

Fix the Problem Game



40 Character
Narratives for
the adult to
read while
showing the
character
pictures

Directions for
the adult

Joel Shaul

Introduction for Adults

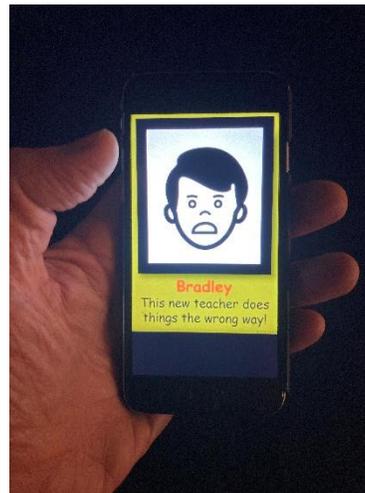
Children with autism spectrum disorders often get tired of scrutiny and criticism. They may know quite well about their need to work on things like conversation, social skills and difficult emotions. But it can feel confrontational and discouraging to have teachers, parents and therapists constantly pointing out problems.

The Fix the Problem Game takes another approach to problem-solving that many children find fresh, engaging, and even fun. Rather than zeroing in immediately on the child's own difficulties, we back off for a while and look at other people's problems instead. Often, when children learn about somebody else's problem, they are able to look at the situation more objectively and come up with useful solutions. This indirect kind of problem exploration seems less personal - more like a game or a puzzle. Then, once children experience the success of solving the hypothetical problem, they are often much more amenable to an examination of their own issues.

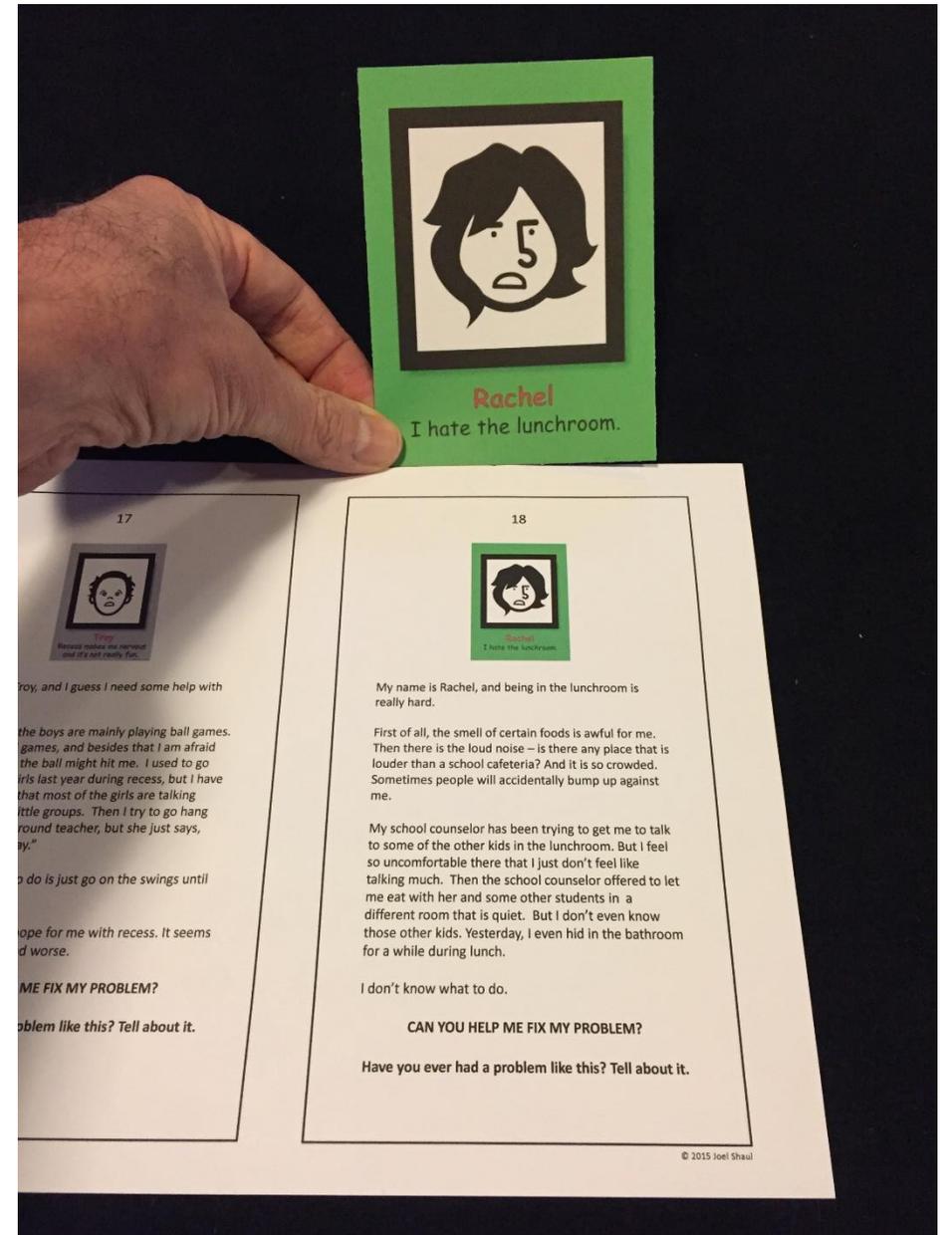
The Fix the Problem Game is designed to get children with ASD to examine their own social and emotional challenges by engaging them in the process of analyzing someone else's problems first. There are 40 child characters with 40 first-person scenarios, each describing social or emotional dilemmas experienced by many children on the spectrum. For each scenario, the reader is asked by the game character to "fix my problem." Afterwards, the game questions ask, "What about you? Have you ever had a problem like this?"

