with the student if their parents or teachers have any concerns with them attending sessions. Check if the student would like you to brief the parents/teachers with information about counselling and/or clear any doubts they may have. You may use the following script:

"Since you will be attending counselling sessions, would you like us to provide any information about counselling sessions to your parents/ teachers? We can inform them about how often we will be talking, how long each session will last and any other information they may want. We will not share any personal information you have shared during sessions with them. How does this sound?"

Summarise and instil hope

- It is important to confirm the student has understood what counselling entails, is receptive and willing to proceed. This can be done by asking the student to summarise the session discussion. If the student shows some gaps or difficulties in understanding, they must be addressed. Ask the student if they have any doubts.

"I know I have explained a lot today. Would you be able to tell me what you understood from our discussion?

"Do you have questions?"

"Do you feel ready to start your counselling journey?"

- Offer hope that counselling can help them feel better. Explain that counselling is effective and consider sharing a brief, confidential success story from a previous student if you have one appropriate and relevant for the student. It is important to be positive and encouraging without being unrealistic.

"I have seen other students with problems like yours and despite that they have progressed well. Let us try to make a start!"

"If these sessions prove not to be sufficient, then as discussed, I will arrange for you to have additional sessions to learn new skills."

- Ask the student to imagine how their life would look different if their problems or mood improved.

Wrap up the session

- Set up the next session. Agree on the time for the next session and ask them to write it on top of their booklet or any other convenient place. Remind them to get the booklet for the next session.

- Inform the student that in case of absence, they must inform you in advance and schedule the next session on an alternate date.

- Remind the student that if they wish to end their counselling sooner than planned or change the frequency of their session, they can let you know and both of you can work out ways to address the student's concern.

- If the student expresses a desire to end counselling sooner than planned, refer to Appendix E for more information about making shared decision about ending counselling sooner

- Close the session.

"We are now coming to the end of our first session. Do you have any questions? I would be happy I would be happy to answer them. I hope what we discussed was clear and helpful. See you on _____at _____."
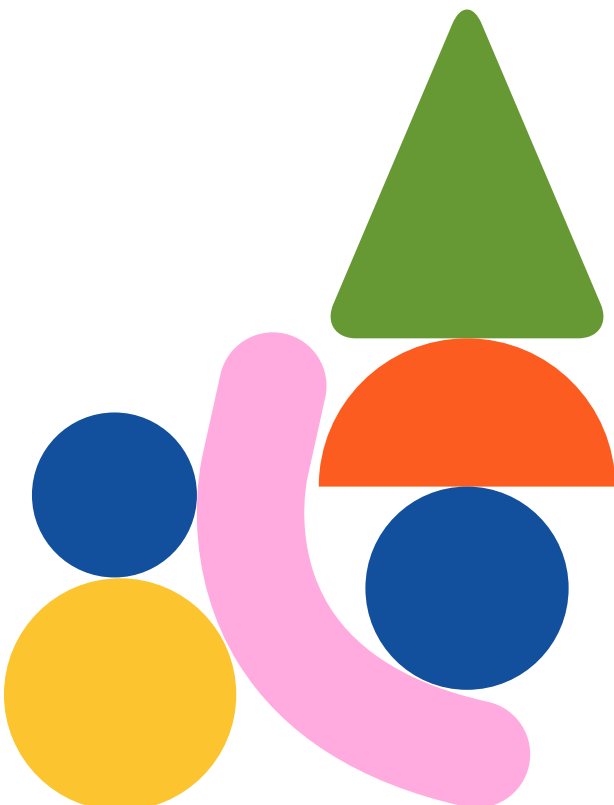
Session 02.

Session Objectives

1. Continuing engagement
2. Monitoring progress
3. Confirming target problem
4. Facilitating option generation

Materials Required

- POD Booklet
- Formulation sheet
- Intervention manual
- Session Record Forms
- Audio Recorder

Session Components Checklist

☐ Continue engagement

☐ Set agenda and session guidelines

☐ Monitor problems and progress

☐ Review home practice

☐ Sharing case formulation: Linking it all together

☐ Discuss option generation

☐ Assign home practice

☐ Wrap up the session

Session Components

Continue Engagement with the Student

- Check if they had any difficulties in attending sessions.

"Were there any issues in coming for counselling?

- Ask how they got on with the home practice, and what they felt about doing it. Actively praise all positive efforts. Also remind the student that it is what they do between the sessions that will result in their overcoming difficulties.

"It is great to see that you have completed the task of writing down your problems! Well done! Doing this

will help you make progress quickly and manage your problem."

OR

"I see that you have not been able to do everything on your home practice list. Let us discuss what made it difficult for you to complete your tasks. I can add this to our session agenda."

"Is this okay with you?"

Set Agenda and Session Guidelines

- Set agenda

"Today, we will be talking further about how to effectively solve problems. First, we will see how your progress has been, then we will review any new problems that you have identified, following which we will work on generating options for the target problem. Is there anything you would like to add to the agenda? [Wait for the student to respond]

- Go over the guidelines briefly, clarify the student's concerns and provide suggestions on how to make the counselling process smoother.

"We had discussed and mutually decided certain

guidelines e.g., about privacy and confidentiality, audio-recording of sessions, dealing with interruptions, changing your session timings. Would you like me to go over them? [Wait for the student to respond] *Is there anything you would like to change about these guidelines?* [Wait for the student to respond]."

- Check with the student if they have the counselling kit/material for the session. Help them locate and identify material required for the session.

"Remember I had said that at the start of every session, we will check if you have the materials you need for the counselling session? Great, let's go through them and open those we would be using today."

Monitor Problems and Progress

- Ask the student to take out the 'Progress Journey Graph' (printed or digital copy). Encourage the student to complete the progress journey graph, using the following instructions.

"Remember I had discussed that we would fill in the Progress Graph at the start of every session? I would like you to complete the progress journey graph today to see

how you are doing. You can begin by including today's date and session number. This is our second session. Then you can add a rating for each problem on a scale from 0 'not at all a problem' to 10 'a huge problem'. Think about how the problem is affecting you NOW. Draw a vertical bar to represent your rating, just as it is shown in the sample progress journey graph*. Remember to make

this rating in the space provided for the second session. I'll give you a minute to complete ratings for all problems and let me know if you have any questions."

Once the student completes the rating, ask them to share them with you. Record the student's responses in the session record form.

If the student ratings show improvement, as indicated by the downward trend in the rating for the target problem, discuss how they feel about the improvements and possible reasons for the improvement.

If the student has shown a lack of improvement, as indicated by the upward trend or no changes in the graph rating for the target problem, instill hope and enquire about their challenges.

"I can see that there has been no improvement/worsening of your problem. Don't be disheartened! This is quite common; we are just beginning to learn how to resolve your problems. The process requires patience and practice will definitely help you to get better at it!"

