

# HELP ME IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM

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<b>Objective:</b>	<b>1) Identify school related problems</b> <b>2) Clarify what the problem is and what help they need</b>		
<b>Time:</b>	45 minutes	<b>How Many:</b>	10-30 students
		Middle & High School	
<b>Materials:</b>	<i>Markers, chalkboard/ flip chart, worksheet: " Student Scenarios" and handout: "Tips on Identifying/Clarifying the Problem"</i>		

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**Enroll:** - Have you ever had a problem that you just can't seem to explain to others? Or you aren't clear yourself what exactly is the problem?

**Do/Experience:** - Have students brainstorm a list of common problems students have in school.  
- Write responses on the board or flip chart paper.  
- Add anything you feel they left out.  
- Have students group the list into different categories: attendance, academic, communication with others, and behavior.  
- Have students brainstorm ideas of how to help someone identify and clarify a problem.

**Process:** - What happened?  
- What feelings came up for you?  
- In making this list, did it remind you of problems you had or have in school?

**Label:** - What did you learn?  
- Why is it important as a peer mentor to help your mentee identify and understand a problem?  
- Give students the hand out "Tips on Identifying/Clarifying the Problem". Ask students if they have any questions about what is written on the handout.

**Demonstrate:** Clarifying the problem  
- One of the mentor's tasks is to help their mentee clarify what the problem is and/or what he/she needs help with.  
- Mentees may not realize what the problem is or may be in denial.  
- Divide students into pairs. Have them choose who will be the candy and who will be the fruit. They will have an opportunity to play both roles.  
- When they have decided, they should raise their hands.  
- Give the candies a scenario.  
- Tell the fruits that it is their job to help the candies clarify the problem and realize what they need from you. They can use the handout to get ideas of what to do or what to ask.  
- Students have 8 minutes and you should give them a 2 minute warning. Go!  
- Have partners give feedback.  
- Switch roles, giving the same instructions.

- Review:**
- What did you learn? Any questions?
  - Remember, you will also need clarification from your coordinator/adult who is referring the student to you. The same active listening skills apply.

- Celebrate:**
- Great job! Give your partner a high five!

## **TIPS ON IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM**

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1. Ask open ended questions.
2. Continue to ask questions until you feel you have all the information.
3. Paraphrase to gain understanding.
4. Ask your mentee to clarify if you don't understand what has been said; for example, "What do you mean when you say...?"
5. Break down the problem by each issue.
6. Don't give advice; instead help your partner think of options.
7. Ask your mentee to be specific if there is too much information being given. For example, "What exactly are you having trouble with in math class? Why are you late to class after lunch almost every day?"
8. Ask your mentee questions like, "How can I help you right now? We have 30 minutes to meet, so how do you want to spend that time?"
9. Determine what you can help with and what you will need your coordinator or other adult to help with. Ask "What do you think we are going to need my coordinator to help with?"
10. Determine whether your mentee needs to be referred to an outside agency. You should discuss this with your coordinator and make the decision together.
11. Observe your mentee's non-verbals to determine if anything else is going on. You can ask questions such as, "You tell me you don't miss your old school or friends, but you look sad when you say this. I think if I were in your shoes I would feel sad. Do you want to say anything about that?"

## SCENARIOS

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1. "I am having trouble in my English class. I don't understand any of the work. Besides, there are several people in the class that I don't like. I almost got into a fight with one of them last week. The teacher took his side. I don't think the teacher likes me, so I decided not to go to class anymore."

**Note for mentee:** What you want from the mentor is to help you talk to your teacher, because you are now embarrassed to go back to the class since you've missed so many days. You also want help talking to your teacher about how you think she does not like you. You also want to have a conflict mediation with the students you almost got into a fight with.

2. "I got good grades last report card, but I'm worried about my grades for this report card period. I just can't get to first period on time, so sometimes I just decide not to show up. Some of my teachers get on my case because I don't turn in my homework, but I just can't do it at home sometimes."

**Note for mentee:** What you want from the mentor is a tutor for math and science. The real reason why you can't go to first period on time is because you have to drop off your little brother at school. Homework is also difficult to do on Tuesdays and Thursdays because your mom works late those days, so you have to take care of your brother after school until your mom gets home. Also, your apartment is so small, you don't have any privacy to do your homework. You want to brainstorm ideas with your mentor about how you can get your homework done.