Problem Solving

"Problem solving is the ability to find solutions to problems in situations where emotions are involved. Problem solving includes the capacity to understand how emotions impact decision making" (**Student EQ Edge**, p. 161, 2013).

The following behaviors exhibit a need for better problem solving strategies:

- Not thinking about how emotions affect problem solving
- Being unaware or unable to correctly identify the *REAL* issue in a problem
- Haphazardly trying different solutions without applying any type of strategy
- Giving up or what is called, "*learned helplessness*."

The following is a tried and true approach to problem solving, whether the problem be sensory or emotional. Following a process like this can protect us from letting problems take over our emotions. Consider a pressing problem you face in your life at the present time. Walk through this process and face the problem head on.

1. ***State the case***. Describe the problem as simply and accurately as possible. The first step in problem solving is figuring out what the REAL problem is.
2. ***Generate alternatives***. Brainstorm. Think of as many alternatives as possible. Now is not the time to evaluate the alternatives.
3. ***Evaluate each alternative***. Try to write down as much as possible. Visualize a probable outcome to each alternative. How does the potential outcome feel to you? How might it feel to others?
4. ***Choose the best option***. No one can predict the outcome of a decision with 100% certainty. Make your choice and move forward, confidently.
5. ***Implement your solution***. Press on with your decision. Modify it as needed.
6. ***Assess the outcome***. Evaluate whether your solution solved the problem. If not, start the process again.

Process adapted from The Student EQ Edge, p. 164-165, 2013

(For further leadership development resources and opportunities, consult www.ascend-international.com)