

problem solving 34

for you to know

People often become anxious when confronted with a situation they think they don't know how to handle. Using problem-solving skills can help you to reduce your feelings of anxiety at these times.

Using problem-solving skills means that instead of becoming overwhelmed or anxious when you encounter a challenging situation, you use your body and mind to help you find a solution. You can remember how to problem solve by using this three-word reminder: Stop, Breathe, and Think.

1. “Stop” means that you have to take a time-out from your initial anxious reaction to the situation. You literally stop whatever you are doing and remain still for a moment. Then, you...
2. “Breathe.” Now is the time to take a long, deep breath, moving your mental focus away from anxiety and onto your breathing. It helps your heart rate to slow down and sends necessary oxygen to all parts of your body, releasing tension in your muscles. When you breathe deeply, you receive more oxygen in your brain, which allows you to...
3. “Think” more clearly and effectively. Now you can look at the situation and think carefully about what you need to do first, second, and third, to solve the immediate problem. Once you identify these steps, you can put them into action.

activity 34 * problem solving

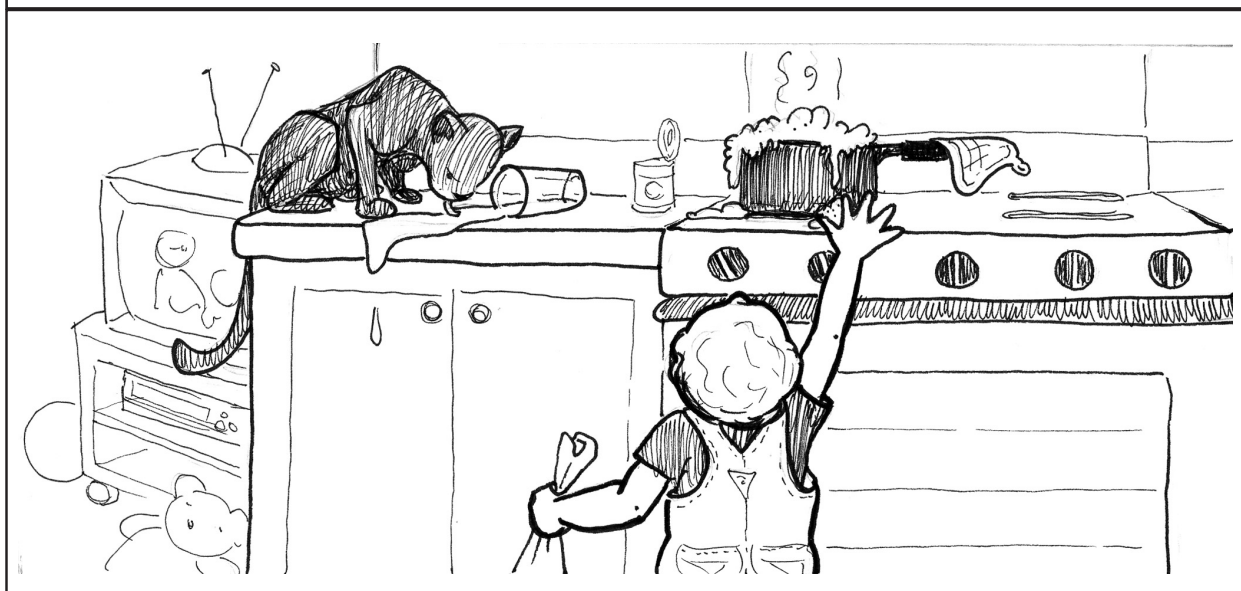
directions

Pretend that you have just encountered each of the situations below. Look at the scene in front of you. Then practice problem solving by following these steps:

1. Close your eyes and *stop* looking at the scene.
2. Take a deep *breath*.
3. *Think* carefully and clearly about what you need to do first, second, and third to help solve the problem.

Write your step-by-step problem-solving plan under the picture.

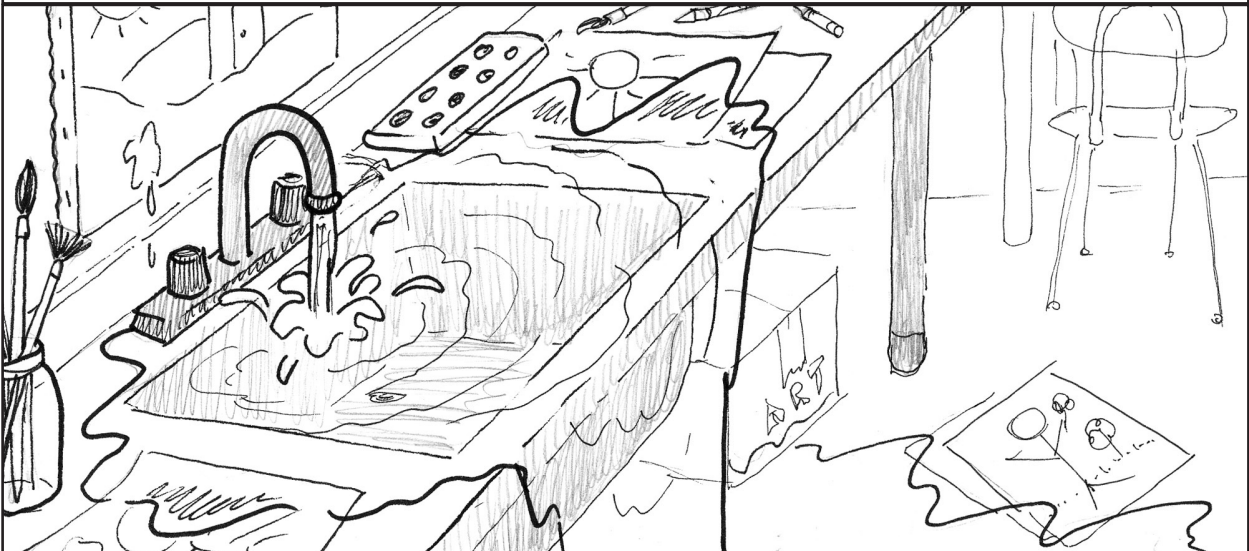
You are babysitting your younger sister. You walk into the room and see...



You are riding your bike near your house. You turn the corner and see...



You walk into the art room at school and see...



more to do

Some people think problem solving is a skill that would be hard to learn, but most of us problem solve in many ways every day. A few problem-solving activities are listed below. Circle any that you already know how to do. Then write some more of your own.

doing a jigsaw puzzle

organizing friends to go to the movies

planning a party

making your lunch

writing a paper

resolving a disagreement

cleaning your room

burning a CD

No matter how simple they seem, all of these activities involve thinking clearly and making and following a step-by-step plan. Choose two of the activities above and list the problem-solving steps you would use to complete them.

Sometimes people think they would not be able to problem solve if a situation was too unfamiliar or seemed too big for them. Most of us underestimate ourselves in this way. Think back to problems that you have already encountered and solved in the past. These problems might have to do with school, home, relationships, or activities. Make a list of them here.

Describe a situation that happened to you recently in which you were feeling very anxious. Tell what steps your problem-solving plan would have involved if you had been able to stop, breathe, and think.

Sometimes a situation will be so complicated or difficult that you will not be able to handle it by yourself. In those cases, part of your problem-solving plan should be to find someone to help you. Describe a situation that you might encounter in which you would need to ask for help. Tell whom you would find to help you.