After experiencing success helping game characters, children are often more insightful and confident with their work on their own similar problems.

Two ways to display the cards while you are reading the character narratives



1. Show them on a computer, phone screen or Smartboard



2. Print out the cards

Directions and Suggestions for the Adult



1. *You, the leader, are to enact, in first person, the various characters.* You start by reading the narrative, and then you should “fill in the blanks” and expand the description as you see fit. Use sufficient expression and dramatic flair to maintain interest and attention.

Show the picture of the character while you are giving your description, either by holding the picture card in front of you, displaying it on your computer screen via PowerPoint file provided, or projecting it on a screen or Smart Board.

2. While remaining in character, *get kids to learn about your problem and give you advice.* You will notice that some of the scenarios are designed to lure children into giving “wrong” answers initially as part of the learning process.
3. I encourage you to *print out lots of the token money to use in this activity.* This will really encourage participation.

There are two kinds of game money:

- a. One Dollar Money: Give this out for “good” answers, questions and feedback, and for speaking in a collaborative manner with the other players.
- b. Five Dollar Money: Give this out reward children who are able to describe times in their own lives when they have experienced problems similar to the particular problem being presented.

Allow players to ask for your suggestions on which characters might have problems similar to their own. Some children will notice that they are similar to the characters. Other children will need your help. Then, you give children the money tokens when they accept your suggestions.

Obviously, the main point of the whole activity is to *get the players to acknowledge some of their own problems* and earn the Five Dollar tokens.

- Don’t encourage the players to point out the problems of *other* children.
- Many of the scenarios are difficult to “fix” and may have many possible interpretations and solutions.

Note: The characters are grouped in very approximate categories with lots of overlap:

- 1 to 9 Social communication skills
- 10 to 18: Isolation
- 19 to 35: Relationships
- 36 to 40: Emotions