Refer to **Appendix B** for scripts to share feedback on assessments.

Review Home Practice and Troubleshoot Barriers

- Ask the student if they followed through with the assigned home practice.

  If they attempted the practice task, praise them. Discuss what the student understood from the booklet. Go over the list of problems and verify the target problem that the student would like to work on.

"Can you tell me about what you read in the booklet?"

"Are there any new problems you have written down that we haven't yet spoken about? Tell me about those?"

"Thank you for finishing the task! You did a great job!"

  If they did not attempt / complete the home practice task, normalize any difficulties they had and problem solve around barriers:

"Sometimes students do experience difficulty in practicing activities assigned to them. It would be helpful to understand what got in the way of you reading and/or working on the practice sheet, so we can figure out how to make this and any other home practices easier. Can you tell me what happened?"

Explain the importance of regular home practice and skill building to the student.

"If you want to become good at playing a sport, do you have to just play once or practice regularly? [Let the student answer]."

"That's right: in order to learn anything new, you have

to practice it again and again, just like you do when you learn a new sport or when you learn a new language."

(Other examples can also be given like braiding hair, learning to ride a bicycle, playing guitar, or any other relevant example taken from student's repertoire of interests)

Refer to **Appendix D** for troubleshooting barriers/challenges to completing the home practice.

- If required, give the student some time during the session to complete the task. Additional guidance can be provided to the student to help finish the task if required (if they are not clear about what needs to be done or look confused).

- Confirm the target problem.

"Since our last session, you had some more time to think about your problems. In the last session you said you would like to work on [insert target problem selected by student]. *Would you like to continue with the same problem for the rest of our sessions or choose another?* [Wait for the student to respond]

Okay, we will work with that one over the remaining duration of counselling – this way, you will have enough time to find effective solutions to this problem and make plans for trying out different options. Once you master problem solving skills with this problem, you can use it with your other problems as well. How does this sound to you?"

Share Case Formulation: Linking it all together

- Share your understanding about the student's problems, efforts at problem solving and stress reactions, using the formulation sheet. Personalize the formulation for the student by adding information about their target problem, ineffective problem-solving methods, and emotional/ behavioural outcomes identified based on the student's description of problems.

"We have identified the problem you want to discuss in counselling[insert student's target problem]*. Right now, whenever you experience* [insert student's target problem]*, you do* [insert student's unwanted/ unhealthy behaviours] *and feel* [insert student's negative feeling]*. This is an ineffective way to deal with your problem as it leads to you feeling bad and having troubles for yourself and others. This further adds to your problems. By learning problem-solving skills, you will learn some effective ways to deal with this problem*[insert student's target problem]*, this will make you feel good/ calmer/ confident/happy, engage in more positive/ healthy behaviours and get into lesser difficulties with others."*

Discuss Option Generation

- Take the student through the next step of problem-solving, i.e., finding options.

"Do you remember what the next step in our POD journey is? That's right, the next step in problem-solving is O, which is to make a list of possible OPTIONS that could be used to manage or solve your problems. To make this process effective, I would encourage you to think of as many different types of options as you can."

- To start things off, work with the student to generate one or two initial options so that they better understand the nature of the task and then ask them to write these down.

- Give an example of a situation if the student doesn't understand the concept of option generation. For e.g., *"if it's raining outside and you have to go out to catch a bus. What all things you can do in this situation to prevent yourself from getting wet".* Elicit possible things they can do (for instance, using an umbrella, wearing a raincoat, taking shade at the bus stop) and then explain that these are all options for solving the problem of getting wet. Similarly, we will work through options for other problems.

- After this, encourage the student to think of as many options as possible, and of varied kinds, and not to disregard any option, even if they appear not 'so perfect' or 'practical'. Let the student lead the task, while providing encouragement and offering guidance if the student feels stuck or struggles with completion of task.

Assign Home Practice

- Ask the student to go through part 2 of the POD booklet to learn more about option generation. Encourage the student to read the 'Quick Tips' section, following which they should work on identifying and writing ways for managing/solving the target problem. You may use the following instructions to help the student navigate the booklet for planning home practice activities:

"Remember I had said that the booklet has three sections in three different colours, each introducing you to a new step of problem-solving? We have completed part 1 of the booklet (red colour section). Now I would like you to go through part 2 of the comic booklet (blue colour section) before our next session. Can you go to page [insert page number]*and read out what you see?* [Wait for the student to read aloud the title/sentence from

the page]. *Yes, this is the story and after the story there are questions that you have to answer as part of home practice. Can you go to the page* [insert page number] *and read out what you see?* [Wait for the student to read aloud the title/sentence from the page]. *I want you to fill this practice sheet with at least 5 options. This is what we will begin discussing in the next session.*

There are also some quick tips, just after this practice sheet. The tips will help you think of some options for managing common problems. See if they are useful to you. Can you go to the page [insert page number] *and read out what you see?* [Wait for the student to read aloud the title/sentence from the page]. *I'm glad you were able to identify the section to go through."*

- It is important to be specific about tasks for the home practice list, so discuss any potential barriers to completion and troubleshoot the same. Discuss the student's plan for working on these items considering details such as when and where the student expects to work on it, and whether they might enlist help from anybody else (e.g., a friend, sibling or parent).Refer to **Appendix D** for probes that can be used for detailing out home practice plan and troubleshooting barriers/ challenges to completing home practice.

"Once again, I would encourage you to think of as many options as you can - don't worry if they don't seem perfect or practical. It would be helpful if you could write all your options down at the end of this booklet and bring it with you for our next session."

Wrap up the Session

Express enthusiasm about meeting the student for the next session and continuing counselling.Keep the following points in mind when wrapping up the session.

- Answer any doubts.

- Set up the next session. Agree on the time for the next session; ask them to write it on top of their booklet.

- Remind them to get the booklet for the next session.

- Inform the student that in case of absence, they must inform you in advance and schedule the next session on an alternate date. Remind the student of the protocol to be followed for communication between sessions, as applicable.

- Remind the student that if they wish to end their counselling sooner than planned or change the frequency of their session, they can let you know and both of you can work out ways to address the student's concern.

  - If the student expresses a desire to end counselling sooner than planned, refer to **Appendix E** for more information about making shared decision about ending counselling sooner

Session 03.

Session Objectives

1. Continuing engagement with the student

2. Monitoring progress

3. Choosing the 'best' option from the ones generated

4. Facilitating a plan to implement the chosen option (Do it)

Materials Required

- POD Booklet

- Intervention manual

- Session Record Form

- Audio Recorder

✓ Session Components Checklist

- ☐ Continue engagement
- ☐ Set the agenda and session guidelines
- ☐ Monitor problems and progress
- ☐ Review home practice
- ☐ Choose the best option and make a do-it plan
- ☐ Assign home practice
- ☐ Wrap up the session

Session Components

Continue Engagement with the Student

- Greet the student and engage in small talk.

