

The Problem-Solving Method

Although various writers describe the problem-solving method in their own style, there are six basic steps to the process. Sometimes these steps flow into each other, and sometimes the information given covers more than one step at a time. Nevertheless, all six steps are part of the process.

- Step 1. Initiate mediation: begin problem-solving
- Step 2. Gather data: get information
- Step 3. Define the problem: find out what each family member wants
- Step 4. Brainstorm ideas: generate alternative solutions
- Step 5. Agree on a solution
- Step 6. Follow-through: bring closure and monitor

Step 1: Initiate mediation: begin problem- solving

- Get to the conflict
- Make a statement
- Get to family member's level: kneel, squat, sit
- Stop aggressive behavior
- Neutralize object of conflict

Step 2. Gather data: get information

- Find out what each wants
- Help each verbalize feelings

Step 3. Define the problem: What does each want?

- Restate family member's feelings
- Restate family member's desires
- Explain the problem

Step 4. Brainstorm ideas: generate alternatives

- Ask questions
- Get ideas from all family members

- Disputants
- Observers
- Use sequential brainstorming

Sequential Brainstorming

- Take turns
"Who has an idea of how we can solve this problem?"
- Check out each idea with the other family members by restating it
"Is it okay with you to _____?"
- If idea is rejected, ask for another idea
"What is your idea to solve this problem?"
or
"Who has another idea of how we could solve this problem?"

Step 5. Agree on a solution

- Rephrase the solution
- Make sure the solution is safe
- Check out how it will be carried out
 - Who will do what?
 - When will they do it?
 - How will they do it?

Adapted from:

"Problem-Solving Techniques with Children Two to Eight", By Sue Dinwiddie

To learn more about the skills needed to effectively problem-solve, how to deal with obstacles to problem-solving, a simplified method to introduce with children as young as two-and-a half, ways to establish rules using problem-solving, and more order I Want It My Way! Problem-Solving Techniques With Children Two to Eight. Better World Press, 1997.

<http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/products/I.want.my.way/I.Want.It.My.Way.html#Intro>

A companion book to help children learn to get in touch with their feelings and express them appropriately as well as learn to think of positive options to fulfill their desires is titled *Let Me Think! Activities to Develop Problem-Solving Abilities in Young Children*. Order from Better World Press