PROBLEM SOLVING

1. If your companion's behavior is causing you a problem, ask for permission to share your feelings. Your companion may listen at that time or if it's not possible because of time schedules or commitments, set another time as soon as possible that same day or sleep on it first.

2. Do not go over two or three minutes in sharing your feelings about the problem. Do not be repetitious, judgmental, belittling, critical, attacking or defensive.

3. The "sending formula" is I.F.A.B., which stands for "I feel...about...because..." (You fill in the blanks with the emotion you are feeling, what you are feeling that way about, and what the results of the feelings and the other person's action or behavior are to you.)

4. The "receiving formula" is L.O.V.E., which stands for "Listen", "Observe", "Verify", and Empathize". The receiver:
   - **LISTENS** to the words the sender is saying.
   - **OBSERVES** the body language, facial expression and tone of voice (words are only 7% of communication; body language is 55%, facial expression and the tone of voice make up the other 38%).
   - **VERIFIES** what the other person is saying, or what the receiver believes or thinks the sender is saying (This step is very important because most misunderstandings take place in this area. The receiver sometimes assumes he knows what the other person means, or interprets the feelings without really listening to them or hearing what the other person is actually feeling.) To verify one would say something like "Are you saying...", "Do you mean...", "Let's see if I understand what you're saying or feeling", etc. Then the sender may say "Yes, that's what I mean", or "no, I'm not saying or feeling that but this...". They continue with the verifying until each one is sure communication has taken place and there is no misunderstanding, and each is sure that the message being sent and received is the same message.
   - **EMPATHIZES** by trying hard to feel what the other person is feeling, by understanding, expressing concern or apology.

5. Each of you then thank each other for honestly sharing feelings with each other.

6. The sender is also responsible for sharing a creative solution to the problem.

7. The receiver may accept the solution, or suggest an alternative solution.

8. You both negotiate until a solution acceptable to both is reached.

9. Sometimes there really isn't a solution needed; sometimes the sender just needs to share some feelings and the receiver just needs to listen and understand. If this is the case, the sender can say "I really don't need you to try to solve this problem; I just need you to listen to my feelings." Or the receiver can ask if she/he needs to try to "fix-it" or just listen and understand.