- Check if they had any difficulties in attending the session. Ask how they got on with the home practice, and what they felt about doing it.

- Actively praise all positive efforts. If practice task was not completed, add this to today's discussion

Set Agenda and Session Guidelines

- Set Agenda

"Today, we will be talking further about how to effectively solve problems. First, we will see how your progress has been, then we will review the options that you have generated, following which we will work on developing a plan for dealing with your problems. Is there anything you would like to add to the agenda? [Wait for the student to respond]

Ask the student if they agree and if there are any additional items that they would like to talk about.

- Go over the guidelines briefly, clarify student's concerns and provide suggestions on making the counselling process smoother.

- Check with the student if they have the counselling kit/material for the session. Help the student locate and identify material required for the session.

Monitor Problems and Progress

- Encourage the student to complete the 'Progress journey graph'.

- Ask the student to share their rating with you (by reading it aloud/ showing it to you).Make a record of it in the session record form.

- Refer to **Appendix B** for instruction for problem and progress monitoring.

   If the student ratings show improvement, as indicated by the downward trend in the graph

rating for the target problem, discuss how they feel about the improvements and possible reasons for the improvement.

If the student has shown a lack of improvement, as indicated by the upward trend or no changes in the graph rating for the target problem, instill hope and enquire about their challenges.

Refer to **Appendix B** for scripts to share feedback on assessments.

Review Home Practice and Troubleshoot Barriers

- Ask the student if they followed through with the assigned home practice.

   If they attempted the practice task, praise them. Discuss what the student understood from the booklet. Go over the list of options with the student.

"Can you tell me about what you read in the booklet?"

"Tell me about the options you have written in the booklet?"

"Can you explain to me in detail about this option?"[Counsellor can ask this question to enquire further about an option they are unclear with]

"Thank you for finishing the task! You did a great job!"

   If they did not attempt/ complete the home practice task, normalize any difficulties they had and problem solve around barriers:

"Sometimes students do experience difficulty in practicing activities assigned to them. It would be helpful to understand what got in the way of you reading stories and/or writing in practice sheet, so we can figure out how to make this and any other home practices easier. Can you tell me what happened?"

Explain the importance of regular home practice and skill building to the student. Refer to **Appendix D** for troubleshooting barriers/challenges to completing home practice.

- If required, give the student some time during the session to complete the task. Additional guidance can be provided to the student to help finish the task if required

Choose the 'Best' Option and Make a Do-It Plan

Help the student choose the best option by discussing the advantages and disadvantages and choosing the option that has most advantages, least disadvantages and is most feasible.

"It's wonderful to see that you have come up with so many different options. Now the next step in our POD journey is D, or DO-It. You need to narrow down this list of options and choose the best option or combination of options that would help with managing/solving your problem. You can do this by thinking of the positives and negatives for each option. Then, choose the option that you think is most likely to make a positive difference."

"Which do you think is the best option? Why?"

Refer to **Appendix A** for guidelines on how to select the 'best' option.

- Ask the student to think about how they plan to implement the option, the aim being that they should implement it a few times, preferably before the next session. The following probes may be helpful to facilitate your discussion:

"As we have discussed, this seems to be the best option (for now) to manage your problem. How will you go for it? Let's think about the plan in detail"

- To start things off, you may use the following probes to discuss some of the aspects of implementing the plan with the student, so that they better understand the nature of the task.

"What exactly will you do?", "When will you do it?", "How frequently will you try this out?", "What might get in the way?", "Would you need someone's help to do it?" [6]

Ensure the plan is broken down into smaller, doable steps that can be implemented within the framework of the intervention. After this, let the student lead in planning and continue providing encouragement and offering guidance if the student feels 'stuck'.

Assign Home Practice

- It is important to be specific about tasks for the home practice, which includes reading part 3 of the booklet, preparing the 'Do it' plan and trying it out. You may use the following instructions to help the student navigate the booklet for planning home practice activities:

"Remember I had said that the booklet has three sections. We have completed parts 1 and 2 of the booklet (red and blue colour section). Now I would like you to go through part 3 of the comic booklet (green colour section) before our next session. Can you go to the starting page of part 3 [insert page number] *and read out what you see?* [Wait for the student to read aloud the title/sentence from the page]. *Yes, this is the story and after the story there are questions that you have to answer as part of home practice. Can you go to page*[insert page number] *and read out what you see?* [Wait for the student to read aloud the title/sentence from the page].

I would like you to write a summary of your Do-it plan. This sheet has some questions that would help you think and make a detailed plan. After writing it, I would encourage you to DO IT! Go ahead and try out your plan before we meet again! Remember, practicing what you have learned is important! At the end of this booklet, you have some empty space, where you can fill in the details such as when you tried out your plan, how it went and how it made you. We can discuss this in detail in our next session. The important thing is to stick to your plan and DO IT!"

- Discuss the home practice plan in detail, identify any potential barriers to completion and troubleshoot the same. Refer to **Appendix D** for probes that can be used for detailing the home practice plan and troubleshooting barriers/ challenges to completing home practice.

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[6] These are examples of probing questions that a counsellor can use to elicit potential options. The probes can be modified/ new probes can be added/ relevant ones can be selected based on the student's responses.

Wrap up the Session

Express enthusiasm about meeting the student for the next session and continuing counselling. Keep the following points in mind when wrapping up the session.

- Answer any doubts.

- Set up the next session. Agree on the time for the next session; ask them to write it on top of their booklet.

- Remind them to get the booklet for the next session.

- Inform the student that in case of absence, they must inform you in advance and schedule the next session on an alternate date. Remind the student of the protocol to be followed for communication between sessions, as applicable.

- Remind the student that if they wish to end their counselling sooner than planned or change the frequency of their session, they can let you know and both of you can work out ways to address the student's concern.

  - If the student expresses a desire to end counselling sooner than planned, refer to **Appendix E** for more information about making a shared decision about ending counselling sooner.
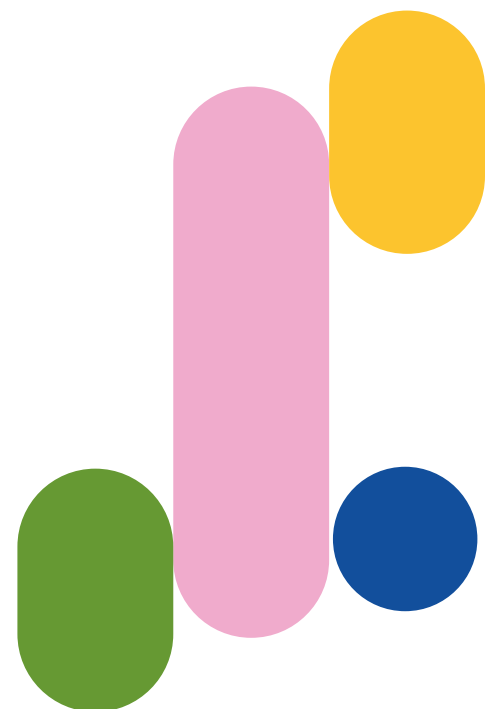
Session 04.

