

PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS FOR EXPLORERS

When Explorers have interpersonal conflicts, it is helpful to have a method available that helps solve those problems. How conflict is handled can make a big difference in the quality and the health of relationships between post participants. This problem-solving process helps Explorers (and Advisors) resolve their conflicts in ways that lead to a better understanding of each other.

- **Empathy:** The first step is to literally imagine how the other person thinks and feels about the problem. This is important because it helps us understand the situation from the other person's perspective, and helps us think about solutions that will benefit both parties involved in the conflict.
- **Invention:** Create as many solutions as possible using brainstorming rules. Anything goes, and there is no criticism of anybody or any idea.
- **Solution:** Choose the solution that is most fair and as closely as possible meets each individual's needs.

You can practice this process in your post by using one of the following stories. Read the story to your post and then work through the three steps, one at a time. When you think the post is comfortable with the process, you can use it with real problems and conflicts.

IT'S ONLY TEASING

With her hair shaved into a Mohawk, Angela definitely stood out in a crowd and in her medical Explorer post. She got along pretty well with everyone, but she was different. One evening on the van ride home from a visit to a hospital, several post participants started teasing Angela about the way she dressed. Angela laughed at their jokes and teased them back about being conformists. All in all everyone had a good time. The next week the teasing continued. As the evening progressed, Angela became more and more quiet. After the activity she went home without saying a word to anybody.

The next three weeks were busy, as usual. Nobody noticed that Angela hadn't come to any of the meetings until Jill saw her in school, realized she hadn't

seen Angela in a while, and asked her where she had been. Angela mentioned her busy schedule and that, well, she didn't feel as if she fit in with the other post participants. She thought she was probably going to drop out.

What should the post do?

COMMITMENT

In the middle of a cold November, Post 251 decided to go skiing. It seemed like a good idea, since all the post participants were enthusiastic and were willing to raise the money to travel to a nearby ski resort for three days of skiing over the school holidays in December. Lisa, the post president, was ecstatic about it, since the idea had come from the participants and they were committed to doing the necessary work toward bringing it about. The event looked to be a winner.

Not everyone was so enthusiastic, however. The post Advisor, Jim, and the post committee volunteers were not happy about the possibility of being away from their families and jobs for those three days. While they weren't unhappy about the post's enthusiasm, the ski event was not on the calendar that had been laid out at the officers' seminar in September. Adding new events to the already busy schedule was difficult.

At the first post meeting after Thanksgiving, discussion of the ski trip was the first item on the agenda. Tension quickly mounted when Jim said, "I'm sorry, but the committee doesn't feel able to support this event, since we're committed to other things during that time. It doesn't look like we will be able to go."

Lisa replied, "You've been telling us that the program belongs to us, but now that we want to make a real decision that's unacceptable to you, you're telling us it really doesn't belong to us."

What should the post do?