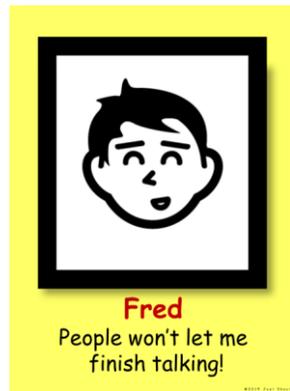


The emoticon images used in this kit are from Freepik.com

CHARACTER SCENARIOS TO READ ALOUD

1. *FRED* "I can't stand it when people interrupt me!"
2. *GRETA* "I'm tired of adults telling me to say hello to people!"
3. *BETHANY* "I can't get people to pay attention to the video game I like to play."
4. *ALLISON* "I get annoyed and confused when people tell me to talk louder or talk softer."
5. *JUNE* "I believe in being honest. Lying is bad, no matter what."
6. *FRANK* "Why can't my dad walk the same speed as me?"
7. *ROB* "I like to practice good eye contact with girls!"
8. *TED* "People should not interrupt me when I am using my electronics."
9. *JEROME* "My sister talks about stupid things I don't care about."
10. *LISA* "Grown-ups keep telling me to hang out more with kids my age."
11. *ANITA* "Why can't people let me just wear what I want?"
12. *VICTORIA* "My online friends are my best friends in the world!"
13. *HANNAH* "I love to play wild and crazy, and people need to deal with it!"
14. *PATRICIA* "I miss the old days when I was not so lonely."
15. *LAURA* "I don't like the way other kids are breaking rules all the time."
16. *BRIAN* "Parents and teachers don't give me enough time to relax."
17. *TROY* "Recess is really hard for me, and not very much fun."
18. *RACHEL* "Eating in the lunchroom is really tough for me."
19. *GALE* "My world of pretend is the best world there is."
20. *ALICIA* "What they are teaching me in school is mainly useless."
21. *BRADLEY* "The new teacher is doing things the wrong way!"
22. *EMILY* "Why do people keep saying my name incorrectly?"
23. *ALLEN* "I am going to get back at the people who have been mean to me."
24. *MORGAN* "Kids are so unkind. Maybe there is not hope for me."
25. *TRISTAN* "My dad said that I am a bully – that cannot be true!"
26. *JENNA* "Bad things keep happening to me and other people are to blame."
27. *DAMIEN* "Wherever I go, everyone is my friend!"
28. *JOSEPH* "Why do people keep stealing all of my friends?"
29. *SHAY* "They want me to have kids come play at my house, and that has me worried."
30. *RYAN* "I need to let adults know when people are breaking the rules."
31. *MARY* "I love to find things that need to be fixed and corrected."
32. *SOPHIA* "It is always very important for me to be first."
33. *JACK* "I have a new girlfriend! Many things happened to make me know for sure."
34. *AMY* "My name is Amy Kelly, not Amy Smelly! Why do kids call me that?"
35. *SAL* "I can't stand to lose at my favorite video game. I would rather just play it alone."
36. *COLIN* "I can't stand it when people change the rules to games!"
37. *CARL* "I am terribly worried about big changes coming up in my life."
38. *JAKE* "Bad things happened, and they will just keep on happening to me."
39. *MELODY* "I am afraid that other kids remember the bad things I did in the past."
40. *SARAH* "I don't think there are not many things to like about me."

1



My name is Fred, and I can't stand it when people interrupt me!

Often, when I am trying to explain something that is really, really important, people will start talking about something else, or even walk away.

This happens to me at home and at school, too. Just yesterday, my father was paying bills at the kitchen table and I was letting him know about a new movie they had just released based on my favorite video game. Before I had even finished, he picked up his calculator and went into another room and shut the door! At school, I was trying to tell my friend Paul about that same movie, and right in the middle he kept trying to change the subject to talk about his new puppy.

What can I do about people not even letting me finish talking?

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

2



My name is Greta, and I am very tired of adults reminding me all the time to "say hi" and "say hello."

I suppose they are trying to make me act all friendly and polite. But people just don't understand how hard this is for me. You see, I often have really important things on my mind, and when I say "hi," or especially "how are you," people right away start talking to me about all kinds of things that I am not expecting. This quickly distracts me from the important things I was thinking about, and I get so nervous and upset.

You see, saying "hello" and "hi" all day long keeps me from thinking my own thoughts. It forces me to have to deal with other people too much. It doesn't seem fair to expect me to be greeting people all the time when I am trying to think.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

3



My name is Bethany, and I can't get people to talk about the video game I play.

This video game is amazing – why won't people show interest for even five minutes? When I try to start conversations with people about the video game, I notice they usually go right back to talking about things that are much less interesting, like what's for lunch in the cafeteria, what somebody is wearing, whether the English test is going to be hard, even what kind of weather we have today.

There must be a way to help people to talk about things that are not boring, but fascinating! Like my favorite video game.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

4



My name is Allison, and I get annoyed and confused when people tell me to talk louder or talk softer.

When I speak, I can hear my voice just fine! So, when people say, "Speak up, Allison!" I think they are just not listening, or else they are trying to annoy me. What can I do to get people to just listen better and quit telling me to talk louder?

Then there are other times when the opposite thing happens, and people tell me that I am talking *too loud*. This happens most often at church, which is a very confusing place if you ask me. Sometimes we are supposed to sing really loud and then a minute later everyone is so quiet that I get in trouble with my grandma just for talking in a normal voice!

What can I do to get people to leave me alone about the volume of my voice?

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

5



My name is June, and I believe in being honest. Lying is bad!

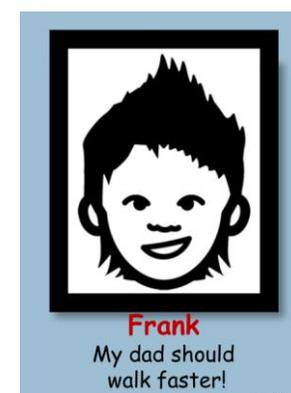
So, when Aunt Cathy gave my brother Alex the new red shirt, I told her that my brother does *not* like the color red, which is true, he *hates* it. Dad told me to be quiet. My brother said to Aunt Cathy, “Nice red shirt!” which is a lie, because he will *never* wear that shirt, ever. So, I told Alex, “You *know* you hate the color red!” That was completely unfair. I know that telling the truth is the right thing.

