

- Wellbeing in Mind
- Communication in Mind
- Skills in Mind
- Mood in Mind
- Activities in Mind

Problem Solving

Have you ever been in a situation where you are not sure how to resolve it? Where there are too many options and you just don't know which option to choose?

This skill will help you break down problems into different parts and help you work through the problem in a methodical way, helping you identify the best option on how to respond. This means identifying the problem that is distressing you, thinking through all the options for solving the problem, looking at the advantages and disadvantages of the options most preferable to you, and picking one or more options to put into place.

As you can imagine, problem solving is difficult to do when you are in the thick of a distressing situation, but is a good thing to try once things have calmed down.

We are going to work through an example of problem solving so you can see it in action. Then you are going to have a go. This system of problem solving uses a strategy called:

POOCH (Problem, Options, Outcomes, Choice)



Work through the below example of problem solving on the white board.

Step 1: Problem

Try to state the problem as clearly as possible. Be objective and specific about the behaviour, situation, timing, and circumstances that make it a problem. Describe the problem in terms of what you can observe rather than subjective feelings.

Problem definition

Two of your really good friends have invited you out on the same day

Step 2: Options

List all the possible options. Be creative and forget about the quality. If you allow yourself to be creative, you may come up with some options that you would not otherwise have thought of.

List all possible solutions

- Don't go to either – stay home!
- Go for only half the day to each
- Go to one and not the other
- Ask if one friend could join the other and do something together
- Avoid both friends so you don't have to make the decision
- Lie to your friends to not hurt their feelings
- Ask one friend if you can rearrange
- Ask a parent to say you're sick on the day so can't go

Step 3: Outcomes

List the advantages and disadvantages for three or four of the top options.

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Option #1 Only go for half a day to each	Get to see both friends. No-one is disappointed.	They may be doing an activity that takes all day so you can't join. It may not be practical – they may be in different parts of town. You may miss out on the fun when you leave to go to the other event.
Option #2 Lie to your friends to not hurt their feelings	No-one's feelings would get hurt.	I'm not good at lying or thinking of excuses. I will probably get found out and hurt the friend's feelings even more. I cannot control what other people may say – the friend may find out another way.
Option #3 Ask one friend if you can rearrange	I get to be honest. I can give all my availability to my friend to pick a new day. I get to focus my full attention on each friend rather than rush or worry I have lied to one.	My friend may be sad that I haven't picked them to do something with. They may not be able to rearrange what they had planned.

Step 4: CHOICE

Decide on which option you want based on the outcomes of those options in Step 3. Specify who will take action, when the plan will be implemented and how the plan will be implemented.

Action Steps	Who	When
Pick which activity to do (think about which I would prefer, which is easier to rearrange)	Me	Monday morning
Ask the other friend if we could rearrange	Me	Monday afternoon
Give a list of my free time to my friend	Me	Tuesday
Organise another day	Me	Wednesday



Activity

Get the students to work through their own POOCH examples.