

## The 5 P's in Problem Solving

**'problem: a source of perplexity,  
distress, or vexation**

**'solve: to find a solution,  
explanation, or answer for**

How do other people solve problems?

How do you currently solve problems?

What would you hope to do differently with a problem solving method?

What can happen if you DON'T have an effective problem solving method?

- You ignore problems because you don't know how to make a decision.
- You create more problems trying to solve the first one.
- You make decisions based on only PART of the information.
- You may not remember from time to time why you made previous decisions or how you came to an answer.
- Your problem can get worse when you keep trying the same thing that doesn't work.
- You create more stress for yourself.

Can you relate to any of this? Name one problem in your life that resulted in one of the ways listed above.

***What's the point of going to all this trouble?***

Who *doesn't* have problems? Wouldn't it be nice to have a way to deal with problems in life when they come up? Well, keep reading and you just might find some of this stuff helpful. You need problem solving skills for work, yes... and you also need them for LIFE. Your LIFE. So this program is not just about how to be better at something for your boss and your employer, this program is about how to be better at something for your SELF. And isn't that what each person is after anyway? I mean what does it matter if you can solve a problem for someone at work... if you can't solve one for yourself? After all... to do something well, you do it from the core of who you are. It's usually because you take pride in yourself and the contribution you make. It's pretty hard to fake it. If you do it for any other reason, it probably won't turn out so great anyway. The 5 P's will help you learn to solve problems from the inside out!

**Why is it important to have an effective system for solving the simplest to the toughest problems in your life?**

- **Consistency**: When you use the 5 P's to approach each problem, you get consistency in your life... You can actually start to guess how things might turn out!
- **Decrease stress**: When you know HOW to approach a problem with the 5 P's, the problem won't freak you out so much!
- **Efficiency**: If you practice approaching problems with the 5 P's each time, you get faster and faster at making things better!
- **Vision**: When you tackle problems using the 5 P's, you might see that the problem in your face is just a branch of a bigger problem the size of a tree! And if you only focus on solving clipping the branches of the problem tree, it doesn't go away. It just keeps growing! Yikes!
- **Forward movement**: When you use the 5 P's, you can move forward instead of staying stuck in the same confusing place!
- **Better Communication**: When you use the 5 P's, you'll be able to talk more clearly about what the problem actually is.
- **Create change**: When you use the 5 P's, you'll begin to make changes in the world around you!
- **Teach others how**: When you practice the 5 P's and they work again and again, other people will want to know your secret!
- **Explanation**: When someone asked you how you came to solve the problem, you can easily explain using the 5 P's!
- **Learn about others**: When you use the 5 P's, you'll be able to see what role people have in keeping the problem a problem!
- **Learn about your SELF**: When you use the 5 P's you'll be able to see what role you really have in keeping the problem a problem AND how you can help solve it!!

### Why do YOU need a problem solving method?

Pick 4 of the reasons from the previous page that give you a clue why learning the 5 P's might be important for YOU.

List them in column 1. For each one, answer the question in column 2.

<i>I want to learn the 5 P's because...</i>	<i>This is why...</i>
examples	
<b>Forward movement</b>	<b>A lot of time I stay stuck in a problem b/c I can't see through all the junk to find a way out!</b>
<b>Vision</b>	<b>I seem to have a lot of problems that relate, so maybe there is a bigger problem I need to solve?</b>
1	
2	
3	
4	

Okay, so you've established that it might not be so awful to have a way to deal with all the problems and the drama that come up in every day life. So now it's time to talk about this 5 P's stuff. What is it anyway?

The first step in effective Problem Solving is defining the Problem... drilling it down to its purest form... leaving no doubt what the problem REALLY is. A fuzzy problem is a problem that won't get solved quickly.

To make the problem less fuzzy and more clear, ask these questions...

- What is the problem?
- What is the REAL problem?
- Is that really the problem?
- Are you sure?

Go back through this list of questions as many times as necessary until you have clearly and briefly defined the problem... until you can answer YES! to the last question...

“Are you sure?”

