We have recently been discussing results from a recent science report titled ‘What science has shown can help young people with anxiety and depression: identifying and reviewing the 'active ingredients' of effective interventions’ [1]. The next part of this series that we will discuss is ‘problem solving’.

What is problem solving?

Problem solving is the process of trying to resolve or cope with problems, both big and small, and both short term (e.g. exams) and long term (e.g. bullying) by taking a series of structured and planned steps [2].

Why is problem solving important?

Problem solving-based concepts are thought to actually constitute some of the core change mechanisms of many programmes that are designed to help young people with anxiety and depression. Understanding why and how problem solving works is important, particularly when focussing on preventing depression and anxiety in young people.

What did the research show?

The researchers synthesised all of the evidence available that addressed this topic, and found 54 relevant studies. They showed that problem solving therapeutic approaches do work, particularly when part of multicomponent interventions.

What did young people think about problem solving?

Young people found problem solving helpful, particularly when they work with a warm, empathetic and encouraging facilitator of the therapy.

How could a young person could try problem solving?

If you are feeling down or anxious, it might help to break down the problem into different parts, such as what the problem is, what solutions there might be, and how these could be implemented.

Are there any other resources to help with problem solving?

The following website has some good resources to help with problem solving: https://www.annafreud.org/resources/children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing/for-self-care/problem-solving/

**References**

1. Wellcome. *Report summary: What science has shown can help young people with anxiety and depression*. 2022; Available from: <https://wellcome.org/reports/what-science-has-shown-can-help-young-people-anxiety-and-depression>.

2. Michelson, D., et al., *Problem Solving as an Active Ingredient in Indicated Prevention and Treatment of Youth Depression and Anxiety: An Integrative Review.* J Adolesc Health, 2022. **71**(4): p. 390-405.