



Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
Oklahoma State University

Pathways to Success

A Basic Living Skills Curriculum

Handling Work and Family – Unexpected Problems

Sissy Osteen, Ph.D., CFP®
sissy.osteen@okstate.edu

Revised 2010



Leader Materials

Handling Work and Family -- Unexpected Problems

Note: Whenever people discuss problems, they may ask for help or advice that you may not be able to give. Review community resources to make referrals to mental health facilities or providers as you think appropriate. If you work with a community health provider, perhaps she or he would be willing to help with this situation.

Objective: To help the learner prepare to face problems that interfere with work.

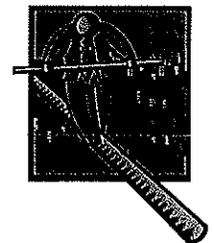
Materials Needed: Learner's guide, pencils, (for leader) dry erase board and markers or large flip tablet, local community resource guide.

Introduction: When a person has a job, family problems sometimes can interfere with your work. What could be some of these problems?



Handling Work and Family – Unexpected Problems

When people work and have a family, they really have two jobs. Two jobs can mean twice the problems, or two times the joy. Balancing these two jobs can seem like walking a tightrope. It's always a challenge and sometimes it's just plain hard to keep from falling. It seems like a single wrong step can bring everything tumbling down.



A smart tightrope walker always has a net underneath the rope. Managing life situations is a balancing act. To protect ourselves from serious falls, we need our own safety nets.

To Say

To Do

Let's talk a little about problems.

Read through page 2 and discuss.

What is a problem?

A problem exists when what is happening NOW is not what we want to happen. To solve the problem, we need to ask some questions:

What is happening?

Why or how is it happening?

What are some ways to change what is happening?

Will our plan to change things work?



To Say

To Do

Let's list the problems you might face as you go to work.

We will use this for an activity later in the session.

Make a list (or ask for a volunteer to write down) of 10-15 problems on white board or flip board.

Then

Make the change.

After making the change, think about how useful the change was. Will it work again?

Sometimes problems can make it harder to work. What are some problems that you or a friend might need to solve?

1. _____

2. _____



To Say

To Do

What *can* these people do to solve their problems?

Brainstorm solutions to Robert's, NaTasha's and Emily's problems.

Three people and their problems

The sun was shining and Emily felt great as she left for work this morning. She was actually running twenty minutes early---NOT LATE! When she got to the apartment parking lot, she saw that her car had a flat tire.



NaTasha got a call from the health nurse at her daughter's school: "Little Nicole is running a 102 degree temperature. Can you please come pick her up?"

Roberto has worked at the factory for three years. He has been a very good employee, never missed a day of work, or even been late. His supervisor has just told him that the company is moving to the Philippines. In six months, Roberto will be unemployed.



What can these people do to solve their problems?

To Say

To Do

Problems do come in different sizes.

Read page 5.

Problems come in different sizes

Sometimes people feel like their problems are too big to handle. They think that whatever they do to solve them will not be enough. We call that being 'in crisis.' Feeling helpless and not knowing what to do, sometimes cause us to do nothing about problems. Doing nothing can create more and bigger problems. Family problems, gangs and drug problems are examples of situations that can seem to be more than we can handle.



The good news is that almost every problem has a solution. We can think about the problems we face and find answers. Often the difference between a huge problem and one we can handle is the way we look at it, and what we think and do about it.

To Say

To Do

<p>A good thing about problems is that they make us think about new things in new ways.</p> <p>Have you ever experienced this? How can it help to see the problem differently?</p>	<p>Read first paragraph on page 6.</p> <p>Read and second paragraph on page 6 and discuss alternative ways of viewing problems.</p>
--	---

Choices in solving problems

We have choices about how we view the problem. When a problem takes us by surprise, it is easy to get upset. Staying calm makes thinking and problem solving easier. If we can find something good about our problems, we don't have the double problem of the problem AND a bad attitude about it. Are there any good things about Emily's, NaTasha's and Roberto's problems?



Another way Emily could look at the problem is "At least I'm running a few minutes ahead; I can call in and explain what's happening. Thank heavens I'm not already running late!"

Another way NaTasha could look at the problem is



A good thing about Roberto's situation is

To Say

To Do

	Read and discuss page 7.
--	--------------------------

How to Solve Problems

There are many ways to think about problems. Here's a good way to find the answers we need:

1. Identify the problem.

Think about Roberto. He will have no job.

Think of a time when the problem didn't exist.

It didn't exist when he got hired to work.

What made that possible?

He looked hard until he found a job. He asked friends if they knew of companies that were hiring. He went to job locations and to the employment office.

