

Problem-solving Worksheet

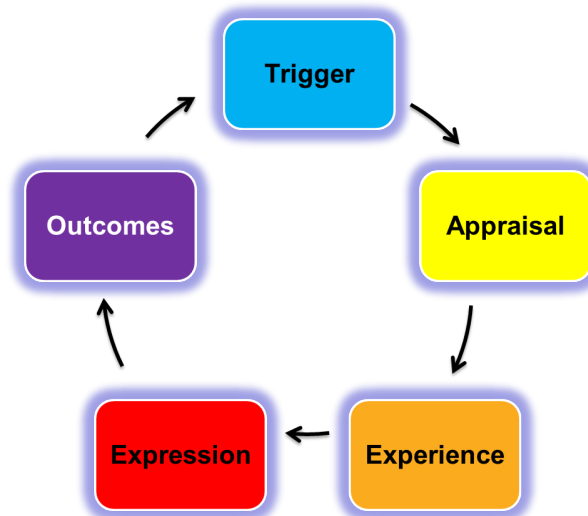
Mike & Jen Scenario

Before his deployment, Mike regularly took his son, Jacob, to little league practice. After Mike was deployed, Jen took over. Now that Mike is back, Jen does not want to give up this activity. She enjoys watching Jacob practice and talking with the other parents with whom she has made several friends. When Jen says she will be taking Jacob to little league this week, Mike sees himself as being left out. He becomes really angry and argues with Jen. During the argument, Mike calls Jen derogatory names and says she should not get in the way of him reconnecting with his son. He throws a coffee mug against the wall and storms out of the house.

Problem-solving Exercise

1. Define the problem specifically and objectively:
2. Write down your goals specifically and objectively:
3. List as many solutions as you can without judging the couple: List positive and negative outcomes for each solution:
4. Select the best solution and describe how to carry it out with specific behaviors:

The Anger Episode Model



Trigger

- The trigger sets the stage for anger
- Anything can be a trigger

Appraisal

- What you think about the trigger
- Differences in thoughts yield differences in emotional reactions

Experience

- The personally felt physical and cognitive aspects of anger
- Differences in thoughts yield differences in emotional reactions

Expression

- Action or non-action taken
- Influenced by environment

Outcome

- What happens as a result of your pattern of expression
- Short-term/long-term
- Positive/negative

How to Take a Time Out from Anger

Recognize when you are becoming angry.

- Physical symptoms of anger, such as muscle tension and increased heart rate, can be a warning that your anger is rising.

Excuse yourself from the situation.

- Try to be honest about why. Tell the other person that you would like some time to cool off, and you will continue the discussion after you return.
- Let the other person know where you are going and how long you plan on being gone.
- Remember, this time out is to help you calm down, it is not meant to punish the other person. Try not to yell, stomp, or slam doors as you leave.

Head somewhere you can relax.

- For short time outs, go to another room or take a step outside.
- For longer time outs, consider a short trip, like going to the mall or a bowling alley.

Use your time away to help yourself.

- Engage in soothing or distracting activities to calm down.
- Gather your thoughts and problem solve to prepare yourself.

Reenter the anger-provoking situation.

- This step is essential.
- Now that you are calmer and have had time to think, you have a better chance of handling the situation positively.

Establish a family rule ahead of time that anyone can take a time out, but he or she must follow the steps listed here. This will help prevent anger blow outs and will lead to more receptiveness and understanding when someone wants a time out.

Assertive Statement Script

1. Ask permission
 - “Do you have a minute to talk?”
2. I-message
 - “I feel/felt [emotion word] when [objective description of situation].”
 - or-
 - “When [objective description of situation], I feel/felt [emotion word].”
3. Verbal Response Model
 - “I understand that you feel [emotion]. When [situation] happens, I feel [emotion]. I would like [action to change to situation].”
4. Listen to what the other person has to say; acknowledge his or her perspective; be willing to compromise
 - “I understand that you feel [other’s perspective of situation based on their response to your request]. Let’s discuss a solution.”

Assertive Non-Verbal Tips

Voice:

- Conversational volume
- Calm, but firm tone
- Avoid sarcastic or whining tones
- Avoid speaking too quickly

Body:

- Stand/sit up straight
- Don’t stand too close or too far away
- Avoid hunching shoulders
- Use appropriate gestures

Face:

- Use appropriate facial expressions
- Maintain good eye contact

Non-Verbal Tips for Listening:

- Maintain good eye contact
- Face the speaker
- Nod when appropriate
- Avoid crossing arms and other closed-body language
- Avoid critical facial expressions, like eye-rolling or smirking