

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Illustration: The Whole World Creative Problem Solving Assembly Line .....	3
"Twenty-five Years of Creative World Involvement," by Sidney J. Parnes .....	6
Acknowledgements .....	9
Preface .....	10
Foreword by E. Paul Torrance .....	11
<b>PART I</b> Why Creative Problem-Solving for Children? .....	12
Introduction .....	12
Problem Solving as a Basic Skill .....	12
CPS in the Classroom .....	13
Stepping the Levels of Creative Problem-Solving .....	14
<b>PART II</b> How Do You Teach Creative Problem-Solving to Children? .....	15
Introduction .....	15
Salient Factors .....	15
Guiding the Group in Brainstorming .....	15
How to Scamper for Ideas .....	16
<b>PART III</b> In What Ways Might I Use This Book? .....	17
Introduction .....	17
Instructional Options .....	17
Before You Start .....	18
Level I: "Sensing Problems and Challenges" .....	19
Activity No. 1: Room for Improvement .....	20
Activity No. 2: Chunks in the Ice Cream .....	22
Activity No. 3: It Isn't Fair .....	24
Activity No. 4: The Shape of Things .....	26
Activity No. 5: Improvement Haystack .....	28
Level II: "Fact-Finding" .....	31
Activity No. 6: The Star Reporter .....	32
Activity No. 7: Geni, the Machine .....	34
Activity No. 8: The Fazh .....	36
Activity No. 9: Tree House .....	38
Activity No. 10: The Unusual Animal .....	40
Level III: "Problem-Finding" .....	43
Activity No. 11: Locked Out .....	44
Activity No. 12: What Happened? .....	46
Activity No. 13: Doubting Debbie .....	48
Activity No. 14: The Jumping Frog .....	50
Activity No. 15: The Great Improvement Machine .....	52

Level IV: "Idea-Finding" .....	54
Activity No. 16: The Thing .....	56
Activity No. 17: Sammy's Secret .....	58
Activity No. 18: Put the Alligator into the Refrigerator .....	60
Activity No. 19: My Name Smelz .....	62
Activity No. 20: Danny and His Friends .....	64
Level V: "Solution-Finding" .....	67
Activity No. 21: The Ideal Chocolate Bar .....	68
Activity No. 22: What's Good About It? .....	70
Activity No. 23: Super Shopper .....	72
Activity No. 24: Lunch Queue .....	74
Activity No. 25: Idea Report Card .....	76
Level VI: "Acceptance-Finding" .....	79
Activity No. 26: The Right Order .....	80
Activity No. 27: Too Much of a Good Thing .....	82
Activity No. 28: Up a Tree .....	84
Activity No. 29: Battle of the Champions .....	86
Activity No. 30: Busy Bathroom .....	88
Bibliography .....	90
References .....	91
<b>PART IV</b> Worksheet Set for Individual or Group Problem Solving .....	92
Duplicate Student Activity Pages .....	99

# PART I

## WHY CREATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING FOR CHILDREN?

**Introduction**    *Question:* What skills must children learn to become responsible, contributing, self-sufficient individuals?

*Answer:* Because it is the most basic of all skills, problem solving is a logical and inclusive response.

*Question:* How can children be motivated to achieve in the academic subjects?

*Answer:* Teaching children how to think and how to apply their thoughts toward a desired outcome is both involving and rewarding to the individual.

Personally, creative problem-solving skills are the tools that allow a child to approach, cope, and deal with social pressures and negative influences. It is significant to note that investigations have shown that the creative thinking processes can be taught to children. When children become more creative, it is not unusual for gains to appear in measures of seriousness, sensitivity, and self-sufficiency. In summary, it can be said that instruction in the creative problem solving processes leads to both cognitive and affective growth in children.

**Problem Solving as a Basic Skill**

Psychologist Abraham H. Maslow (1972) has declared, "What a person can be, he must be." Maslow is saying that each person has the need to become all that he or she is capable of becoming. For each child to grow to their fullest potential is a wish held by parents and teachers alike. Guiding children along the path to social and academic growth is a monumental responsibility.

Meeting the individual needs of children is a well established educational goal. It is acknowledged that no single learning prescription fits all children equally well. Yet, an uneasy groping for a master plan having general application seems to exist in both home and school. Parents and teachers are expressing the need for a general method, a practical plan for guiding the social and academic growth of children. They are saying that children need to be motivated to grow intellectually and to cope with situations that have no pat answers.

Creative problem-solving is a basic skill and a good sense approach to modern day living and learning. It provides for the application of a broad range of thinking processes. It is a practical style of learning having transfer value. It serves as a model for artistic expression, scientific investigation, and social inquiry. It is also a model for improving relationships, dealing with social uncertainties, and reducing stress that individuals sometimes experience.

## STEPPING THE LEVELS OF CREATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING<sup>1</sup>

- Level I**      *Sensing Problems and Challenges*  
Being alert to situations and conditions needing improvement.  
Noticing and getting the feeling that things are not as good as they should be.
- Level II**      *Fact-Finding*  
Getting information as an aid to understanding the situation.  
Digging in and getting at the cause of things.  
Asking questions, finding out about it for sure.
- Level III**      *Problem-Finding*  
Looking at the whole puzzle to see how the pieces fit together.  
Using facts to identify the parts of a big problem.  
Selecting and stating a manageable problem.
- Level IV**      *Idea-Finding*  
Coming up with lots of ways to solve a problem.  
Thinking of ways that are different and far out.  
Thinking up things that nobody else will think of.
- Level V**      *Solution-Finding*  
Looking at our ideas to see which one might work. Coming up with some measures to see how good our ideas really are. Picking out the ideas that measure out as the best.
- Level VI**      *Acceptance-Finding*  
Preparing a plan to put our ideas to work.  
Figuring out what needs to be done and how to do it.  
Finding out about other things that need to be improved.
- Note: The levels appear and should be taught in hierarchical or stair-step order. Each level is an outgrowth of the preceding level and follows in sequential order.*

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<sup>1</sup>The five stage process described by Parnes and his colleagues has been modified for use by children (Parnes, 1967; Noller, Parnes, and Biondi, 1976; and Noller, 1977). Permission to reprint the five stage process appearing in *Scratching the Surface of Creative Problem Solving, A Bird's Eye View of CPS* (Noller, 1977) has been granted by the D.O.K. Publishing Company of Buffalo, New York 14214, and The Creative Education Foundation, Buffalo, New York 14222.