The 5 P's of Problem Solving will help you form a plan.

**Pattern, Purpose,  
Perception, Partnership, Prosperity  
=  
Plan**

**NEXT TIME YOU HAVE A PROBLEM... 'TAKE FIVE' TO FIND A SOLUTION.**



## Pattern and Purpose

**\*pat-tern:** frequent or widespread incidence

### 1. Pattern

- When does the problem occur?
- When does it not occur?
- What happens right before the problem comes up?



Begin to notice exactly when the problem comes up and when it doesn't. What happens right before the problem happens that is DIFFERENT from other times when it doesn't happen? These are great clues!

**\*pur-pose:** something set up as an object or end to be attained

### 2. Purpose

- What does the problem accomplish?
- What are the benefits of the problem?
- What would be different if the problem didn't exist?



Often times a problem keeps on being a problem because it is actually serving a purpose or accomplishing something. That sounds weird, but why else would it keep happening? You will find clues to the problem when you look at the problem a different way... What are actually some of the benefits of the problem and for who? Another way to look at the problem from a different angle is to see how things would be different if the problem didn't exist.

## Perception and Partnership...

**'per-cep-tion: a mental image**

### 3. Perception

- Who sees it as a problem?
- Who else?
- Who doesn't see it as a problem?
- Who else?



Who actually sees it as a problem? Remember that everyone has a unique perspective in life. When you notice who actually sees it as a problem and who doesn't, you will get clues about a useful plan for solving the problem!

**'part-ner-ship : one associated with another especially in an action**

### 4. Partnership

- Who is NOT involved that needs to be?
- Who is involved that *does not* need to be?

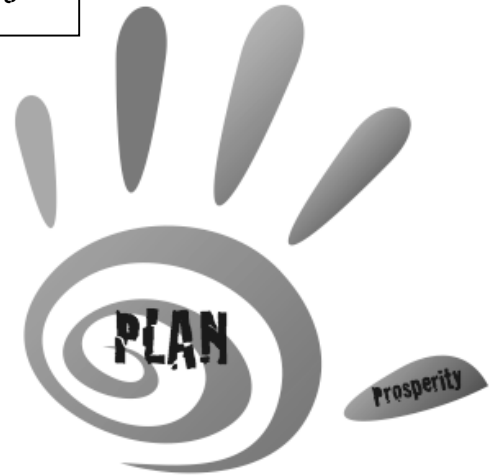


Often times there are too many opinions and advice floating around the problem. Are the right people involved? The right people are the people who can actually affect the problem in a positive way - not just gossip and complain about it!

## Prosperity

**'pros-per-i-ty: the condition of being successful or thriving**

5. Prosperity (prosperity = happiness/success)
- How does it keep you from being happy?
  - How does it keep others from being happy?
  - How does it keep your workplace from working?



When you can see how the problem keeps you and others from being happy and prosperous, it's a great clue for change! Because you can then look at the other side of the coin...

If \_\_\_\_\_ keeps me (or others) from being happy, then \_\_\_\_\_ would make me happy!  
If \_\_\_\_\_ keeps my workplace from working, then \_\_\_\_\_ would make it work!

The answers to these 5 topics hold the solutions to the problem or the PLAN for the problem.

Can you see HOW the answers to your questions hold clues to solving the problem?

Can you look at these answers and come up with a plan for a problem of your own?  
(For examples of how to do the following exercises, see pages 15-18)

**'Based on the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary**

## Let's Solve a Problem!

### Defining the Problem...

Pick a current problem in your PERSONAL life. The problem might be at school, at home, or within...

- What is the problem?

- What is the REAL problem?

- Is that *really* the problem?

- Are you sure?

Go back through this list of questions as many times as necessary until you have clearly and concisely defined the problem... until you can answer YES! to the last question, "Are you sure?"

Once you are sure... write the problem in one clear sentence below.

Now go to the next page and make a plan.