Session Objectives

1. Continuing engagement with the student
2. Reviewing the 'Do It' plan
3. Preparing for termination

Materials Required

- POD Booklet
- POD Poster
- Intervention manual
- Session Record Form
- Audio Recorder

✓ Session Components Checklist

☐ Continue engagement

☐ Set agenda and session guidelines

☐ Monitor problems and progress

☐ Review home practice

☐ Update 'Do it' plan

☐ Assign home practice

☐ Wrap up the session

Session Components

Continue Engagement with the Student

- Greet the student and engage in small talk.

- Check if they had any difficulties in attending the session.Ask how they got on with the home practice, and what they felt about doing it.

- Actively praise all positive efforts. If practice task was not completed, add this to today's discussion

Set Agenda and Session Guidelines

- Set agenda

"So far, we have discussed how to identify and prioritize problems, generate options and then choose the best option and make a do-it plan. Today, we will review your progress, experience with Do it and plan for the next steps."

Ask the student if they agree and if there are any additional items that they would like to talk about.

- Go over the guidelines briefly, clarify student's concerns and provide suggestions on how to make the counselling process smoother.

- Check with the student if they have the counselling kit/material for the session. Help them locate appropriate material for the current session.

Monitor Problems and Progress

- Encourage the student to complete the 'Progress journey graph'.

- Ask the student to share their ratings with you (by reading it aloud/ showing it to you).Make a record of it in the session record form.

- Refer to **Appendix B** for the instructions to provide for problem and progress monitoring.

  If the student ratings show improvement, as indicated by the downward trend in the graph

rating for the target problem, discuss how they feel about the improvements and possible reasons for the improvement.

If the student has shown a lack of improvement, as indicated by the upward trend or no changes in the graph rating for the target problem, instill hope and enquire about their challenges.

Refer to **Appendix B** for scripts to share feedback on assessments.

Review Home Practice and Troubleshoot Barriers

- Ask the student if they followed through with the assigned home practice.

  If they attempted the practice task, praise them.

Discuss what the student understood from the booklet. Go over the list of problems with the student and verify the target problem that they would like to work on.

"Can you tell me about what you read in the booklet?"

"Can you read out the plan you prepared/"

Can you explain to me in detail about this aspect of the plan?" [Ask this question to enquire further about any aspect of plan they are unclear with]

"It's great to see that you have tried out your option(s) as per the plan! Could you tell me what went well? Did you face any difficulties? How does this make you feel?"

If they did not attempt/ complete the practice task, normalize any difficulties they had and problem solve around barriers. Discuss barriers to preparing or trying out the plan.

"I see that you weren't able to prepare/ try out your plan. It would be helpful to understand what got in the way of your efforts so we can figure out how to make this and any other home practices easier. Can you tell me what happened?What difficulties did you face when attempting to prepare/ try out the plan?"

Explain the importance of regular home practice and skill building to the student. Refer to **Appendix D** for troubleshooting barriers/ challenges to completing home practice.

"I know that you do understand the importance of regular practice in learning any new skill. You told me you were unable to prepare/ carry out your Do-It plan due to _____ [mention here the barriers reported by the student in trying out the chosen option]. *What do you think might help you in ensuring you don't face these difficulties when you try again?* [Wait for the student to respond].*"*

If required, give the student some time during the session to complete the task. Additional guidance can be provided to the student to help finish the task if required **Update the Do-it plan**

This will include the following elements:

• Continuing to implement the chosen solution/ option

• Implementing an alternate solution/option

• Developing a plan for another problem

If there has been improvement in student's problem and they have successfully tried out the plan, you may use the following script to facilitate practice of POD steps:

"You have now learnt the POD steps and used them successfully with one problem! You can now use this strategy to manage other current problems and solve future difficulties! Do you have any questions?"

"Let us discuss how you would like to continue practising POD steps with this problem".

"Would you like to try and apply POD steps to another important problem from your list?"

If there hasn't been much improvement in student's problem or they **haven't been successful in implementing the plan,** you may use the following script to facilitate the practice of POD steps:

"It seems you have put in efforts but your problems are still not fully resolved. Don't be disheartened! This is quite common; our first attempt at finding and trying out an option may not always be fully successful in resolving a problem. Learning to solve problems is a process that requires patience. Practice will definitely help you to get better at it!

There are 2 ways to move forward:

(i) You can go back and try this option until our next session. We can talk about what did not work well and make some modifications in the plan accordingly.

(ii) You can try another option from the list in addition to the one you selected and see how that works.

How would you like to proceed?"

If the student selects the first option, provide adequate support and brainstorm ideas to ensure successful implementation.

"What will make it easier for you to try out the plan?", "If you need help with an activity, is there anyone who can help you?", "What changes, if any, you would like to make to this plan?"

If the student selects the second option, brainstorm what other option can be tried out and plan for their implementation.

"Which other option that you think may be more feasible or an option that you could try along with the previously chosen option" [Go back to the list of most beneficial options as discussed in previous session and select the options they can try out].

Once the preferred option is identified, go through the following problems to help the student plan out details for trying out this new option.

"How will you be going around trying this plan?", "How *much time do you think you can keep aside to try out this plan?", "What will make it easier for you to try out the plan?", "If you need help with an activity, is there anyone who can help you?"*

Assign home practice

- Based on the option the student selected for the do-it plan, the task for this session's home practice needs to be decided.

"Remember we decided that you will try practising this option a few more times, you will try another option to work on your problem/ will try and apply POD steps to your other problems. Do you want to go over the plan once more?

Refer to **Appendix D** for probes that can be used for planning home practice.

- It is important to be specific about tasks for the home practice list, so discuss any potential barriers to completion and troubleshoot the same. Refer to **Appendix E** for troubleshooting barriers/ challenges to completing home practice.

- Give the POD poster to students/ help them locate this from the counselling kit provided. Use the following script to explain the same:

"This poster lists out all the three steps of problem-solving – P for problems, O for Options and D for Do It! You can keep this poster where you can find it easily and refer to it when needed in the future. Whenever you need to see the problem-solving steps all in one place and practice them, you can use this poster!"

Wrap up the Session

Express enthusiasm about meeting the student for the next session and continuing counselling. Keep the following points in mind when wrapping up the session.

- Answer any doubts.

- Set up the next session. Agree on the time for the next session; ask them to write it on top of their booklet.

- Remind them to get the POD poster and booklet for the next session.

- Inform the student that in the next session you will discuss if the student would benefit from learning a new behavioural skill.

