

5.7 Solving the problem in 6 steps – peer conflicts

Goal

The students learn a technique for problem solving. They understand that problem solving is also related to skills and aptitudes which can be acquired.

6th–9th grade

60 minutes



Materials:
worksheet “Solving the problem in 6 steps”
(master copy see next page).

Procedure:

- The instructor describes a realistic conflict situation. (Example below). The situation will be dramatized in form of a role play. The students discuss how the conflict could be resolved. It is possible that they are already describing the partial steps listed in the model “Solving the problem in 6 steps”.
- The students receive and read the worksheet “solving problems in 6 steps”. They then compile a list of examples of conflicts that occur between the parents and children of their peer group. Examples:
 - A girl/boy would like to go out to a certain place. The parents are opposed and say the child should rather study. Most of all s/he should not go to that establishment.
 - A student makes fun of a classmate because of his/her accent or a speech impediment.
 - A girl/boy meets another boy/girl, but the parents are against it because of his/her origin (e. g. s/he belongs to another ethnic group or hails from another country).
 - Some youths would like to listen to certain music during the break. Others are against it, because they would rather listen to a different kind of music or piece.
 - Many refuse to sit next to a certain student, owing to their prejudices in terms of his/her origin, religion or nationality.
- A conflict is chosen, which then is more closely analyzed. (Variant: 2–3 conflicts for 2–3 groups).
- In a first step, the parties to the conflict convene separately to discuss their positions following the 6-step plan (e. g. all “parents”, all youths that want to listen to a certain kind of music, all girls/boys who don’t want to sit at this place, etc.). They then meet with their counterparts within the same group and begin the negotiations according to the 6-step plan. The instructor stops the negotiations after about 15–20 minutes; the students return to the classroom where they exchange their experiences in the class as a whole.
- Hint: it would be optimal if the groups selected a mediator who would guide them through the 6-step plan. This process could also be implemented in a second run through the exercise.

For master copy of the worksheet for “Solving a problem in 6 steps”, see next page.

1. Step: Clarify the needs.	
<p>What do you need? What exactly do you want?</p>	<p><i>Each party to this conflict must answer this question without blaming others or making accusations against them.</i></p>
2. Step: Describe the problem precisely.	
<p>What do you think is the problem?</p>	<p><i>All students can describe the problem from their own point of view. The opponents must be ready to accept the viewpoints of the other groups.</i></p>
3. Step: Search for different solutions.	
<p>What would other possible solutions look like?</p>	<p><i>All students can contribute answers. These must be recorded in writing – without commentary or evaluation. The goal is to find as many solutions as possible.</i></p>
4. Step: Evaluate the solutions.	
<p>How satisfied would you be with the various solutions?</p>	<p><i>Each party to the conflict evaluates the various suggestions for a solution and explains which ones are acceptable to them and why, and which ones are not and why.</i></p>
5. Step: Decide which solution is best.	
<p>Do you accept this solution? Was the problem solved?</p>	<p><i>It must be clear that both parties accept the solution. Their efforts to seek a solution should be appreciated.</i></p>
6. Step: Analyze how the solution is implemented.	
<p>Let's talk about the situation once more to ensure that the problem was solved.</p>	<p><i>A plan is developed to evaluate the solution. Depending on the kind of conflict and the age of the parties to the conflict, an evaluation can be implemented within a few minutes, hours or not until the next lesson.</i></p>