My Dad got all upset with me that day – just for being honest!

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

6



My name is Frank, and I am having a hard time with my dad’s slow walking.

There is nothing wrong with his legs, and he does know how to walk fast. In fact, he works out on a fast treadmill every day! But when we are together, like at the store, he goes too slow for me and he won’t keep up with me when I need to go faster. He is so slow that sometimes I will look behind me and I won’t even be able to see him.

Yesterday, when we were at the grocery store, he got angry at me and said, “Slow down!” and “Walk with me, for God’s sake!”

What can I do to get him to just speed up a little when he needs to?

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

7



My name is Rob, and I have gotten very, very good at “eye contact.”

Eye contact is when you look right at a person’s eyes. I am especially careful to use good eye contact when I am with pretty girls. When I look into their eyes, it feels good, and also I know that I am doing just what my mother and the speech teacher have been telling me to do for years.

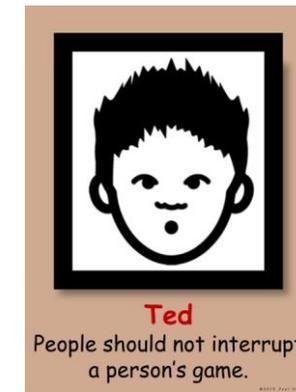
Yesterday, though, a new girl sitting next to me on the school bus and she was kind of rude to me. When I was looking right at her eyes for a minute or two, she kept looking away, and then she moved to another seat.

Shouldn’t girls do good eye contact with me, instead of being rude and moving away? I’m confused.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

8



My name is Ted, and I think people should learn to wait a while before interrupting someone who is using their tablet, phone or computer.

I bet you have noticed, like me, that when you are playing a game or watching a video on your phone or tablet, people will start talking to you and they expect you to *look up right away and answer?* Don’t people realize this is interrupting?

My uncle Jim did this last week. When he arrived at our house, I was right in the middle of a really important battle in the game on my tablet. He forced me to stop and talk to him.

I think people need to learn to wait a minute or two if they want to talk to a kid who is busy with their phone or tablet.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

9



My name is Jerome, and I have a problem with my little sister talking about ponies.

Little Tanya, age 4, has been talking more and more. The problem is that she talks at the wrong times, like at the dinner table. Dinner time is when Dad and I talk about computers, and it has always been that way. But now Tanya interrupts us during dinner to talk about things like ponies or her dance class. And when I tell her to stop interrupting, she cries!

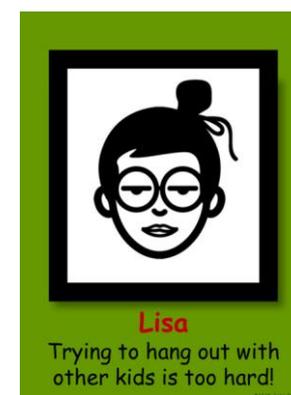
Dad is not handling this the right way. A lot of times he just gives in to Tanya and they chat about ponies. While I just sit there!

Tanya needs to respect Dad and me, and let us continue our important discussions about computers.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

10



My name is Lisa, and I need to figure out how to get my parents and my teachers to stop telling me to hang out with kids my age.

I did spend a lot of time trying to play with other young people in the past, and it did not work out very well. Very few of these kids had my same interests. Most of the kids seemed loud, or rude, or just confusing to me. I am usually happy enough at home reading and using my computer. At school, I have enough to do just getting my work done without having to try to hang out with noisy and annoying students.

I really need to find some way to get grown-ups to back off and accept me the way I am.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

11



My name is Anita, and I think I need to figure out ways to get people to let me wear what I want.

I have these shoes that I just love. They have big Cinderella pictures on them. When I wear them every day it makes me feel really good and it reminds me of Cinderella, my favorite story. My teacher, my friend John and my dad have all told me to stop wearing them every day.

People should leave me alone! I'm a good person. We live in a free country! And my Cinderella shoes aren't hurting anyone.

I'm sure there is some way I can get people to leave me alone and let me wear what I like to wear.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

12



My name is Victoria, and my online friends are my best friends in the world.