"If you remember, we had discussed at the start of counselling that if after completing POD steps you needed more help in solving problems, then I can teach you additional 'act well' skills. We can discuss in the next *session what these skills are, how you would benefit from learning these skills and how we can go about doing so."*

- Inform the student that in case of absence, they must inform you in advance and schedule the next session on an alternate date. Remind the student of the protocol to be followed for communication between sessions, as applicable.

- Remind the student that if they wish to end their counselling sooner than planned or change the frequency of their session, they can let you know and both of you can work out ways to address the student's concern.

  - If the student expresses a desire to end counselling sooner than planned, refer to **Appendix E** for more information about making shared decision about ending counselling sooner.

Session 05.

Session Objectives

1. Continuing engagement with the student

2. Reviewing impact of the problem-solving on student's problems

3. Consolidating and preparing for future difficulties

4. Assessing need for learning addition skills (stepping up)

Materials Required

- POD Booklet
- Looking Ahead Poster
- Intervention Manual
- Session Record Form
- Audio Recorder

Session Components Checklist

- ☐ Engage the student
- ☐ Set agenda and session guidelines
- ☐ Monitor problem and progress
- ☐ Review home practice
- ☐ Review and consolidate learnings
- ☐ Prepare for managing future problems
- ☐ Decide course of the counselling
- ☐ Terminate problem-solving counselling

Session Components

Engage the Student

- Greet the student and engage in small talk.

- Check if they had any difficulties in attending the sessionAsk how they got on with the home practice, and what they felt about doing it. Actively praise all positive efforts. If the practice task was not completed, add this to today's discussion

"It is great to see that you have completed the task of trying out your Do-It plan. Well done! Doing this will help you make progress quickly and manage your problem."

OR

"I see that you have not been able to try out your Do-It plan. Let us discuss what made it difficult for you to complete your tasks. I can add this to our session agenda."

"Is this okay with you?"

Set Agenda and Session Guidelines

- Set agenda

"Till now, we have discussed and practised the three steps of problem-solving: identifying problems, generating options and then making a 'Do it' plan. Today, we will review your overall learning with POD steps, its impact on your problem and plan how you can continue managing your problems."

- Ask the student if they agree and if there are any additional items that they would like to talk about.

- Go over the guidelines briefly, clarify the student's concerns and provide suggestions on making the counselling process smoother.

- Check with the student if they have the counselling kit/material for the session. Help them locate appropriate material for the current session.

Monitor Problems and Progress

- Encourage the student to complete the 'Progress journey graph'.

- Obtain the student's subjective perception of improvement. Use the exact wording as below in enquiring about the progress from the student:

"Since coming to counselling, are your problems

Much worse, A bit worse, About the same, A bit better or Much better?"

Record the student's responses in the session record form.

If the student ratings show improvement, as

indicated by the downward trend in the graph rating for the target problem and rating of 'bit better/ much better', discuss how they feel about the improvements and praise them for the efforts.

"From what we have seen in the last session and as we have seen right now from your progress journey, it looks like you are feeling a lot better. You have also mentioned that you feel better about managing your problems now. Is that right? [wait for the student to respond]

This tells me that you've been working really hard and practicing everything we learned to help deal with your problems and feel better."

If the student has shown a lack of improvement, as indicated by the upward trend or no changes in the graph rating for the target problem or rating of 'about the same /a bit worse/much worse', instill hope and enquire about their challenges.

"I can see that there has been no improvement/ worsening of your problem. Don't be disheartened! This is quite common; we are just beginning to learn how to resolve your problems. The process requires patience and practice will definitely help you to get better at it!"

If the student has given contradictory ratings, as indicated by an improvement rating of 'bit better/ much better' but this is not accompanied by a reduction in scores for the target problem, discuss the discrepancy with the student to understand their overall perception of improvement. The student should be allowed to revise their rating after the discussion, if needed.

Refer to **Appendix B** for scripts to share feedback on assessments.

Review Home Practice

- Ask the student if they followed through with the assigned home practice.

    If they attempted the practice task, praise them and discuss what the student did and how the chosen option was implemented.

"I see that you have continued with practicing your do-it plan. Good job! Can you tell me more about how you implemented this plan?"

"I see you have also tried different options for managing your problem."

"I am glad to see you have been able to use your problem-solving skills to solve another problem."

    If they did not attempt to implement the chosen option, normalize any difficulties they had and problem solve around barriers:

"I see that you weren't able to try out your plan. It would be helpful to understand what got in the way of your efforts so we can figure out how to make this and any other home tasks easier. Can you tell me what happened? What

difficulties did you face when attempting to prepare/ try out the plan?"

    Discuss barriers to implementing the chosen solution, provide adequate support and brainstorm ideas to ensure successful implementation. Modify the plan, as necessary.

"I know that you do understand the importance of regular practice in learning any new skill. You told me you were unable to carry out your Do-It plan due to _____ [mention here the barriers reported by the student in implementing the chosen option]. *What might help you in ensuring you don't face these difficulties when you try again?* [Wait for the student to respond*]."*

"Is there any other option that you think may be more feasible or an option that you could try along with the previously chosen option? (Go back to the list of most beneficial options as discussed in the previous session)*."*

Review and Consolidate Learnings

- Step back to consider the whole process from a problem-solving perspective. Discuss the skills learned and helpful aspects.

"I'm glad that you attended the session to see how to manage your problems. It will be helpful to hear what

you have learned in counselling. Can you summarise what you have learned?"

"It would be good to know what skills/ steps you found helpful with your problems?"

- Highlight their efforts in solving and managing their problems.

"I see that you are making efforts to solve your problem and overcome challenges you experienced while working on them. The improvement is due to your hard work."

- Summarize the problem-solving approach using the POD Poster detailing the steps of problem-solving.

"This counselling focused on helping you learn a tried and tested method called 'problem-solving'. It has three steps. [Ask the student to refer to the POD poster and read the three steps aloud or students can be encouraged to recall POD steps based on their learning during sessions]*."*

"Thanks for summarizing the POD steps. As we have discussed, regular practice of problem-solving skills are important. You can use these steps to manage current problems and solve future difficulties! Can you think of any such problems that you would like to discuss?"

OR

"It seems you have made some efforts. Learning to solve problems is a process that requires patience and practice. Practice will definitely help you to get better at it! I would encourage you to use the booklet and the poster to help you practise the POD skills. Do you have any questions?"

Prepare for Managing Future Problems

- Discuss future concerns with the student. Explore with the student the barriers/ difficulties they anticipate in using the POD skills. The following probes may be used for facilitating the discussion:

"What situations might arise in the future that may make it hard for you to practice the skills you learnt?", "What situations might increase your stress?"

"Thinking about them and planning for them in advance can help you be prepared to deal with these problems. Can you think of any such situations? Let's discuss them now."

