SOLVING PROBLEMS

PROBLEMS BETWEEN FRIENDS

ED U. GATOR’S IN A REAL MESS

PEACE MAKERS & PROBLEM-SOLVERS
ACTIVITY:

There are many big problems that affect people all over the world, like hunger, homelessness, and war. Imagine you're the president of the United States, and it's your job to figure out possible solutions for some really important problems. What kinds of issues would you have to deal with as leader of the country?

Everyone has problems from time to time. There will always be broken things that need fixing, and difficulties and obstacles that need to be overcome. Sometimes people spend all of their energy whining and complaining about their problems, instead of trying to solve them. That's not the solution! Because most problems won't go away by themselves. They have an annoying habit of sticking around until somebody takes the initiative to DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

Take a math problem, for instance. It might seem difficult at first, but if you really take the time to think about it, you can probably work it out. Of course, some problems are bigger than multiplying numbers, or fixing a broken plate with glue. Sometimes we have problems with our friends, or our family. Think about the last time you had an argument with a good friend, or a brother or sister. Finding a solution to that kind of problem takes maturity, good communication and an open mind. Hopefully, through talking about the problem, you came to a fair solution. Probably someone had to apologize, and someone had to forgive. Maybe you both apologized, and both forgave each other! In that case, you compromised. That's really acting grown up and accepting responsibility!

But you know what? Some problems are too big, or too complicated, to be solved by one person alone. That's when it's a good time to ask for help. Someone else, with a different point of view, may have the perfect solution to your problem! Sometimes two heads are better than one. So, before you get weighed down with problems, ask someone to help you "lighten the load."

Because you never know when you'll be called upon to be someone else's problem solver!
A GATOR CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF A MESS

Hi, friends. Ed U. Gator here. Boy, it's been a rough week at school. Two of my best friends, Will and Franklin, have been feuding over something that happened at the baseball game last week. In the bottom of the ninth, Will was up at bat, with a chance to hit the game-winning run. Franklin was on first base. Suddenly, Franklin decided to try to steal second base, but the pitcher from the Lakeshore Lizards threw him out. Game over. Will was furious! He stormed off the field and refused to speak to Franklin for the rest of the day. In fact, they've only said a few words to each other since the game, and none of them have been very nice!

Somehow, ol' innocent bystander Ed here got stuck in the middle. Both of my friends have spent hours trying to convince me they were right. Will believes he could have hit Franklin home safely. Franklin believes stealing second was our only chance of winning. As far as I'm concerned, the game's been over for four whole days, and it's time to forget about it! But these guys are really stubborn. Then things got worse. Franklin invited me over to play basketball Tuesday afternoon. Well, that made Will mad. So Will invited me out to dinner with his folks on Wednesday night, but that hurt Franklin's feelings! “Gee whiz!” I thought. “How did I get into this mess!” By Thursday I had had just about enough. What started out as a problem between Will and Franklin, has grown into a big problem for me! All I want is to hang out with both of my friends, and not on separate days in different parts of town. So I decided it was up to me to get the problem solving ball rolling. Thursday afternoon, I invited both Will and Franklin over to my house. They didn't know until they got there that the other one was coming too. “I'm out of here!” said Will, who started to walk away in a huff. “Good riddance!” said Franklin. “Hold everything!” I said. “Can we please grow up a little bit and try to work things out?” Reluctantly, Will came back over where we were standing. They both looked so silly with their arms crossed and big scowls on their faces. Well, it took the rest of the afternoon, but I finally convinced Will and Franklin that we'd all be a lot better off getting along. I tried to remember some fun things we had all done together, and when we talked and laughed about that, they loosened up a bit. Then I told them how important it was for us to be friends so we could beat the Granite Gophers in next week's game. Luckily, Will and Franklin both apologized, and they both forgave each other. By the time they left, things were pretty much back to normal. Whew! Sometimes it's hard work solving someone else's problems! But I guess having my friends back together was worth it.

QUESTIONS

1) How did the fight begin between Will and Franklin?

2) Why did Ed feel he was stuck in the middle?

3) How did Will and Franklin’s argument affect Ed? How did it affect the rest of the team?

4) What was Ed's solution to the problem? How did he convince his friends to deal with their problem?

5) Have you ever had to mediate a disagreement between your friends? How did it turn out?
**HELP BE A PROBLEM-SOLVER**

*Directions:* Below there are big block letters which spell SOLVING PROBLEMS. Cut out the letters, mix them up, put them in an envelope and give it to a good friend or someone in your family. Ask that person to try to put together as many words as he or she can with the jumbled letters. Then tell him or her there are two big words that go together that mean “fixing something,” and see how long it takes them to spell out the words above.

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<th>SOLVING PROBLEMS</th>
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**THERE MUST BE AN EASIER WAY!**

*Directions:* We live in a time of incredible advances in technology. Many of the tasks we complete quickly today took much longer to accomplish when our parents or grandparents were kids. Pick three of the items below and think about, or write a few words about, how each one has changed our lives.

