

Activity

Problems can be opportunities for learning more about others, learning new skills, gaining new information, and discovering new ways to do things and ourselves. In each problem statement, describe what could be an opportunity as a result of the problem described.

1. You are assigned to a new work group in your math class.
2. Your best friend borrows stuff (clothes, music, money) from you and never returns it.
3. You don't have enough money to buy a ticket for the concert you wanted to attend.
4. Mom was just told that she will not get a promotion or a raise without more education.
5. You want the same day off from baby-sitting that the mom wants away from the kids.
6. You want a new bed for your room, but your family wants a new couch for the living room.

Five ways to respond to a problem, with results that may not be worthwhile in 4 of them:

- Ignore- more time may be spent worrying about the problem that causes stress and the problem does not go away, but may get worse. Ask: *What are stress symptoms?*
- Demand that it be solved your way- anger, being aggressive, wanting to control others, will make enemies for you. Ask: *Do you know someone who is demanding?*
- Give in or give up-when problems feel too big, but you will start to feel like a doormat to others Ask: *Have you ever felt like a doormat? Describe the situation.*
- Compromise you get part of what you want, and others get part of what they want. It is sometimes called “meeting someone half-way” or “splitting the difference”.
- Ask: *Have you ever compromised? Tell about the situation*
- Problem-solving skills are used which involve other people and follow 4 steps:

1. Define the problem- ask questions to get the facts and develop a clear, non-blaming statement of the problem
2. Find the cause- do not confuse this with symptoms or consequences or it could happen again. Ask questions to find the cause.
3. Look for solutions- brainstorm, but limit the question/problem frame to usable ideas. Write down all the ideas. Do not evaluate until all the ideas are collected.
4. Evaluate possible solutions-Look at each possible solution suggested. Drop any that will not work. Apply any standards or rules that are necessary. An example would be that a gift couldn't cost more than \$10. For each standard or rule, drop the solutions that do not fit. Choose the best option that all can live with.

Student applications are found at the end of this lesson on problem-solving, using the 4 problem solving steps, SW F, “Imagine That You Have \$10 To Spend On A Birthday Gift...” and SW F, “Problem Solving ‘Feeling Sick’”.

Objectives

- Understand that problems can be opportunities.
- List several ways to handle a problem.
- Be familiar with the steps of problem solving.
- Describe how stress and problems are related.

Materials

Copies of student worksheet(s), if using:

SW F – Feeling Ill on Test Day

SW F – Birthday Gift

Vocabulary

- Opportunity
- Brainstorming
- Solution
- Alternatives
- Options
- Compromise

Notes for Teachers

To bring in relevancy, after reviewing the brainstorming, stop and brainstorm school problems with students.

Maintain the list of school problem topics where it is visible to all students.

After completing all the problem-solving steps, students can then apply steps as a group, with teacher direction, to one of the school problems from the brainstorm list.

Summary

Have students answer the following:

- *What is the easiest part of problem solving steps?*
- *What is the hardest part of problem-solving for you? Why do you think it is hard?*

Reflection

Over the next week, identify a writing a problem that you came across and how you went about solving it. Use these four steps you have learned:

- ✓ **Define the problem-** ask questions to get the facts and develop a clear, non-blaming statement of the problem
- ✓ **Find the cause-** Don't confuse this with symptoms or consequences or it could happen again. Ask questions to find the cause.
- ✓ **Look for solutions-** brainstorm, but limit the question/problem frame for usable ideas. Write down all the ideas. Do not evaluate until all the ideas are collected.
- ✓ **Evaluate possible solutions-** Look at each possible solution suggested and drop any that will not work. Apply any standards or rules that are necessary. An example would be that a gift cannot cost more than \$10. For each standard or rule, drop the solutions that do not fit. Choose the best option that all participants in the solution can live with.

Home Connection

Ask your parents to explain how they solve a problem. Compare their way with this problem-solving technique. Ask your parents what some hang-ups are for problem solving for them, with an example. Share what you have learned in school.