I have hundreds of friends in Instagram, Facebook and other social media sites, where I am known as "Vick-o-rama" – maybe *you* are already one of my special online friends!

Anyhow, I have had lots of problems with grown-ups like my mom. She has been trying to make me spend less time online. She even took away my phone once, for a week! And my counselor has been trying to make me talk to more kids at school and "make friends."

So – how can I get my mom and my counselor to accept my online social life and leave me alone?

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

13



My name is Hannah. I just *love* having fun! People need to learn to deal with that.

For me, having fun means getting pretty wild and crazy sometimes. If I am not running around or laughing a lot, that is just not fun. Grown-ups keep telling me to “act my age,” and to pay more attention to other people’s feelings. But I can’t change.

Lately, even many kids my age are starting to criticize me when I get a little out of control. I wish they would just join in the fun!

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

14



My name is Patricia, and I miss the old days when I wasn’t so lonely.

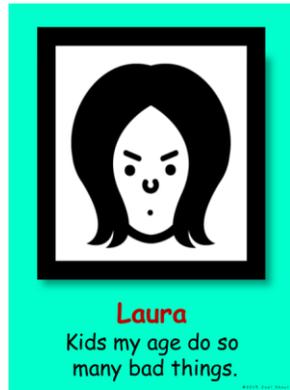
Back when I was younger, my mom used to call up other parents to set up play dates for me and my friends. But I’m a few years older and things are different. Usually, parents don’t set up these get-togethers for kids anymore and young people are supposed to somehow set up these things on their own. I don’t seem to get invited anywhere. I try to get up my courage to go talk to people I used to know and arrange to get together with them. But then I get really nervous. I start to think they don’t really want to talk with me or play with me.

I don’t know what to do to stop being so alone. And when I get nervous, I just can’t think of what to say to people.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

15



My name is Laura and I don't like the way kids my age behave.

When we were all younger, the grown-ups were always around and they could make everyone behave well. But now the students in my school often get away with terrible things! They say bad words. They sneak out their phones when it is not allowed. They sometimes wear clothes that are against the school rules.

I am *different from them*. I am a good person who follows rules. You never know where you might run into these bad rule-breakers.

Probably I should keep to myself as much as possible.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

16



My name is Brian, and I have this problem with parents and teachers leaving me no time to relax.

All day long, I do work at school. Then, when I come home, when I am supposed to relax, everyone expects me do even more work! Yesterday, I only ninety minutes for Minecraft after I finished my homework. That is not nearly long enough.

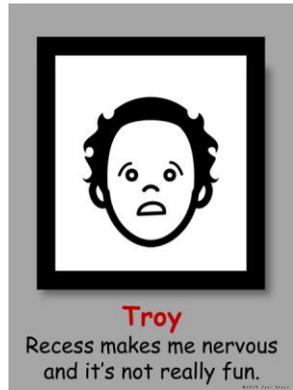
Saturday, things got even worse. Dad had me raking leaves! I had already made important plans for that day to spend four hours putting together a new Lego kit. So, I refused to pick up the rake. And then my Dad took away my Lego kit!

My free time is being stolen from me. And it is not fair!

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

17



My name is Troy, and I guess I need some help with recess.

During recess, the boys are mainly playing ball games. I am bad at ball games, and besides that I am afraid sometimes that the ball might hit me. I used to go talk with some girls last year during recess, but I have noticed recently that most of the girls are talking together in tight little groups. Then I try to go hang out with the playground teacher, but she just says, "You need to go play."

The only thing left to do is just go on the swings until recess is over.

Probably there is no hope for me with recess. It seems to be getting worse and worse.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

18



My name is Rachel, and being in the lunchroom is really hard.

First of all, the smell of certain foods is awful for me. Then there is the loud noise – is there any place that is louder than a school cafeteria? And it is so crowded. Sometimes people will accidentally bump up against me.

My school counselor has been trying to get me to talk to some of the other kids in the lunchroom. But I feel so uncomfortable there that I just don't feel like talking much. Then the school counselor offered to let me eat with her and some other students in a different room that is quiet. But I don't even know those other kids. Yesterday, I even hid in the bathroom for a while during lunch.

I don't know what to do.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

19



My name is Gale, and my pretend world is the best world there is!

I have the most amazing things going on in my mind. I can create imaginary stories that are as good as movies – even *better*. In this special world in my brain, I am powerful. I can fly. I have superhero friends. It's wonderful!

Quite a lot of my time at home I am in my pretend world, and even during the school day. When other kids are chatting before class, I don't usually join in, since the things they are talking about are boring.

