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. You can earn points for resolving problems directly related to upgrades of course materials and procedures (see examples below). A shared PS counts for participation points, a personal PS does not.
Source: *Weeks, D. 1992. The eight essential steps to conflict resolution. J.P. Tarcher, Inc: Los Angeles.*

How to send and receive credit for 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*** *(does not earn participation points, because it is personal)*

- PROBLEM: My horses opened the gate and are out on the highway so I may not be able to complete the quiz in time.
- GOOD ASPECTS: We can drop 2 of the 12 quiz grades, providing flexibility for emergencies like this.
- OPTIONS: #A ignore the situation and complete the quiz, #B not take the quiz and count this as a "grace day", #C rush to get the horses back and take the quiz
- PREFERRED OPTION: #B; the disadvantage of #A is that I may lose the horses and face a lawyer if they cause a car crash; disadvantage of #C is that I probably won't do well on the quiz or on handling my horses

3. *Example:* ***Shared PS*** *(eligible to earn up to 4 participation points)*

- PROBLEM: A link to the syllabus is not provided on the Home page: http://agonline.tamu.edu/wfsc622
- GOOD ASPECTS: In looking for the syllabus, I went to the Course Description page and found it there, plus I learned more about the course on that page.
- OPTIONS:
    - #A: add a link to the Syllabus pdf on the left menu bar
    - #B: change the link "Course Description" to "Syllabus" on the top menu bar
    - #C no change, and communicate with each student about this by email or chat, answering PS messages that result from confusion
- PREFERRED OPTION:#A: the disadvantage of #B is that students may not realize that the syllabus is a description of the course; the disadvantage of #C is that it starts off with confusion and its better to "put the best foot forward"