### Clues to the problem...

*The personal problem for me is...*

Pattern		Purpose		Perception		Partnership		Prosperity
When does the problem occur?	When does it not occur?	What does the problem accomplish?	What are the benefits of the problem?	Who sees it as a problem?	Who doesn't see it as a problem?	Who is NOT involved that needs to be?	Who IS involved that doesn't need to be?	How does it affect your happiness and/or the happiness of others?
Plan 1			Plan 2			Plan 3		



## Let's Solve Another Problem!

### Defining the Problem...

Pick a current problem at WORK or imagine a problem that might come up in the job you hope to get soon.

- What is the problem?

- What is the REAL problem?

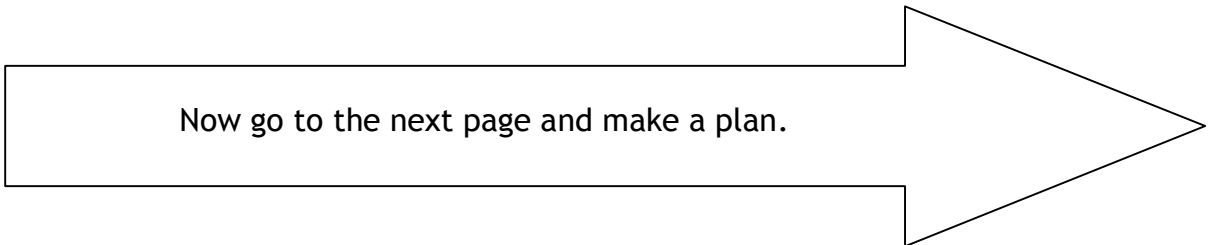
- Is that *really* the problem?

- Are you sure?

Go back through this list of questions as many times as necessary until you have clearly and concisely defined the problem... until you can answer YES! to the last question, "Are you sure?"

Once you are sure, write the problem in one clear sentence below.

Now go to the next page and make a plan.



### Clues to the problem...

*The problem at work for me is...*

Pattern		Purpose		Perception		Partnership		Prosperity
When does the problem occur?	When does it not occur?	What does the problem accomplish?	What are the benefits of the problem?	Who sees it as a problem?	Who doesn't see it as a problem?	Who is NOT involved that needs to be?	Who IS involved that doesn't need to be?	How does it affect your happiness and/or the happiness of others?
Plan 1			Plan 2			Plan 3		



## What have you learned about making a Plan for a Problem?

What have you learned about the Power of Problem Solving today?

How does your power to problem solve affect your work?

How does your power to problem solve affect your family?

How does your power to problem solve affect your future?

What will you do differently now?

### Top 6 Questions to begin Problem Solving.

1. Have you clearly, briefly defined the problem?
2. When does the problem happen and NOT happen?
3. What purpose does the problem serve? (What does it accomplish?)
4. Who sees it as a problem and who DOESN'T?
5. Who should be involved and who should NOT?
6. How is it affecting happiness/success?

## The 5 P's in Problem Solving

### EXAMPLES FOR YOUR REFERENCE (PGS 15-18)

#### *Let's Solve a personal Problem!*

#### Defining the Problem...

What is the problem?

**My parents keep trying to tell me who my friends should be, and they won't let me hang out with the people I like.**

What is the REAL problem?

**I should be able to choose my own friends but my parents don't get it.**

Is that *really* the problem?

**YES!**

Are you sure?

**Well, I guess part of the problem is I've gotten in some trouble with my friends... Like last week a cop had to drive me home b/c the guy I was riding with got picked up for drinking... But I still don't think my parents should be allowed to tell me who my friends can and cannot be! It's a free country!**

**(Go Back and keep trying until the problem is clear and true...)**

#### TRY AGAIN...

What is the problem?

**I got into some trouble with this new guy I've been hanging out with.**

What is the REAL problem?

**It's sort of affecting my grades and I've been absent from work a lot lately b/c I call in sick to hang out.**

Is that *really* the problem?

**YES!**

Are you sure?

**Yea. I've been spending time with him and things aren't going so well right now. I stay in trouble at home, at work, and at school...**

Go back through this list of questions as many times as necessary until you have clearly and concisely defined the problem... until you can answer YES! to the last question, "Are you sure?"

