

## Lesson: People Management - Problems with people

**Level:** Pre-intermediate

**Age:** Adult

**Time:** 60 minutes

**Language objectives:** to discuss some problems at work and then report on the discussions

**Key life skills:** giving advice and stating your opinions

**Materials:** one copy of the problem cards for each group of three–four students, cut up as indicated



Teacher's notes

### Part 1

1. Tell the students that they are going to talk about some work problems.
2. Dictate one of the problems to them and put the text on the board for them to read.
3. Discuss the problem with the whole class, eliciting what the person in the situation *could* or *should* do.
4. Ask the students to work in groups of three or four.
5. Give each group a set of the problem cards face down.
6. Explain the procedure. Each group takes one problem card at a time (in random order). One person reads it aloud to the group. They then discuss what advice they would give as a group. They do not have to agree and *I don't know* is a valid answer. They should each make a brief note to

remind themselves of the problem and their reaction, return the card to the pile and take another.

### Part 2

1. When each group has discussed several problems, regroup the class in pairs. Each student should be working with a new partner – someone who was not in their previous group.
2. In the new pair, the students tell each other about the problems they read and the discussions they had with their previous partners.

### Follow-up

Some classes may wish to talk about similar problems they have experienced or heard about.



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Problem cards



**1** I've been under stress for some time at work. I have more responsibility and more work to do and it's becoming very hard to keep up. Some of my subordinates don't take things seriously. I'm more and more bad-tempered and it's starting to affect my home life: I've noticed that I'm often irritable with my wife and children. What's going wrong?

**3** Since being promoted to senior management I've been working non-stop to learn everything I need to function in my new job. I often get home very late and have reading to do at the weekend. I started in the company as a secretary and it's important to me to make full use of this opportunity. My husband is very unhappy about all this. He even says he wishes I had carried on in the old job. Have I made a mistake?

**5** When the job of head of the sales department, where I work, was advertised I applied for it. I've been with the company for a number of years and I have a good sales record: I'm consistently one of the top-earning salesmen. I didn't get the job. It went to another person who hasn't been with the company as long as I have and who doesn't have as good a sales record. I am very angry about this and don't really know how I should react.

**2** I've just received an offer from another company. It's a better job – more responsibility and more money. The problem is that the company is more than two hours' drive away, so I'd be spending four hours a day travelling to and from work. I don't want to move house, my daughter is studying for exams and my son is disabled and has to go to a special school. Should I accept the job?

**4** I've been promoted within my department, and I'm now the boss of the people I used to work with. Most people are fine about this but a couple are very resentful. One person will not let me check any of his work: he sends it all directly to my boss before I can see it. Should I try to change his behaviour?

**6** When I started with this company a couple of years ago they were having a crisis. My training was cut short so I could start on the job straight away. Now, two years later, I am a team leader and I have three new people working for me. They are being sent away on courses and are receiving all the training I missed. What should I do?

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**7** I think my department is a success. We achieve good sales levels and have been growing constantly since we entered this market. I get on well with my staff and everyone is working terrifically hard. However, I am an engineer and not terribly good at paperwork. I am often behind. I am beginning to receive complaints from accounts and administration and there are rumours that I might be replaced. I love what I am doing. How should I defend myself?

**8** The top managers in my company seem to form a closed group. Most of them went to the same university (not the one I went to) and have many acquaintances in common. I am not going to get anywhere unless I break into this group. What do you advise?

**9** I qualified in Business Administration and Economics one year ago. After a year as a management trainee I am now in my first job as a real manager, supervising a group of people in the administration department of a factory. Most of them are older than me and any attempts I make to change anything are met with passive, but absolute, resistance. Many of the working practices are genuinely inefficient. How can I get people on my side?

**10** We are introducing a fully automated quality-checking procedure on the production line where I work. We are offering full training for staff to use the new systems. Though in the long run we will need fewer people, we will not be firing anyone: we will reduce through natural wastage. In spite of all this the workers are strongly against the new procedures. What can I do to inspire confidence?