Some hard and stressful things have been happening in my life recently, and I have needed my pretend world more than ever. Grown-ups have been telling me, "Don't get lost in your imagination!" But I don't want to change. Thank goodness I have my pretend world during these tough times!

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

20



My name is Alicia, and I think what they are teaching me in school is mainly useless.

I am going to be a successful video game designer. I have already started learning some of the basics on my computer at home. The problem is, almost all of what they teach me at school is a waste of my time, since it won't help me at all to design video games. Social studies, French class, math – they are all pointless.

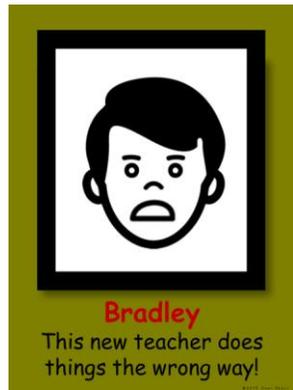
Lately, I have felt so fed up that I have stopped doing some of the work. Especially in French class, which unfortunately I have now failed.

So, the principal called in my dad and stepmother to have a meeting about this and now I am in big trouble. What am I going to do about this?

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

21



My name is Bradley, and I have some complaints about this new teacher, Ms. Bricker.

Ms. Bricker became our teacher right after our teacher Ms. Allen had her baby and left to stay home. When Ms. Bricker started in our class, she had some trouble learning about Ms. Allen's rules and routines for our class. Ms. Allen had a certain schedule for how our school day went, for example, when we had our recess and when we did our reading out loud. But Ms. Bricker changed most of that. That was very upsetting.

So I have tried to help Ms. Bricker to learn how Ms. Allen ran our class. Ms. Bricker did not even say thank you! She even sometimes says rude things like "Stop telling me what to do." How am I ever going to deal with such a mean teacher who does not seem to know what she is doing?

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

22



My name is Emily. *NOT* "Emmie" or "Em." Definitely *NOT* "Emmie Lou," which is what one girl was calling me yesterday. I have noticed that some other kids give each other nicknames. I find this very strange and I have no idea why anyone would want their real name all mixed up like that.

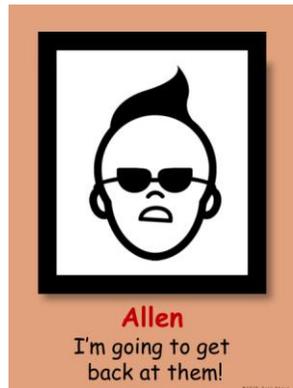
Yesterday, some kids said, "Let's make up nick names!" and then everyone got excited making up names for themselves and their friends. I warned them to not mess with MY name.

But did they listen? No. When one kid said, "Hi Emmie Lou!" I yelled at them really loud to stop. Well, that worked. They are calling me just Emily now. They had better not make me yell again!

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

23



My name is Allen. People have been mean to me and I'm not going to put up with it anymore.

At our school, they are always talking to us about making peace and being nice. But being nice does not work. I have tried to ignore kids when they say I am stupid or ugly. I have told my teachers about kids about kids who steal my stuff, but kids have kept doing it.

I have decided that I have to get back at the people who are being mean to me. I am not sure what I am going to do, but the time has come for me to get revenge. I am not going to take it anymore.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

24



My name is Morgan, and it seems as though I have done everything possible to deal with they kids who are so unkind to me.

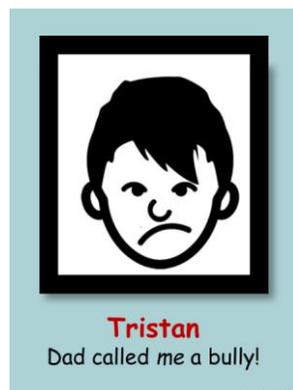
When they make fun of the way I talk, I tried ignoring them. When I tried walking away from kids who were laughing at me, they just followed me. When I said, "Please stop!" they just laughed more.

I have one close friend, Janine, and she told me that I should report all of this to the principal. But I can't. The last time I did that a few years ago, the kids called me a "tattletale." Maybe there's no hope for me.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

25



My name is Tristan, and I am definitely NOT a bully. It was not fair or right for my father to call me one after something happened between me and me little brother.

We learned all about bullies at school when we had the No Bullying unit in Health Class. Bullies are bad people who pick on people like me, steal our stuff, make fun of us and so forth.

So, when Dad called me a bully, just because I knocked down my little brother a couple times, and laughed at him when he kept falling down skating, that was completely ridiculous. That's just what big brothers do sometimes! I didn't mean any harm. I need to figure out some way to convince my dad how wrong he is.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

26



My name is Jenna. People are always doing things to make me upset.

