

## 'Problems are opportunities in work clothes'

– Henry Kaiser –

### ■ Introduction

Problem solving is a simple but effective technique. We may do it naturally but it is often useful to deliberately go through the stages of finding a solution in a methodical fashion. Don't be put off by its simplicity.

- a** Take one problem at a time
- b** Don't waste time on problems that cannot be solved.

### ① Identify and define clearly what the problem is

The problem could appear in any area of your life and could range from deciding where to go on holiday, how to get up earlier in the morning, or how to get a new job. The important part of this stage is working out exactly what the problem is, moving from very general feelings to specific, concrete problems and questions.

*Example:* Where to go on holiday in the summer.

### ② Brainstorm

This means spending time generating a list of as many possible options as you can. Don't think about whether they are realistic or not. In brainstorming sessions everything goes; the only rule is that you cannot criticise or laugh at a suggested option – be as creative and imaginative as possible.

- a** Package holiday to Spain.
- b** Caravan in Lake District.
- c** Friends' cottage in Wales.
- d** Visit sister in Australia.
- e** Camping in the New Forest.
- f** Chalet at seaside (Britain).

### ③ Decide which options are realistic and unrealistic

Consider the consequences of each course of action and decide which options are realistic and unrealistic eliminate unrealistic options.

- a** Too expensive.
- b** Caravan too small with baby.
- c** Possible.
- d** Too expensive.
- e** Possible but difficult with baby.
- f** Possible.

### ④ Choose the option that is both most rewarding and feasible

Look at the pros and cons of the remaining options and decide which is the most viable. A useful strategy at this stage is the two column technique. Write down the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

- c** Friends' cottage in Wales: Pros – not too expensive, plenty of room, only one hour's drive from coastal beaches, best of both worlds, baby would be fine. Cons – weather might be foul, area is not as interesting as the Lake District or New Forest.

### ⑤ Prepare and plan strategies for the accomplishment of chosen option

Once the option has been chosen, it then becomes a matter of planning how to achieve that goal. Objectives or stepping stones on the way to achieving it must be identified. Obstacles also need to be considered.

- a** Contact friends to see if it is vacant.
- b** Arrange to have time off work.
- c** Find out school summer holidays.
- d** Get information and map of the area.

Then try it out and evaluate what happens.