"What will you do?", "Can you think of a few options?", "Is there someone who can help you with this – perhaps a family member, friend or teacher?",

"In any case, the POD steps found in the book and poster are useful to remember to manage current and future problems."

- Provide the Looking Ahead Poster and encourage the student to fill it based on today's discussion. It helps prepare the plan for future problems.

"You can write different things we discussed- what problems you may expect to face in the future, your strengths, to remind you of what you can achieve and the people who can help you manage the problems. This may help you feel more confident in managing the problem. What do you think?"

- Encourage the student(s) to keep the POD booklet, poster and Looking Ahead poster somewhere safe so that it can be accessed again if needed.

Decide the course of counselling

- If the student has provided a subjective rating of 'much improved' and there is no suicidal risk, proceed with the termination of counselling as planned.

"This will be our last session together. How do you feel about ending counselling?"

If the student expresses hesitations about ending counselling, explore the student's concerns.

If the student expresses distress / sadness about not seeing the counselor anymore, validate their feelings and discuss how this is an important step in their journey of learning to cope better.

If the student expresses a need for more sessions, use the shared decision-making procedure as outlined below to decide the need for stepping-up to learn new skills.

• If the student has provided a subjective rating of other than 'much better', discuss the option of learning additional skills (stepping-up).

"As you have indicated, there is not as much improvement/ only little improvement in your problem since coming for counselling. Working on problems can take time and requires practice, so don't be discouraged! We would like to discuss with you the possibility of offering more help for your problem. This would involve working directly with me to learn a new skill called 'act-well' skill. I want to check if you would like to learn more about how you can continue counselling and what new skills you can learn? It will ultimately be your decision whether you would like to end counselling or continue with sessions to learn new skills?"

"Does this make sense to you? Can you summarise what I said?"

"Would you like to discuss the possibility of learning additional skills?"

• If the student says **Yes**, refer to Appendix E for details on making a collaborative decision for deciding intervention pathways

• If the student says **No**, proceed with the termination of counselling.

Terminate counselling

• Ask the student whether they have any questions.

• Remind them to keep the POD booklet, poster and Looking Ahead poster somewhere safe so that it can be accessed again if needed.

• Say goodbye by using the following script:

"We have now come to the end of the counselling program. I hope you keep the POD booklet, your notes [if they made any notes or used extra sheets to complete practice exercises] and both posters safe so that you can use them whenever you need to help manage your problems now and in the future. Thank you, good luck and goodbye!"

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Guidelines for Problems Selection

• The identified problems should be <u>potentially changeable via the problem-solving intervention.</u> Problems such as "We don't have enough money"," "Parents are going through a divorce" are not suitable for this mode of intervention. In these instances, some good follow-up questions might be:

"How does this affect your mood or behaviour?"

OR

"What are some ways in which your behaviour or mood may have been different since the problem began?"

• Explain to the student that they cannot work on changing situations that are beyond the student's control, but they can work with him/her in helping them learn techniques to help them manage how they feel and react.

• <u>Break down the complex problem</u> into smaller ones, if necessary.

"It seems like you are dealing with a lot! Shall we try to break this problem down into smaller bits? It is always easy to start working on smaller bits, right?"

• If the student has mentioned something vague, such as "anger" or "concentration" for their top problem, <u>ask them to elaborate</u>. You can use probing question such as

"What are you not able to concentrate on?", "What happens when you get angry?"

OR

"How does this problem affect your mood?"

Guidelines for Option Selection

• Let the student take the lead in choosing the best option(s). Stress the importance of choosing wisely by considering the pros and cons. Provide guidance if the student feels stuck.

• Ensure that the options are practical and simple enough to put into action.

"Would it be possible for you to try this option? What help would you require to try out this option?"

• Ensure the student takes into consideration both the immediate pros and cons, and the long-term consequences before choosing an option.

"What might happen if you do this? What would be the benefits? Are there any disadvantages? Are there any disadvantages of this option in the long run?"

• If required, the student can be encouraged to try a combination of options from the list generated, in a pre-planned manner, to reach the desired outcome. The student can combine two options simultaneously OR try one after the other to solve their problem.
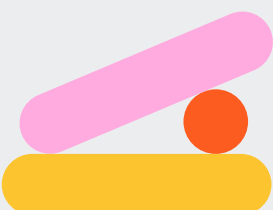
Appendix B

Instructions and Scripts for Monitoring Problems and Progress

- **Progress Journey Graph** is designed to obtain the student's ratings of problem severity ratings. This graph is adapted from the Youth Top Problem scale[7]. You can use the following script:

"Remember I had discussed that we would fill in the graph at the start of every session? I would like you to complete the progress journey graph today to see how you are doing. First, you should fill in the session number and date for today over the dash given at the bottom of the graph [if possible, point to where the details need to be filled]. *Now, you should rate each problem on a scale from 0 'not at all a problem' to 10 'a huge problem'. Think about how big the problem is for you NOW. Draw a vertical bar to represent your rating, just as it is shown in the sample progress journey graph. Remember to make this rating in the space provided for today's session. I'll give you a minute to complete ratings for all problems and let me know if you have any questions."*

- Provide guidance in helping students locate the progress graph and the sample graph within the counselling kit.

- Let the student take the lead in completing these questions.

- Record student ratings of problem and severity in their session record form.

Interpretation of Problem Rating on the Progress Journey Graph

Rating	Interpretation
0-2	Not a problem at all/ small problem
3-6	Somewhat a problem
7-10	Very much a problem

Script for discussing Progress

If the student ratings show improvement, discuss improvement using the following script:

"I can see there is a reduction in your problem from the first day you came in for counselling. It seems you have made good progress on your problems since we last met. How do you feel about this?

What could have led to these improvements?"

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[7] Weisz, J. R., Chorpita, B. F., Frye, A., Ng, M. Y., Lau, N., Bearman, S. K., &Hoagwood, K. E. (2011). Youth top problems: Using idiographic, consumer-guided assessment to identify treatment needs and to track change during psychotherapy. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 79(3), 369.

If the student has shown a lack of improvement, share feedback using the following script:

"I can see that there has been no improvement/ worsening of your problem. Don't be disheartened! This is quite common; we are just beginning to learn how to resolve your problems. The process requires patience and practice will definitely help you to get better at it!"

Can you tell me what challenges you are facing when trying to work through your problem?"

**If the student has given contradictory ratings,** resolve the discrepancy by discussing ratings with the student using the following script:

"I noticed that you reported significant improvements in your problems, however, your ratings on the graph are more or less the same, indicating no changes/ worsening in your problem. Can you help me understand this discrepancy? What makes you feel your problem has improved, even though on the graph your problem hasn't reduced?"

