

Here is a story to show how **Problem Solving** can be used to help depression

The girl with angry parents

Ingrid's parents were always mad at each other (at least, that's how it seemed). Arguing with each other, trading sarcastic putdowns, sometimes calling each other names. It made her feel horrible – scared and angry.



Even after they stopped fighting, when they were just glaring at each other and slamming doors, Ingrid would hide in her room, crying and miserable. **She was only 14** and she didn't know what to do.

She felt trapped and alone – who could she tell? She thought that she couldn't bear it if her friends found out how pathetic her family was and she couldn't imagine talking about this stuff with a doctor or counsellor. Really, she didn't think she could talk to anyone... she would have to live with it.

But she couldn't live with it. She got sadder and she had trouble concentrating on schoolwork because she kept imagining her parents

fighting and maybe getting divorced. And that made her even sadder, and she had trouble sleeping so she felt tired in school, so she couldn't concentrate on schoolwork, and that made her feel bad about herself.

A teacher noticed that Ingrid seemed tired and unhappy much of the time. He asked her to see the school counsellor, and she agreed. The counsellor got her to open up about how difficult things were at home and arranged to meet with her every few weeks. Also, the counsellor gave her a copy of this guide. Ingrid decided that the Problem Solving skill was the most important one for her.

~ The Girl with Angry Parents ~

The problem she chose was, of course, her parents arguing. **She wrote it down like this:**

The problem:	My parents argue a lot, 2 or 3 times a week and it makes me feel really sad, angry and scared they might get divorced
People who can support me:	school counsellor, family doctor, my favorite aunt, my 2 best friends
What I want to happen:	I want them to stop arguing or at least not so often, also they should think about my feelings more
3 things I could do:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. learn to live with it, keep it a secret 2. run away from home 3. tell my parents how I feel about their arguing, ask them to change

Then she evaluated each of these 3 possible actions:

Action	Good Points	Bad Points
1. learn to live with it, keep it a secret	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ my friends won't find out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ it won't change and I'll keep on being miserable
2. run away from home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ I won't have to hear my parents arguing again ☀ it might be an adventure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ I would miss them ☀ I might end up on the street and that would be horrible ☀ it would really frighten my parents, and they love me
3. tell my parents how I feel about their arguing, ask them to change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ at least I'm trying to make it better ☀ maybe they'll argue less if they know how much it upsets me 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☀ I'm nervous about telling them, maybe they'll get angry at me

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Ingrid decided that #1 was too passive, it would leave her in the same lousy situation and that #2 was too aggressive, it would really hurt her parents besides being dangerous for her. So, she decided to try #3, talking to her parents about how upset she was. One weekend, she asked to talk to her parents and told them about her feelings and that she wanted them to argue less. Her parents didn't get mad at her for talking about this, and they admitted that they'd been fighting a lot lately. They said that they would really try to keep things more calm and argue less.

This helped, they did argue less often. But they still argued too much and it still made Ingrid unhappy. So, she decided to do something else as well: she started spending more time at the home of her favourite aunt – things were peaceful over there. With her parents arguing less and spending one evening a week with her aunt, things were a lot better for Ingrid. Her mood improved, as did her sleep, and she began to feel like herself again.