Last week, some boys were kicking a ball and it flew over and smacked me right in the head! Later, at the end of the school day and the hallway was crowded with everyone heading for the exits, I got bumped and my books fell and scattered everywhere!

And I just heard the worst thing of all – that the field trip tomorrow is postponed because the bus is broken! Why can't they just fix it?

People do so many things to make me unhappy.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

27



My name is Damien, and people really like me a lot. And I love other people right back.

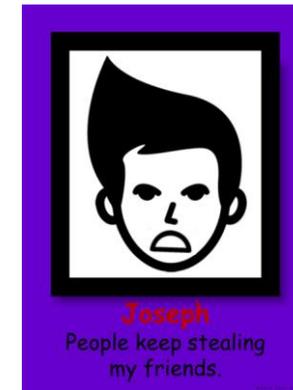
I like to show how friendly I am wherever I go. I give lots of hugs, hand shakes and high-fives. When I meet new people, like people in the check-out line at the store, I say hi and chat with them and tell them all kinds of nice things about me and my family.

I can't figure out why my grandmother got mad at me last week. She said that I need to "stop talking and touching so much." I wonder what her problem is? I better give a big hug right now.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

28



My name is Joseph, and I have a problem with people stealing my friends.

Last week, my friend Josh and I were sitting together at lunch. We always sit together and look at each others' Pokémon cards which we bring from home in our pockets. But then Josh invited this guy Larry to come sit with us! And then Larry and Josh started talking about *football*, which I hate. So, I had to look at my Pokémon cards all by myself.

This always happens to me. It's not right to take things from people. And taking away friends is the worst of all!

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

29



My name is Shay. My step-dad has been trying to get me to have someone over to play. He can't seem to understand how confused and worried this makes me feel.

I am sort of okay with getting together with other kids in groups, like at day camp or the church youth group. I know what's going to happen and adults are in charge to make sure things are okay. But if somebody came over to my house, there are so many things that I can't predict. What would we do together? What if the person does not like to play what I like?

My step-father has another idea that is even worse – that I should go over to some other kid's house. What if they give me food I don't like? What if they play a videogame that I have never tried? I need to find some way to get my step-dad to leave me alone.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

30



My name is Ryan. It is very important for me to make sure that adults know whenever anyone is breaking the rules.

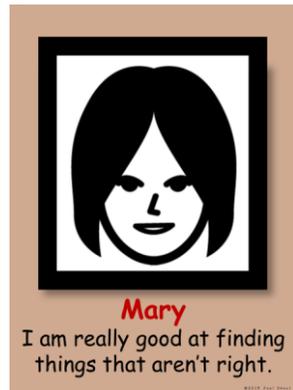
Like that day in September when that kid pulled the fire alarm. I was the one who told the teacher! Or when that girl kept walking around without her shoelaces tied – I made sure that our teacher knew right away. And just last week, when my friend Alex said really bad things about his mom, I did let his mom know about this later.

Adults have a hard job keeping track of kids and making sure that kids behave. I know I need to do my part to help.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

31



My name is Mary. I am very good at finding things that need to be fixed or corrected. And I am getting better at it all the time!

Last month, I found a small spelling mistake on a test that the teacher had made. He thanked me for pointing it out. A week ago, when a visitor came to the classroom, I raised my hand to let her know that she had pronounced one boy's name the wrong way. This morning, I noticed that Anna had taken off her glasses and I reminded her that she is supposed to keep them on all the time. And then Anna yelled at me, saying "Mind your own business!"

Well, later I will certainly need to explain to Anna that her yelling is inappropriate and that she needs to work on this problem.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

32



My name is Sophia, and I really enjoy being first. Don't you?

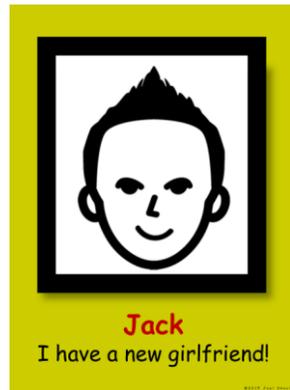
My last name is Adler, so at school in my class when we line up in alphabetical order, I get to be first. When we line up for lunch, I have figured out ways to get to the front of the line most of the time, and that really, really helps me finish eating so that I can be first in line for recess. In class, I like to finish my work first, and sometimes that means I have to complete my assignments as quick as I can.