Once you are sure, write the problem in one clear sentence below.

**I've been having a hard time every since he moved here and we started hanging out.**

### Clues to the Problem...

The personal problem for me is...

I've been having a hard time and getting in a lot of trouble lately.								
Pattern		Purpose		Perception		Partnership		Prosperity
When does the problem occur?	When does it not occur?	What does the problem accomplish?	What are the benefits of the problem?	Who sees it as a problem?	Who doesn't see it as a problem?	Who is NOT involved that needs to be?	Who IS involved that doesn't need to be?	How does it affect your happiness and/or the happiness of others?
When I hang out with my new friend who just moved here.	Duh. When I'm not with him.	When he gets in trouble, he can blame it on me or have someone to get in trouble with him. Maybe it makes him feel better?	1. When I go along with what he's doing, it gives him an excuse to keep doing it. Sometimes I even egg him on... 2. Also, when I am grounded I can blame my parents that I can't hang out.	My parents, my teachers, my principal, my school counselor  I guess ...me.	My friend doesn't think it's a big deal.	I won't really let my parents get involved until they have to get me out of a bad situation. I won't talk to them about it. I guess it might help them understand?	My brother... He keeps ratting me out!	I have fun when I hang out with this guy, b/c he is really funny and doesn't care what people think. I like that. But I am unhappy most of the time b/c I stay grounded for my grades and all the other junk that happens!
Plan 1			Plan 2			Plan 3		
Stop hanging out with him totally... but that sucks because he is new and doesn't have any friends besides me.			Stop acting like he is so cool when he does things that get us in trouble. Just let him know it's not that cool...			Keep doing stuff with him and just see how bad it gets!		



## Let's Solve a Problem at work!

### Defining the Problem

What is the problem?

**I keep getting in trouble at work for messing up customer orders in the warehouse. The customer gets the wrong product, then calls and complains.**

What is the REAL problem?

**I'm about to get fired if I don't fix it.**

Is that *really* the problem?

**YES!**

Are you sure?

**Yes. It's a problem! But I double-check the information every time and no one believes me!**

Go back through this list of questions as many times as necessary until you have clearly and concisely defined the problem... until you can answer YES! to the last question, "Are you sure?"

Once you are sure, write the problem in one clear sentence below.

**The customers are getting the wrong product and I am getting blamed for it.**

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### Clue to the problem...

The work problem for me is...

The customers are getting the wrong product and I am getting blamed for it.								
Pattern		Purpose		Perception		Partnership		Prosperity
When does the problem occur?	When does it not occur?	What does the problem accomplish?	What are the benefits of the problem?	Who sees it as a problem?	Who doesn't see it as a problem?	Who is NOT involved that needs to be?	Who IS involved that doesn't need to be?	How does it affect your happiness? The company's success?
When I ship to customers in the certain states. (Arkansas, Missouri, and Kansas)	When I ship to any other customer in states other than those three things seem to work just fine.	It makes the customer mad!	1. The freight company benefits b/c the customer ships the order back at my company's expense. 2. I get a chance to do some research and show my boss that I am a good employee.	I do!  My boss does.  The customer does.	Nobody I can think of.	Our computer guy might need to look at the customer files to see why these three states are messed up when it comes to products.  The customer service agent who takes the order.	All the other warehouse guys have something to say about it.  One of my friends keeps telling me to just quit if they won't believe me.	It affects me personally b/c I need this job and the wrong shipments make me look bad.  It affects the customer b/c they are not getting what they ordered.  It affects the company b/c maybe these customers will get tired of it and buy their product somewhere else!
Plan 1			Plan 2			Plan 3		
Tell my boss what I've noticed about the wrong shipments to three specific states and see if that might help us figure out what's going on.			Go talk directly to the customer service agent and see if she can look in her computer screen to see what the error is for customers in those states...			Get defensive and complain b/c it's not really my fault but no one listens to me b/c I'm a teenager!		