- Computers
- CD-ROMs
- Fax machines
- E-mail
- The Internet
- VCRs
- Books on Tape
- Camcorders
- Copier machines

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IN THE NEWSPAPER

**Directions:** Look through the newspaper and see how many ads you can find, or stories related to the types of technology listed above. Try to find pictures of other gadgets that are being offered to “solve problems” or make lives easier.

YOUR OWN HELPING HAND STORIES

**Directions:** Write a short paragraph about the last time someone helped you solve a problem. Then write another paragraph about the last time you helped somebody else.
Harley Matthews had a very big problem. Well, truth be told, he had lots and lots of little problems, which, when piled one on top of the other, became a BIG problem. Charley just wasn’t very good at finding solutions to his problems. In fact, he never really tried at all. He just whined day in and day out about his problems. “Oh, what am I going to do about this?” was one of his favorite sayings, followed closely by “Why are all these things happening to me?” So, instead of fixing things, Charley would just complain about them, and then try to get rid of them, hoping if he didn’t see them they would just disappear. But, as you probably know, problems are about the last thing in the world to “just disappear.”

At first, Charley tried sweeping his problems under the rug. But after a few weeks of that, the bulge in the carpet became so huge that Charley couldn’t walk across the room! So then he tried shoving them in the hall closet, and quickly closing the door. Oh, he was able to fool himself with that stunt for a whole month, but then one day he tried squeezing one too many problems in that crowded space. Suddenly, there he was, lying on the floor up to his neck in problems!

“Oh, what am I going to do about this?” he said, with great anguish, followed closely by, well, you know what. So Charley ran over to the window, yanked it open and did what Charley does best. He threw it away! But, to his surprise, he never heard it land with that satisfying bang! When he stuck his head outside, he discovered why. There was the clock, just a few inches from his twitching nose, resting comfortably on the top of Charley Matthews’s monumental problem pile. When he tried to open the front door to get to work, it simply wouldn’t budge. “Oh my,” said Charley to himself, “I do believe I must do something about this!”

So remember: it’s far better to deal with little problems now, than a GREAT BIG PILE OF PROBLEMS later!
The countries in the Middle East have always had problems getting along. For many generations, the people of this region have experienced wars over religious and philosophical differences, and disputes over geographical boundaries. The most bitter confrontations have been between the Arab and Israeli nations, and countless lives have been lost on both sides.

In 1978, the two leaders of these warring nations attempted to bring an end to the bloodshed in the Middle East. Menachem Begin, the prime minister of Israel, and Anwar al-Sadat, the president of Egypt, jointly received the Nobel Peace Prize for beginning the negotiation process. The next year, the first peace treaty was signed by the two countries. For both men it was a very brave thing to do, because many Egyptians and Israelis were vehemently against the two leaders communicating and compromising in any way. In 1981, Sadat was assassinated by a member of his own army.

Today, there continues to be a great struggle to maintain peace in the Middle East. Hopefully, future leaders of the Israeli, Egyptian and Arab nations will follow the powerful examples set by these two courageous individuals.

**VOCABULARY:**
- **Philosophical:** having to do with beliefs and principles.
- **Confrontation:** a debate or fight between two parties with opposite views.
- **Negotiation:** to talk over a problem or dispute.
- **Vehemently:** full of deep, strong feeling.
- **Assassinated:** to murder someone, especially for political reasons.
TIPS

1) It's important for your child to realize that everyone experiences problems from time to time. Many kids (and adults, too) feel as if they are the only ones dealing with a particular hardship or difficulty. Problems are "par for the course," and in the most positive way should be viewed as challenges to overcome as part of a lifelong learning process.

2) Television shows are often a good format for observing people working through problems with friends and families. However, due to the limitations of a 30- or 60-minute time slot, many problems are "wrapped up" much faster than they could possibly be in real life. It's important to explain that this "quick fix" might be an unrealistic expectation for a "real" family.

3) Problems need to be dealt with, not "swept under the carpet" or just set aside in the hopes they will disappear. (See "Lessons for Life" in this issue). Also, teach your child that whining and complaining about a problem is not the most productive way of getting to the solution.

4) Many young people carry unnecessary stresses and emotional burdens because they're afraid to talk to someone about their problems, or feel it's not okay to ask somebody for help. Try to create an environment of open communication, and encourage working things out together.

FAMILY ACTIVITY

As in tip the fourth above, kids sometimes have difficulty reaching out. It might be a useful exercise to reverse the situation as a learning experience. Tell your child that you have a problem, and you were hoping he might be able to give you some assistance finding a solution. Experiencing this process might make it easier for him to ask for help solving his own difficulties.

FAMILY PLEDGE CARD

Our family has completed the Family Page together.

______________________________
Child's name

Family members:

__________________________    ___________________
__________________________    ___________________

School: ___________________________

__________________________    ___________________

Teacher/grade: ___________________________

RESOURCES