

UNIT 2 >>> Identify the cause of a problem

Aim: To help students look at a problem from different angles, identify the cause and suggest solutions.

1 Lead-in

- Elicit from students different reactions they have when something really annoys them. Suggest the following scenarios: your sister/brother takes your things; a friend breaks something; a sibling always changes channel when your favourite programme comes on.
- Write *You* on the left-hand side of the board, and add these possible reactions below: *shout, get angry but keep it inside, talk about it, pretend I don't care, throw something*. Elicit more possible reactions from the class and add these to the list.
- Write *What does the other person do? How does he/she feel?* on the other side of the board and list the phrases below. Ask students to look at each reaction under *You* and match it up to a possible reaction from the other person. Students can match more than one reaction (a–g) to each *You* reaction.
 - a gets angry
 - b listens
 - c gets really upset
 - d carries on annoying you
 - e tries to understand
 - f thinks you are silly
 - g throws something back

2 Choose a scenario

- Ask students to work in pairs and choose one of the three scenarios (A–C).
- Encourage them to think about how each of the people is feeling in the scenario.
- Ask students to consider each person's point of view and identify the causes of each person's problem. Encourage students to list these in columns.
- Then ask students to think of ways to solve the problem. They should write suggested solutions for each person. Monitor and help with language where necessary. You may want to put some sentence starters on the board for less confident students, eg *Matt should tell his dad that ...*
- Elicit what caused the problems in the first place. (The people didn't talk to each other at the beginning.)

3 Reflection point

- Point out to students that seeing both sides of a problem makes you realise that communication is extremely important. Explain that there is an English saying 'a problem shared is a problem halved' (write it on the board). Elicit from students what they think it means (that when two people talk about their problem it is easier to solve and seems less important).

4 Class discussion

- Put each pair with another pair that chose the same scenario. Ask them to exchange their notes and compare their approaches to the problem. Ask them to check whether a) they identified the same problems, b) they wrote down the same solutions, c) some solutions were better than others.
- Ask students the following questions:
 - Do you think that in your scenario the problem was equally bad for each person?
 - How bad do you think the problems were on a scale of 1–5 (1 = least bad; 5 = worst)?
 - How do you think each person felt?
 - How easy was it to find solutions for the problem? What helped you?

5 Work alone

- Ask students to choose a second scenario from A–C and approach the problem on their own. Encourage them to follow the steps they used in section 2.
- When students have finished, invite individuals to stand up and present their problems and solutions. Ask the class to decide whether the solutions will work in each scenario.

6 Extend

- Ask students to work in pairs and think about a time when they've argued with a friend or sibling, and then made up. Be clear that you're looking for simple, light-hearted arguments. You might want to give a simple example (eg *She borrowed your favourite jumper without asking.*) to clarify this. What caused the argument and what happened afterwards? Ask students to think about whether they would deal with the problem differently now. What would they do?
- Elicit from students which strategies for dealing with problems work and which don't work (eg *talking about it works; shouting or pretending nothing has happened doesn't work*).
- Suggest students apply the problem solving to their lives. Ask them to think of a situation at home that they don't like. Ask them to work out how to change it (think of the different points of view of all involved).