PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH

1. **Acknowledge the conflict.**
   Acknowledge the conflict at the earliest level possible, before it reaches higher and more difficult levels. This calls for a certain amount of self awareness. If you are already feeling emotional, acknowledge it and then try to use techniques to stay calm. If this is impossible, postpone dealing with the conflict until emotions are more settled.

2. **Define the problem.**
   Define the problem in terms of specific behavior. For example, rather than say, "He's mean," express it as "He refused to take my call." Listen carefully as the other party attempts to define his/her perspective on the problem. It is important to try and see the other person's point of view (POV). Try to get to underlying needs.

3. **Brainstorm solutions.**
   List all ideas, practical and impractical. Do not evaluate ideas at this point, as this can stop the creative flow. Let your imagination take over.

4. **Evaluate solutions.**
   Analyze each idea as to its consequences and the process of implementation. Discard ideas with a low chance of success and/or those that are impractical because they may be too costly in terms of time, money or personal energy. Narrow the list down to a few solutions. Give each person a chance to eliminate any solutions that are unacceptable to them!

5. **Choose a solution.**
   The question to keep asking is, "Does this solution meet both our needs?" It is crucial that both parties agree to the chosen solution.

6. *Implement the solution.*
   What is the plan for making the solution work? It can be helpful to write out the plan. Decide on a time to later evaluate the implementation of the plan.

• a six-step planning process •