Appendix C

Sample Progress Journey Graph (Printed version)
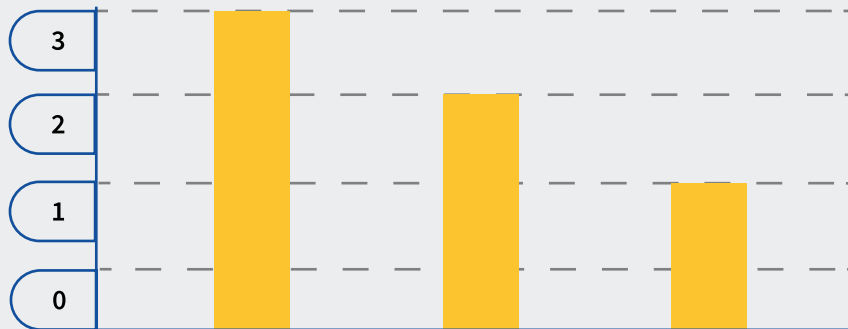
This is your Progress Journey which will help you understand whether your problems are getting better or not. Using the boxes below, make a note of three top problems you want to work on during counseling. For each problem, draw a vertical bar on the graphs, to show how big each problem is to you, where 0 means it is not a problem at all and 10 means it is a huge problem. Enter the date in the space provided, each time you draw the vertical bar to mark your progress.

Problem 1

10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0

Date: ....

Problem 2

10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0

Date: ....

Problem 3

10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0

Date: ....
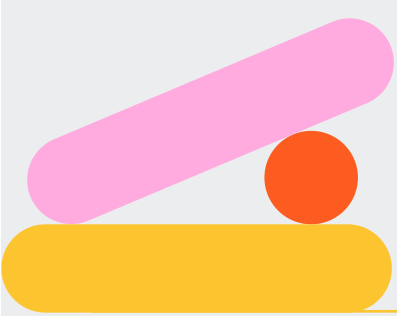
Appendix D

Probes for facilitating Home Practice Plan

- You may use the following probes to facilitate the student's plan for their home practice:

"When will you be able to read the booklet?", "Where will you be able to read the booklet?", "How much time do you think you can keep aside to read the booklet and then complete the writing task?" "Would you prefer to write in the booklet or a separate sheet?", "If you don't understand something or need help with an activity, is there anyone who can help you?", "Do you anticipate any difficulties in completing these activities?", "What situations might arise that would make it difficult for you to try out these activities?", "What will make it easier for you to try out the activities?"

Troubleshooting Home Practice Barriers

Some of the common barriers/ challenges to completing home practice and finding potential solutions.

Barriers/challenges	Solution
Student says they find it difficult to remember to do the activity	Link the activity to some other routine activity such as meal time. Keep the plan in a prominent position such as kitchen table or in school planner. Set an alarm/reminder on a clock/telephone to remind the student
Student says they do not have the time to do the activity and/or fill the worksheet	Help the student identify a possible time when they may be more likely to do the activity and/or fill the worksheet. Ask the student to fill it only once in the day rather than more frequently.
Student cannot read/write	Help the student identify a parent/friend who can read for them and assist them in writing. Encourage them to draw/ use symbols instead of writing in worksheets.
Student does not understand the reason to do the activity and/or fill the worksheet.	Revisit the link between practice and their problems and explain how completing the tasks would help them deal with their problem better.
Student lacks confidence about doing the plan, saying that they may feel too low/stressed.	Emphasize how trying out the plan will help the student feel better. Explore with the student who may be able to help him/her with the plan – friends, parents Review the plan and break it down into smaller steps and encourage the student to start with one step at a time.

Appendix E

Introduction to Shared Decision Making

Shared decision-making (SDM) is a structured and collaborative process for reaching an agreement with the student about the appropriate intervention course. The decisions made are responsive to students' progress, their specific needs, and informed preferences. This, in turn, helps to improve the engagement and effectiveness of the intervention. In this stepped care intervention, the SDM guides selecting appropriate intervention courses for students who are not fully responsive to PS intervention. During the last session of PS intervention, if a student's problems are not fully resolved, the counsellor invites the student to actively participate in deciding whether stepping up to learn additional skills is a suitable course of counselling for them or not. The counsellor and student collaboratively review the student's progress, preferences and perceived need for additional help, and expectations from the available intervention options. During this process, the counsellor may provide their recommendation and support students by clarifying any doubts or queries they have, but ultimately the student is encouraged to make the final decision. The SDM process can also be used to address student's concerns, in case they wish to end counselling sooner than planned and decide a suitable course of counselling.

The process of SDM is structured within the P (problem changes)-O (option for intervention)-D (Do planning for next steps) framework, as outlined below.

Section 1. Step-by-Step Guide for Shared Decision-Making at Session 5

1. Review in detail the student's perception of changes in their **Problems.**

"Let's go over your problems one by one. We can start with problem 1 on the Progress graph.

Since coming for counselling, do you feel overall your problem 1 [insert description] *is Much worse, A bit worse, About the same, A bit better, Much better?"*

   Similarly, review student's perception of the changes in the second and the third problem, as applicable.

• Review any additional problems for which the student wants help.

"During the course of the program, sometimes students may experience new problems for which they require more help. Have you been experiencing any new problems that you would like to discuss?"

   Explore in detail the additional problems for which the student wants help, using the same questions as in session 1, component 3.

• Summarise the student's improvements and problems where there is scope for further improvement.

2. Share available Options for counselling and elicit their preference.

"Now, we are faced with making a decision about the next steps in your counselling journey. I'd like to tell you about two options on how to move forward".

"The first option is that if you feel confident about managing your problems by yourself, we can end our counselling journey here and spend the rest of the session summarizing what you have learnt so far. The second option is that we may continue with our counselling journey so you can learn additional behavioural skills to manage your problems more effectively."

"Remember, this is your counselling journey, your opinions and preferences are very important in deciding what to do next. If you need more information to make this decision or you want my opinion on the decision, I'm there to assist you. But the final decision will be yours."

"What would you like to do? [Wait for the student to respond]."

    You may use one or more of the following probes to check the student's understanding and preference:

"Do you have a preference between these two options?", "Would you like to learn more about either of the options?", "Why do you think this is the better option for you?", "What are your expectations from continuing the counselling journey?"

- After the student's preference is elicited, re-share your recommendation for continuing with the intervention.

"I suggest continuing with sessions because this will help you learn and strengthen additional coping skills, which will not only help you with the current problems but also coping with your future problems".

3. Make a Do it plan for the counselling journey

- Elicit student's final decision

"Based on our discussion, what route would you like to take for your counselling journey? Remember, this is your counselling journey and your decision is most important."

- Outline next steps based on the student's final decision.

Following options discussion, if the student decides to terminate counselling, use the following script:

"Thank you for sharing your decision. Since you have decided to end counselling, let us spend the rest of the session summarizing what you have learnt, plan for how you could continue to use these skills and then end your counselling journey. It would be helpful to hear how you feel about this."

