

# PROBLEMS PLUS [ t e e n p r o b l e m s ]

## THIS WEEK

Each stage of life presents its own unique set of problems. Most teenagers lack the experience and resources that adults have in dealing with problems. Some teenagers don't know who to go to with certain problems or how to solve them. This TalkSheet will give you an opportunity to talk about common problems, concerns, and frustrations of the high school years, and how to solve them.

## OPEN

What problems are high schoolers dealing with? On pieces of paper, have your kids write down problems that they or their peers face. Collect their answers and then read each on aloud. Give the group time to brainstorm ways that each problem could be solved. How do male handle problems different from females? Do teens and adults face problems the same way? Why or why not? How might different people deal with a specific problem?

You may want to list the solutions on a whiteboard or poster board and talk about the different ways to deal with a problem (for example, confronting a person versus talking behind the person's back). Also discuss healthy ways to deal with problems (such as letting your anger cool off versus hitting your brother).

## THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Make a master list of all the changes your kids would like to make. What ones do they have control over and which ones don't they have control over?
2. Ask for a vote on these problems and see which ones are considered the worst. You may want to rate them as a group.
3. How would they answer for teenagers who may be minorities? Disabled? Live in a third world country? Have AIDS or cancer? Your group may soon see their own problems in a different light.
4. Without forcing anyone to share, take some time to talk about each statement and which ones the group chose most often. What questions does the group have about solving problems? What advice do they have for each other?
5. These verses look at problems from different perspectives. Ask for some volunteers to read what their paraphrases of these verses. How do these verses apply to your kids today?

## THE CLOSE

Bible characters faced problems of all kinds—one example is the story of David and Goliath. Goliath presented an enormous (and very tall!) problem for David. There were people who probably said to David, "David, look at that giant! He's, well...huge! There's no way on earth that you're gonna win!" But David's attitude as he loaded his sling was "Nope, because the giant is so big, there's no way I can miss!" Communicate with your kids that the biggest problems are chances to grow. That's God's way of making them stronger and more solid in their faith.

Reassure your kids that everyone has problems. As the leader, be careful that you don't gloss over these problems. Be aware that some of your group members may be dealing with some larger, more complicated problems, though—maybe an abusive parent, an eating disorder, or depression. Let your kids know you are available to talk about their problems. If they don't want to or can't talk to a parent, encourage them to find another trustworthy adult like yourself, the pastor, or school counselor. Most important, remind them that God is waiting to listen. Encourage them to take their problems to him. His arms are open wide, waiting to take them in and give them his peace.

## MORE

- Have your kids think of the biggest problem that they are facing at the moment. Is it friends? Getting a certain grade in a class? Dealing with peer pressure? Have them write this problem—along with their birthday instead of their name—and explain the problem on the top half of a piece of 8 1/2 x 11 paper. Then pass out the problem papers to some college kids, parents, or other adults for them to write down some thoughts, advice, or favorite verse that would help deal with the problem. Then return these papers to the high schoolers (using their birthdays) and have them respond to the advice that was given. Was it helpful? What kind of advice was given?  
Communicate that people who are older have experienced some of the same problems that they do. Use this activity to encourage your youth to seek out adults for advice and encouragement.
- Set up an e-mail (or snail mail) support network for your kids. Encourage them to e-mail you with prayer requests or concerns that they'd like others to pray for. Distribute this list to your group once a week or so. Emphasize the importance of supporting each other through prayer, as well as praying for your own struggles.