

# “Problem Solving Skills - Step by Step Process

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**OBJECTIVE:** To help children think about ways to solve their own problems, anticipate problems before they escalate, and to help children identify possible solutions.

**SKILL:** Problem Solving



- Video
- Exercise Sheets
- Counsellor Interaction

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## CORE LEARNING

Problem Solving is a necessary skill in every area of life.

### What are problems a problem?

If you are like most kids, you’ve soon figured out that problems are a part of life. Some individuals are able to manage problems in a systematic way, however some find it more difficult to cope if they have lots of problems that they can't seem to get on top of. Having problems impacts how we feel, our thoughts, our relationships, our motivation, our desires, and our overall mental health.

Struggling with unresolved problems can often make us feel worse. We can end up worrying or ruminating over our problems without finding a way to resolve them. This can make us feel even more upset, and can end up interfering with our sleep and our life in general.

### What is problem solving?

Problem solving can help us to develop a structured way of working through a problem. Beginning to overcome some of your problems might help you to feel better. You can improve your problem solving skills by learning to apply certain steps.

Problem-solving is the ability to identify and solve problems by applying appropriate skills, step by step. It is an important skill to have for problems within your school, sports, social activities, friendships and even within your families. There are many types of problems and conflicts we will face, but it doesn't have to be a negative. Conflict allows us to work through problems, learn some new strategies, and grow to be more understanding and empathetic human beings.

# THE PROCESS FOR PROBLEM SOLVING



## Identify your problem

The first thing to ask yourself is "what is the problem?" Try to be as specific as possible. For example:

- "I broke my friend's necklace."
- "I am not going to make it on time."



## Come up with possible solutions

Try to list every way that you can think to overcome your problem. Don't worry about how unrealistic an idea seems. Write down anything and everything. The best solutions are likely to be the ones you think of yourself. This is because nobody really knows your situations as well as you do. It may be helpful to consider the following:

- How you might have solved similar problems in the past.
- What your friends or family would advise.
- How you would like to see yourself tackling the problem.



### **Choose a solution**

Next, you need to select the best solution from your list. Think carefully about each option. It is useful to go through all the reasons 'for' and 'against' each idea. This will help you to make a good decision and select the best solution.

After this, you may find that you are still unsure. Perhaps a couple of approaches seem equally good. Try to pick one to begin with. If it doesn't work then you can always go back and try out a different one later.



### **Break down your solution**

To help you carry out your chosen solution, it can be useful to break it down into smaller steps. This can make it easier and more manageable to follow through. The number of steps required will vary depending on the solution and how complex it is. For example:

Someone who broke their phone may decide to find possible ways to coming up with money to buy a new phone. This would require several steps:

1. Listing people who might be willing to give
2. Asking parents if they could do chores to earn money
3. Looking for stores who may have sales on phones
4. Calling up the store and asking questions
5. Saving up the money



### **Try out your solution and review the outcome**

Follow the steps required to carry out your solution. Simply take them one at a time. Go at your own pace and don't allow yourself to feel too rushed. Once you have completed all the steps, you should then review the outcome. If you have successfully resolved your problem then – great! If the problem still exists then don't give up. Here are some ideas to consider:

- Is there another solution on your list that you could try?
- Is there a different solution that you have yet to consider?
- Can you ask someone else if they have any ideas or advice?
- Can you combine any of your solutions?

It is useful to remember that not all problems are within our control. This can make it really difficult, if not impossible to resolve using the steps above. Perhaps you will have to wait, or ask someone else to take action instead. In such a situation, try not to worry. Nothing can be gained from worrying about something that you have no control over.



**ABSOLUTE MUST'S** - While you are solving your problems, there are some **MUST TRAITS** to keep in mind.

## **YOU MUST:**

1. *Be in charge of your emotions – When you have a problem and your emotions takes over your logic, it makes problem solving much more difficult. Keep your brain in control of your emotions.*

2. Controlling your impulses – Stop to think before we act. Don't be impulsive. Try to think, wait, and reflect on your options.
3. Figure out the "root" of the problem - Sometimes we get stuck on just trying to fix the problem instead of asking why it happened in the first place. Pay attention to habits, patterns or ways of thinking that put you into problems so you can avoid them in the future.
4. Empathize with others – No matter how emotional the situation is, it is always important to always try to understand how the other person might be feeling and try to figure out what it's like "to walk in their shoes".
5. Be a "realistic" optimist – Seeing the situation "as it is", and at the same time keeping a bright outlook by doing what we can to make the best of it.
6. Believing in our competence – Having faith in your ability to tackle life's problems and bounce back.
7. Reaching out – Asking for help when we need it, and offer assistance to others and taking opportunities that present themselves.

## INSIDE STORY

Jesse desperately wanted to make the school choir. When she tried out she wasn't sure she was going to make it, but she did. Not only did she make it, she got the lead role in the upcoming concert. The choir director said to her, "You have a great attitude and we are excited to have you play our lead role". Jesse was so excited she forgot that she also practices volleyball during the same time the choir would be practicing. She's really excited about the choir but she has been loyal to the volleyball team for the last 2 months. Jesse is torn between two wonderful opportunities and she can't decide what to do at this time. Using the diagram below, help her use the problem solving steps to gather some ideas and come up with a possible solution.



Identify Your Problem

Large empty box for identifying the problem.



Possible Solutions

Large empty box for listing possible solutions.



For

Against



Large empty box for evaluating solutions, split into 'For' and 'Against' columns.



Chosen Solution

Large empty box for the chosen solution.



Steps Required

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

### Problem Solving

Identify a problem and try to come up with solutions to overcome it. By considering all of the options you will hopefully come up with the best solution.