Recently, something terrible has happened! My teacher, Ms. Campbell, has started putting me in the back of lines. For no reason! I need to find some way to get her to stop being so mean.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

33



My name is Jack, and my new girlfriend is named Julie!

Here is how I found out that she is my girlfriend. First, she often smiles and says "hi" when she sees me. Second, when the bullies knocked me down in the hallway, she chased them away. Third, we had a great time playing basketball together in gym class. Fourth, she said she likes my new shoes.

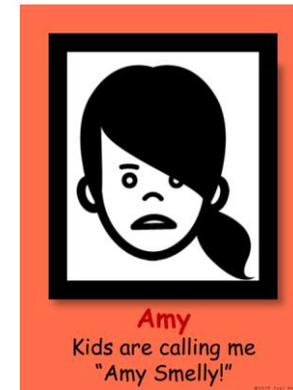
Julie is my first girlfriend, and I am so happy. I have started telling my friends.

Julie's birthday is next week. I bought her a bracelet and I look forward to giving it to her when I see her that day in the cafeteria.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

34



My name is Amy Kelly, not Amy *Smelly*, like some kids have been calling me lately.

When they say that I smell bad, they are lying. Sometimes I sniff myself, and I seem to smell fine, so that proves that what they are saying is just not true. One girl said, "Patricia, excuse me, but when was the last time you showered?" What a rude thing to say! I do in fact shower every few days!

There must be some way for me to get kids to being so mean to me.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

35



My name is Sal, and I have always loved the video game Super Smash Bros. I play it many hours a week. But recently something has made me almost hate the game.

My friend Carol came over to play Super Smash Bros every week starting a year ago. After a few months, something terrible started happening – she started beating me! I asked Carol, “Can you please let me win sometimes because after all it is *my game* and *my house*? So then Carol goes and beats me again!

Carol made me cry and yell that day. Since then, she has stopped coming over to my house. My dad is telling me to call her up, apologize, and invite her over again. But I won’t. Carol needs to apologize to *me*. And to be honest, I would rather play Super Smash Bros. by myself.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

36



My name is Colin, and I need to get kids to stop changing the rules to games.

Yesterday on the playground, some things happened that were completely unfair! First, we were playing a game of tag, one of my favorite games, and I was having a great time. Then, all the kids made up a new rule – you had to tag a person *twice*, not *once*, when you are “it.” I explained that this is not the right way to play. I even proved it by getting out my phone and looking up “Game of Tag” on Wikipedia.

When I found the official list of rules, I needed to read it to the kids quite loudly to make sure they heard me well. That’s when the playground teacher came over. And guess what she did? She made *me* sit down till the end of recess! So unfair! Since it was the *other kids* who were breaking rules, not *me*!

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

37



My name is Carl, and I terribly worried about some big changes coming up in my life.

We're moving. My dad took me to walk through the new apartment last weekend. It doesn't feel like home at all. I could tell right away that I was going to be unhappy there.

The new school looks even worse. My step-mom took me on a tour of the new school on Tuesday and I hated it. That night, I had a bad dream about getting lost inside the school building.

Sometimes a person can just tell when something is going to turn out bad. People keep telling me that the move will be okay. But I know they are wrong.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

38



My name is Jake. Bad things keep happening to me.

My only friend, Jason, moved away. My dad left our family last year and now he only just calls on the phone sometimes. Our principal, Dr. Nelson, who was always nice to me, got transferred to a different school.

I have learned two things about my life. One, I have bad luck. Second, I always end up being alone and lonely.

That is the way it has been in the past, and that is the way it is going to stay.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

39



My name is Melody. Even though I have gotten over a lot of my problems, all the kids remember the bad things I did in the past.

It took lots and lots of hard work to get better. Until three years ago, I used to cry at school pretty often, and have meltdowns. And I hardly ever talked to anyone back then. Now, I almost never cry. I have not had a meltdown at school in over a year. And I am much better at talking to people.

But I am sure that people think all the time about the way I used to be. They play the memories back over and over in their brains, and talk about it with each other.

My grandmother is encouraging me to make some friends now. But I don't think I should even try. My mistakes in the past have ruined everything.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.

40



My name is Sarah. There are not many things to like about me.

When I look in the mirror, I don't look pretty. I don't get very good grades.

My family does not have as much money as some other families do and I don't own very many nice things.

There is no one in my life right now who I think of as a real friend.

It seems like my life has been like this for quite a while now . And it seems like it will always stay this way.

CAN YOU HELP ME FIX MY PROBLEM?

Have you ever had a problem like this? Tell about it.