Following options discussion, if the student decides to learn a new skill, use the following script:

"Let's continue with our counselling journey. Now, we will learn some additional skills that may fit better with your problem. We will have additional 4-5 sessions to learn and practice the new skill. We can choose from one of the three 'act-well' skills that best suit your problems. I will briefly explain these skills to you now.

The first skill is called being active. In this skill, you will learn about how to plan and engage in activities that

are enjoyable or were enjoyable previously, or activities that are important for you and you would like to master. We hope that learning and practicing this skill will help you improve your mood and ability to manage your list of activities.

The second skill is learning to face your fears. In this skill, through a series of small steps, you will learn to face objects, situations, people or things that make you feel nervous, scared or worried. We hope that learning and practising this skill will help you improve your mood and make you feel more confident in facing difficult/scary situations.

The third skill is learning to communicate well. Here you will learn to better express your thoughts and feelings in a way that respects your needs and the needs of others. We hope that learning and practising this skill will help improve your interpersonal relations with your peers, teachers and relatives.

What do you think of these three skills? Is there anything about these skills that you do not understand?"

"We previously decided to work on[insert target problem as identified with the student]. Would you like to continue with the same problem or would you like to work on another problem?"

    If the student wishes to work on another problem (and not the previous target problem), understand more about this problem using the same question as used in session 1, component 3. The revised target problem should be documented and regularly tracked using the Progress journey graph. It should also be recorded in counsellor's record form.

"I will tell you more about the new 'act well' skill in the next session. During our sessions, we will practise the selected skill together. Similar to the POD booklet, I will give/ send you a new booklet with a brief story and exercises to help you practise the skill in between our sessions. The more you practise these skills, the easier it will be to use them and manage the difficulties/ problems that you are currently facing. Once your problems have gotten better, we will move towards the end of our time in counselling and will come up with a plan to help you keep using the skills you have learned to feel better."

"For the counselling to be helpful, it is important that you come to every session and practise the skill in between sessions. We will work together to make sure that this is possible within your schedule, just as we have done so far in counselling. Does that sound okay to you?"

- Ask the student whether they have any questions.

- Inform the student that in case of absence, they must inform you in advance and schedule the next session on an alternate date.

Following options discussion, if the student seems uncertain about their decision, you can use one of **the following scripts, depending on the stage of counselling:**

"I understand that you are unable to make a decision right now and there is no hurry to do so. We can end our session today. I can answer any questions you have. You can take some more time to think about whether you would like to learn a new skill or end with POD. If you have any questions, I will be happy to answer them. We can then meet next week to finalise how to proceed. How does this sound?"

Section 2: Extending Shared Decision-Making Principles to situations where the student requests Ending Counselling sooner:

Step-by-Step Guide

Review Problems interfering with attending the full course of counselling

Problem *Barriers*	Potential Solution
Student cannot attend counselling sessions due to practical barriers such as lack of time, difficulty getting out of class, upcoming exams etc.	Discuss with student what is specifically getting in the way Flexibility in scheduling sessions (e.g., conducting sessions once a week instead of twice a week or conducting sessions quicker in succession) may help. If available, offer the option for attending counselling sessions after schools or remotely on phone/ video call.
A relative does not allow counselling, and thinks it is a waste of time (or opposes it or other reasons).	Invite the relative to the session (face-to-face/ telephonic). Educate them about counselling services, explain how counselling can benefit their child, and address their concerns sensitively and empathically.
Student has significant social stressors such as financial problems and does not see how 'talking' will help.	Explain that although you cannot make the stressors go away, you can teach the student how to cope with them so that they can manage their emotions.

Progress in target problems	
Student's perceived lack of progress on target problems	Review with the student the potential reason for lack of progress. Instill hope. Emphasize the importance of patience and practice. Discuss if the student would like to work on a different target problem, as the selected problem may be a difficult one to start with or unsuitable for problem-solving counselling. Discuss with the student if they would like to do something different or learn a new skill in counselling.
Student's perceived resolution of target problem	Obtain student perception of improvement: *"Since coming to counselling, do you feel overall your problems are Much worse, A bit worse, About the same, A bit better, Much better?"* If the student feels better, understand the possible reason for improvement. Reinforce student improvement and encourage them to complete POD skills, so they continue to cope with current and future problems. If student reports lack of improvement in their ratings, discuss the reason for the discrepancy between their ratings and verbal report of progress: *"Can you help me understand this discrepancy? What makes you feel your problem has improved, even though on the graph your problem hasn't reduced?"*

2. Once the potential problems are reviewed and solutions are discussed, check with the student whether they will prefer the option of continuing counselling or ending it sooner.

"Following our discussion, I want to check if you would still like to end counselling sooner? I feel it would be beneficial for you to complete all steps of POD and master this skill. We can try out the solutions that we have just discussed, which may help you better learn and practice skills. But if you are still interested in ending counselling, we can plan to summarize the progress and your learnings so far and then terminate counselling. It will ultimately be your decision whether you would like to end counselling or continue with the rest of the sessions?

Does this make sense to you? Can you summarise what I said?

So, you have two options: you can end counselling in today's session or continue with the rest of the sessions? If you need more information to make this decision or you want my opinion on the decision, I'm there to assist you.

"What would you like to do? [Wait for the student to respond].*"*

3. Make a Do it plan for the counselling journey.

Following options discussion, if the student decides to terminate counselling, use the following script:

"Let us spend the rest of the session summarizing what you have learnt, plan for how you could continue to use these skills and then end your counselling journey. It would be helpful to hear how you feel about this."

The following steps can be used to review and consolidate:

- Step back to consider the whole process. Discuss the skills learned and helpful aspects

- Summarize the problem-solving approach using the POD Poster detailing the steps of problem-solving.

- Discuss any problems that the student anticipate. Explore how the student can continue to use the skills learned.

- Provide the Looking Ahead Poster and encourage the student to use it to help prepare the plan for future problems.

- Ensure the student receives the POD Poster and Looking Ahead Poster in counselling. Remind the student to keep posters safe and use them again if needed.

Refer to Session 5, components 7, 8, and 9 for detail on consolidation and end problem-solving intervention

Following options discussion, if the student decides to continue with PS counselling, use the following script:

"Let's continue with the rest of the sessions and further learn/ strengthen problem-solving skills. How does that sound? We previously decided to work on[insert target problem as identified with the student]. Would you like to continue with the same problem or would you like to work on another problem?"

Identify the target problem for the rest of the sessions. If the student wishes to work on another problem (and not the previous target problem), try and understand more about this problem using the same question as used in session 1, component3. The revised target problem should be documented and regularly tracked using the Progress journey graph. It should also be recorded in the record form. Following this, proceed with the SESSION 2 or SESSION 3 or SESSION 4, as applicable. If another problem is identified, encourage the student to complete the steps previously covered in intervention as home practice tasks.