The 10th Dimension... the power of 10

In part one of this two-part series, Ed Bonner and Adrianne Morris discuss the important art of effective problem solving

What's the problem?

When we started writing this article, we encountered a problem – we could not agree on what the word ‘problem’ actually meant. Is a problem, as one dictionary suggests, “a source of perplexity”? Well, indeed it is, if you are talking about say Sudokus or a crossword, but there is nothing in that definition to suggest the emotional component that very often accompanies a problem.

If you can’t work out a correct sequence of letters or numbers, that’s one kind of problem — there’s always a solution: a dictionary, going online, checking your newspaper the next day. But if you have that problem and also torment yourself that you are stupid, cannot do anything properly, or are getting Alzheimer’s, that’s another problem altogether. A much bigger problem occurs when there doesn’t appear to be a solution: for example, you are getting bad headaches or your overdraft is getting bigger and bigger despite increasing effort to prevent either of these occurrences.

Whatever kind of problem you might be having, there are some things that you can contemplate that will make dealing with it a great deal easier, so here is a list of things to consider:

1. Origins: To deal with a problem appropriately, you need to think about when you first became aware of the problem. What happened? When did it happen? How did it make you feel?

2. Background history: Are the issues that have arisen consequences of events that happened in your infancy, childhood or youth? Is the work problem a consequence of something happening at home, or vice versa?

3. Attempt at resolution: What did you do about it? How effective was what you did in terms of offering a solution? If not effective, what was blocking its resolution?

4. Secondary problems: What has happened since you first encountered the problem? Has the problem got worse? Why? Has the initial problem created one or more secondary problems? For example, not earning enough can cause relationship stress and loss of respect. Is there a relationship between the first event and the way you feel about it at present?

5. Effects: What is this problem causing you to do? Perhaps...