

What To Do?

Level C

Second Edition



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The techniques of problem solving are among the most important skills you will learn. Your ability to master and use these techniques can make the difference between success and failure in life. Indeed, many of the highest paid people in our society are paid specifically to solve problems. The better they are at problem solving, the more they are paid.

Everyone has many problems every day. Some are tiny problems, such as not having soap in the bathroom. Others have a little more consequence, such as deciding what to wear in changeable weather. Others may be more important, such as deciding what things should be done now and what should be left for another day. Still others can have important life consequences: being present when someone commits an illegal act or getting involved with drugs. These may alter the course of your life. The ways in which you handle these situations can be important to you.

The first thing you should learn about problem solving is that you have to do it with energy and enthusiasm. You have to learn to tackle the problem before it tackles you. You have to plan to solve problems. The steps that are presented in this book are designed to give you such a plan. They will ensure that you have thought carefully before you begin to act so that when you do something, it will accomplish what you want to achieve.

On the next page is a chart that contains ten steps to effective problem solving. Learn these ten steps and how to apply them in the situations or problems that you confront. They are explained in depth in the example on the pages that follow. That part of the book is then followed by several problems. Use what you have learned about problem solving to determine the best solution to each problem. There are no right or wrong answers, but some solutions will be more effective than others.

The problem pages are good practice for your own life. You may encounter problems like the ones in this book, but you will likely have many different kinds of problems. Each problem must be dealt with, and learning how to apply the strategies in this book will be good preparation for you to tackle any difficulties that come your way so that you can achieve happiness and success in your life.

Problem 1



The Empty Test Paper

Ben sits next to Logan in class. Today is the day for the history test. For weeks the class has been hearing about the people who explored the world after Christopher Columbus discovered that it was round.

Ben cannot tell these people apart. Was it Captain Cook who first saw the Pacific, or was it de Soto? Was it Vasco da Gama who sailed around Africa, or was it Magellan? Was it Sir Francis Drake or Henry Hudson who settled Roanoke? For Ben, they are just names. Logan knows every one of them.

Ben knows, however, that Logan takes good notes in class and that he studies his notes at home. Ben doesn't like taking notes, and he certainly doesn't like to study. But he also doesn't like failing tests. Logan sits next to him, and Ben can see Logan's test paper. It would be easy to copy the answers.

Ben thinks about his baseball coach. Does Coach Johnson know who Henry Hudson was? Would not knowing that fact change Coach's life? He doubts it. Why does he even need to learn this stuff, anyway?

But cheating is against the rules, and Ben's school takes this violation seriously. If his teacher sees him and turns him in to the principal, he could even get kicked off the baseball team. Unfortunately, he could also get kicked off the team if his grades are too low. Ben looks down at his test paper. It is blank. *Is it worse to fail a test or to get caught cheating?* he wonders.

What should Ben do?

Why?

What could Ben do to avoid this problem in the future?

Problem 17



The Post

Aubrey and Zoey are spending the evening at Aubrey's house while Aubrey's parents go out with friends. The girls are planning to watch a movie; Aubrey's parents have bought them soda and snacks and have left for several hours. Now Aubrey and Zoey are alone in the house.

The girls head to the kitchen to load up on snacks before they start the movie, but rather than getting out the soda, Zoey asks Aubrey about her parents' liquor cabinet. "We should totally try it!" she urges Aubrey. "There are lots of bottles here. They'll never know if a little is missing."

Neither Aubrey nor Zoey has ever tasted alcohol, but they're both curious. Aubrey's parents often enjoy a drink with dinner, but they have warned Aubrey that she is not allowed to have any until she is old enough to drink legally. That's not for several more years.

Aubrey hesitates, but Zoey is persistent. Not only could they try some of the liquor, but they could also do it outside under the stars. It is a beautiful evening, and there's supposed to be a meteor shower later. Aubrey's house isn't far from the school, and Zoey proposes that they take a few bottles in a backpack and sit on a blanket in the football field. It's dark there; they'll see the meteors better that way.

Aubrey admits that watching a meteor shower sounds better than watching a movie—they can do that anytime—so they pack up a few bottles and head to the football stadium. Once there, Aubrey takes out the bottles and chooses one to try first. "Wait!" Zoey exclaims. "This is your first drink ever. Let's memorialize it!" She gets out her cell phone and snaps a photo of Aubrey taking her first sip from a bottle. Aubrey does the same thing for Zoey.

The girls are surprised at how awful the alcohol tastes, and they don't drink more than a single sip out of each bottle. They are also disappointed to see only one meteor. Finally they head back to Aubrey's house.

The next day at school, Aubrey is called to the principal's office. When she gets there, Zoey is sitting outside the office looking scared. Aubrey's parents are in the office with the principal.

The principal explains that someone alerted her to a troubling post on Zoey's social media accounts. Zoey posted the picture of Aubrey drinking from a bottle, along with the caption "Aubrey's first real drink!" The school is clearly visible in the background.

The principal informs Aubrey that it is a serious violation of school rules to drink alcohol on school property, and she reminds Aubrey that it is also illegal for her to be drinking at her age. The penalty is suspension for two weeks.

Aubrey's parents frown. Her father shifts uncomfortably in his seat. "You know," he tells Aubrey, "that even if Zoey takes this post down, this picture will probably still be out there. Anyone can download it and save it or pass it along to others. Once you put something like that online, it's never really gone."

Aubrey's mother nods her head. "As part of your punishment," she says, "we're taking away your phone while you are suspended." She holds out her hand and waits for Aubrey to take the phone from her pocket and give it to her.

The principal leans forward with her elbows on her desk. "What I need to know, Aubrey," she says, "is whether or not Zoey was drinking too."

Aubrey has the photo of Zoey on her phone, but no one has seen it yet. She considers what happened: she wouldn't have drunk anything if Zoey hadn't suggested it and then pressed her to do it. She would have been happy to drink soda and watch the movie. And what was Zoey thinking posting that picture? She didn't post anything about herself drinking, Aubrey noticed, only Aubrey. But Zoey is her best friend, and best friends don't snitch. Then again, Zoey and Aubrey shared the alcohol, so they should probably share the punishment as well. And if her parents go through her phone, they'll find the picture anyway.

"Aubrey," the principal says again. "I need to know the truth."

What should Aubrey do?

Why?

What lessons could Aubrey and Zoey learn from this experience about friendship, trust, breaking the rules, and social media?