

## Positive Problem-Solving

### Problem Solving Messages (PS)

You may email a "problem solving" (PS) message to the instructor, to communicate about any problem that arises during the course. Personal-problem solving provides us with a mechanism for flexibility and a "safety-net" in case unforeseen events unfold. Shared problem-solving helps in "continuous quality improvement" for course materials and procedures.

**Source:** Weeks, D. 1992. *The eight essential steps to conflict resolution*. J.P. Tarcher, Inc: Los Angeles.

### How to send a PS message

#### I. Framing your Problem:

First, think about and answer the following 4 questions .

- What is your perception of how to define the problem?
- What good aspects of the situation are not problems?
- What options might be considered to address the problem?
- Which option do you favor, and why?

Second, communicate with the person who shares the problem .

- Ask the other person if s/he perceives the problem differently.
- Ask the other person if other options should be considered.
- Ask the other person which alternative is favored and why.
- Together, decide on the best option for both.

#### 2. Example: **Personal PS**

**PROBLEM:** I will be out of town attending a scientific conference during the week that Q1.3 is due.

**GOOD ASPECTS:** We have one week to complete the quiz, and attending a conference will benefit my professional development.

**OPTIONS:**

- #A not take the quiz and work harder on earning points on assignments,
- #B take the quiz using the hotel computer or borrowing a friend's iphone,
- #C request addition of Assignment #4 to earn points to make-up for the missed quiz

**PREFERRED OPTION:** #C because I would like credit for the poster I am preparing with a graduate student for the EIS Symposium, and I plan to include the poster in my ePortfolio with my application to graduate school; the disadvantage of #A is that another problem may arise and I need a good grade to get into grad school; disadvantage of #B is that I am uncertain that I will have access to a computer or iphone.

#### 3. Example: **Shared PS**

**PROBLEM:** The link to the syllabus is not showing in eCampus:

<http://people.tamu.edu/~j-packard/courses/wfsc422/Documents/syllabus.pdf>

**GOOD ASPECTS:** The URL works when I copy and paste it into my browser.

**OPTIONS:**

- #A: upload the syllabus as a file that opens within eCampus rather than an external link
- #B: email the syllabus as a pdf file to students
- #C no change, and send an announcement telling students to copy & paste the URL

**PREFERRED OPTION:** #A would benefit the most students: the disadvantage of #B is that students may overlook or misplace the email; the disadvantage of #C is that it is likely to create more confusion