

Steps to Better Problem Solving

1. Define the problem—then stick to it.



2. Brainstorm—think of as many possible solutions as you can.



3. Evaluate your options.



4. Select the option most agreeable to all.



5. Implement the plan.



6. Evaluate the implementation of the plan.

- Go back to Step 2 if necessary.
- Go back to Step 1 if necessary.
- Establish consequences if necessary.

PARENT HANDOUT FOR STEP 10

Problem-Solving Worksheet

Date _____

Problem _____

Proposed solutions	Evaluations		
	Teen + -	Mother + -	Father + -
1. _____			
2. _____			
3. _____			
4. _____			
5. _____			
6. _____			
7. _____			
8. _____			
9. _____			
10. _____			
11. _____			
12. _____			

Agreement _____

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

- A. Teen will do: _____ by the following time: _____.
- B. Mom will do: _____ by the following time: _____.
- C. Dad will do: _____ by the following time: _____.
- D. Plan for monitoring whether this happens: _____
- E. Any reminders that will be given. By whom? When? _____
- F. Consequences for compliance and noncompliance: _____

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PARENT HANDOUT FOR STEP 10

Problem-Solving Exercise

Name _____ Date _____

The purpose of this worksheet is to give you practice with the steps of problem solving. Write out the answers as best you can. Bring the sheet to your therapist at your next session; the therapist will go over it with you.

I. Defining the problem

A good definition of the problem explains what the other person is doing or saying that bothers you and why it bothers you. The definition is short, neutral, and does not blame the other person. Below are several definitions. Read each one, then say whether it is good or bad. If it is bad, write down a better definition.

A. **Mother:** My problem is that I don't like to see your room dirty; all the clothes are on the bed and the dust is two inches thick. I'm upset when my friends come to visit and see the room looking that way.

1. Is this a good definition of a room-cleaning problem?

_____ Yes _____ No

2. If you said No, write a better definition: _____

B. **Daughter:** I hate you, Mom. You just are a real pain. I'm missing out on all the fun because you make me come home by 9 P.M. on weekends.

1. Is this a good definition of a coming-home-on-time problem?

_____ Yes _____ No

2. If you said No, write a better definition: _____

(continued)

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Problem-Solving Exercise (page 2 of 4)

C. **Father:** Son, the real problem with you is that you don't respect your elders. Kids just don't know the meaning of respect today. When I was your age, I would never talk to my father the way you talk to me.

1. Is this a good definition of a talking-back problem?

_____ Yes _____ No

2. If you said No, write a better definition: _____

D. **Son:** I get angry when you bug me 10 times a day about taking out the trash and feeding the dogs. I'm old enough to do these things without being reminded.

1. Is this a good definition of a chores problem?

_____ Yes _____ No

2. If you said No, write a better definition: _____

E. Below, a mother and a daughter define their problem about playing the stereo too loud. Notice how each accuses and blames the other; this is a poor way to define the problem. Read their definitions, then write a better definition for each person.

Mother: You are ruining your ears with that loud stereo. You just don't have good taste in music. How can you stand all that loud noise? I can't, and what's more, I *won't* stand for it.

Daughter: Don't talk to me about taste in music. You sit around all day listening to 1970s junk music. No one listens to that stuff anymore. And get off my back about the loud stereo. I'll play it as loud as I like so I can enjoy my music.

Better definitions:

Mother: _____

Daughter: _____

(continued)

Problem-Solving Exercise (page 3 of 4)

II. Listing solutions

- A. List as many ideas as you can.
- B. Be creative and free.
- C. Anything goes.
- D. Don't say whether ideas are good or bad now; that comes later. Pretend you are trying to solve a telephone problem: A mother is upset because her son texts 5,000 times per month, exceeding the limit of their phone plan and running up a large bill. The son says his friends live too far away to visit on weekdays; he texts them instead. Make a list of 10 ideas to solve this problem. Put down anything you can think of. Try to be creative.

List of solutions:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

If you run out of ideas, here are some hints:

- Is a trade-off possible?
- Can they change anything around the house to help?
- Is a change of place or time possible?
- What about other ways to talk to friends?

III. Picking the best idea: decision making

When you decide on the best idea, you should state the good and bad points of each idea on your list. Then rate each idea "+" or "-." Ask yourself about each idea:

- A. Will this idea solve my problem?
- B. Will this idea solve the other person's problem?
- C. Will this idea really work?
- D. Can I live with it?

(continued)

Problem-Solving Exercise (page 4 of 4)

Consider the telephone problem we discussed above. Make believe one idea was “get a phone plan with unlimited texting.”

1. An adolescent might evaluate this as follows: “Well, this idea meets my need to keep up with all my friends by texting a lot. I’ll give it a ‘+.’”
2. A parent might evaluate it as follows: “While my son might stay in contact with his friends, it would not solve the problem of higher bills for unlimited texting. Now, if my son wants to get a job to pay for unlimited texting that’s different. As is, I rate this idea ‘-.’”

Now write out evaluations of the first two solutions to the telephone texting from your list on the last page. For each idea write out an evaluation from the parent’s side and a second evaluation from the adolescent’s side.

Idea 1

Parent’s evaluation: _____

Adolescent’s evaluation: _____

Idea 2

Parent’s evaluation: _____

Adolescent’s evaluation: _____

