Joint Problem-Solving Steps: Solving problems with dignity and respect.

1. State an observation: “I notice \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I’d like it if we could work out another

way to deal with this that we both can live with.”

2. Ask the teen what their view of the problem is, and ask how they feel. Listen without

interrupting, unless it is to ask, “Is there more? Anything else?” Don’t argue.

When your teen has finished, summarize what they just said using this format:

“You feel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and you wish \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

Ask whether you have understood them properly. If not, ask for clarification and try again.

If your teen did not include a wish, ask them, “What do you wish could happen?”

3. Ask your teen whether they would be willing to hear your feelings and your view of the

problem. (Teens usually say yes at this point because you have listened respectfully.)

Share using the “I feel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I wish \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” format.

After you have finished sharing your view, ask your teen to summarize or give feedback

on what you said.

4. Express appreciation to your teen: “Thank you for sharing your thoughts and feelings.”

5. Ask, “Are we close to agreement or far apart?” If you’re close, you can probably agree on a solution at this point. Ask your teen for a suggestion.

Or ask, “Would you be willing to try \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ [for a day / week]?”

If you’re not close, suggest, “Let’s brainstorm for some ideas about how to solve

this.” Simply come up with as many ideas as possible about how to solve this

problem together. Write them all down. You don’t have to agree that every idea is

a good idea, nor that it is an idea you’re actually willing to try — just write them all

down. If your teen protests an idea, say, “We don’t have to pick anything we both

don’t like.” Try to come up with at least six or eight possible solutions together.

6. Ask your teen to choose one of the solutions from the list you created together,

one that you can all live with for a short time — one day, one week, etc. Role-play to practice the solution if there is enough time.

7. Agree on a date you will review the temporary solution to see how it is working.

Make sure to end the conversation with an appreciation to your teen for working together on a solution to this problem. “Thank you for working on this with me.” or “I appreciate that we could work together to find a solution.”

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