

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a thinking process that can help you generate ideas to be able to start the processes of *creative problem solving* and *goal setting*.

Steps that may help you brainstorm effectively¹:

1. Formulate a question or state your problem as simply as possible: For example, “What can I do to get more physical activity into my week?” or “How can I get more fruits and vegetables into my daily meals?”
2. Let go of the need to come up with the “right” answer, or the least expensive, easiest, or most logical answer.
3. Use any effective method to get yourself relaxed, yet alert—such as doing deep breathing exercises, visualizing yourself in a relaxing place, or doing some light stretching.
4. Tape record or write down every suggestion or answer that comes into your head. Doing this with a friend will allow you to speak freely, while the other simply lists what you say. Do not judge any suggestion. Do not reject any suggestion as being silly, wrong, impractical, too expensive, or whatever.
5. Continue throwing out ideas as fast as you can for a limited amount of time—say five minutes. This will force you to think fast and will help to eliminate evaluation of suggestions.
6. Put the material away. Let it rest, simmer, gestate for a while.
7. Finally, go back and review your data with new eyes and an open mind. What surprises you? What delights you? What hits you hard? What elements can be combined? Which ones are possible, and easy? Which ones generate new ones? Which ones are worth a try?

This brainstorming activity will help you gain a sense of control for dealing effectively with your problem or question. It can help you come up with specific solutions and action steps to help you solve your problem and reach you goals.

¹ Excerpted from *Wellness Workbook* by Regina S. Ryan & John W. Travis.