2. What needs to happen to make it possible to find a new job?

He can look for a new job.

3. Decide how well your answer solved Roberto's the problem. Will it work for other problems?



To Say

To Do

<p>What are NaTasha's and Roberto's problems, solutions, and consequences?</p>	<p>Discuss page 8 and have learners fill in solutions.</p>
--	--

Each problem and each choice about a solution have possible outcomes or consequences. Even the choice to do nothing can cause more problems. What are NaTasha and Roberto's problems, solutions and possible outcomes?

Problems	Solution	Consequence/Outcome
Emily, flat tire	<p>Do nothing, not go, not call, miss work</p> <p>Call work, get a ride with a friend or taxi, ride the bus, change the tire</p>	<p>Get fired</p> <p>May be a few minutes late but shows responsibility</p>

NaTasha

Problems	Solution	Consequence/Outcome
Sick baby during working hours		

Roberto

Problems	Solution	Consequence/Outcome
Unemployment; company moved		



To Say

Now we will use the list of problems we made at the first of the session. What are their solutions and consequences?

To Do

Take list of topics generated at first of session. Divide learners into 3 or 4 groups. Distribute problems equally. Have groups discuss solutions and consequences.

Problems will usually just get worse if we ignore them. Most problems have solutions. Solving our problems makes life more pleasant, and makes us proud of ourselves. We know we have what it takes to be successful in life.



We can avoid problems or make solving them easier by:

1. advance planning,
2. always having a 'Plan B.'
3. having a support network—knowing who we can count on and where to go for help...including friends, family members and social agencies.

To Say

To Do

We can make life simpler for ourselves by thinking ahead.

Talk about ways to plan ahead.

Good choices can make life simpler.

If we think ahead of time (not worry) about what could go wrong in a situation, we can avoid many problems we might otherwise face. Advance planning includes such things as learning how to budget money and time, having good habits that keep us healthy, and not doing things that can harm us.



We can make good use of our money by choosing to keep our cars in good shape, so we spend less on repairs. We can shop sales or buy good second-hand clothes. We can choose to buy a lottery ticket only when we have extra money once in a while.



To Say

To Do

What advance planning could make for faster, easier solutions?	Discuss briefly how planning lessens frustration.
--	---

What advance planning could make for easier, faster solutions to Roberto's, Emily's and NaTasha's problems? Write one answer.



For example, Roberto could ask about severance (sev'er ens) pay. Severance pay is a lump sum paid to an employee after being released from a job. The amount is based on the employee's length of service. He can learn about his rights to unemployment compensation, and take a personal leave day to look for a new job. He should begin *now* to save extra money for living expenses if he doesn't find new work right away. Unemployment compensation means payment you might receive because of the loss of your job.

NaTasha could _____



Emily could _____

To Say

To Do

Friends support us and help us enjoy life more. A personal support network is friends and more. It is also knowing who to ask for help.

Read and discuss page 12.

Always having a 'Plan B' is *almost* the same thing as advance planning. The difference is that you have a second plan. You're thinking, "IF this doesn't work out as I plan, THEN I'll do _____." It's thinking a little more deeply. For Emily's flat tire problem, her 'Plan A' could be to ask a friend for a lift to work. If no one is available, she could go to her 'Plan B,' which is to call a cab.



A personal support network is very important. Getting along with people always makes life more enjoyable. There are people who care about you, who like you and see the good in you. Find them and show them that you care about them, too. Friends encourage and help each other during hard times, and share the joy of good times.

Often a friend knows what you're going through because he or she has been through nearly the same thing.

To Say

To Do

Who can *you* call when you need help? Now would be a good time to make your own personal list.

Talk about community resource guide, personal resources and other topics learners might suggest.

How could friends help NaTasha, Roberto and Emily?

Having friends and knowing where to go for help cuts down on the stress in our lives. Also, many communities have books called "community resource guides" that tell about the help available that can be found in your community. Call your public library, Cooperative Extension office, or ask a social service staff person for help finding it.



A problem or crisis situation can exist because you're in a bad relationship. If the situation is dangerous to you or another family member, you may have to decide whether to stay or get out.

You may have to ask yourself what is important to you and how you're willing to live. What are your limits? What is best for you? What is best for your children? Is there anything you can do to help the relationship be more friendly or loving?

References:

Graham, J. (2008). Balancing work and family. Online
<http://www.umext.maine.edu/onlinepubs/htmlpubs/4186.htm>

Park, E. (2007). Surviving a family crisis. In Nelson, P.T. (2007) (Ed)
Families Matter! A newsletter series for parents of school-age youth.
Newark, DE: Cooperative Extension, University of Delaware.