

## ***PROBLEMS WITH RELATIONSHIPS***

### ***WHAT TO DO***

This is a Detention Learning Packet. It consists of several pages of text and a Response sheet that asks questions about what you did, why you did it, and what goals you must set to avoid doing it in the future. Read the text and try to remember what you read. Then read the Response Sheet and write answers to the questions.

### ***WHAT YOU DID AND WHY IT WAS WRONG***

You have been given a detention because you are having trouble getting along with others, including other students, teachers, administrators or other members of the school staff.

Problems relating to others can take many forms. Maybe you have trouble working as a member of a group and cooperating with others. Possibly you argue and fight with others too often. Maybe you only see things your way and aren't willing to go along with others. Do you sometimes have a problem with being stubborn?

Your years in junior high school or middle school are an exciting time for you. You are living in a period of your life when you are separating more and more from your family and becoming your own person. You do things and go places with other people your own age. You have a life separate and apart from the family. In a sense, you are developing your independence. But you must be careful not to force this "new you" on others. Go slowly!

You are also becoming a member of a group. Sometimes we call it "the peer group"-- meaning that it's a group of people who are about the same age and the same grade in school. Maybe they share the same background and the same interests. This group becomes very important to students. They don't want to be "different" or strange; they want to fit in, to be liked and to be accepted as

members of the group. If possible, they would like to be looked up to be the group. But this can be an unrealistic goal.

Being accepted sometimes means doing simple things, like dressing in a certain way or going to a certain place or using certain expressions. But at other times, it can mean giving in to what we call "peer pressure"--pressure from some people in the group to do silly or dangerous things, like smoking, drinking or even doing drugs. These acts require us to go beyond what is necessary to be accepted by most people. Often, people do such things because they feel that they must prove themselves.

Let's look at stories about people who have problems with relationships.

## ***STORIES ABOUT PROBLEMS WITH RELATIONSHIPS***

### **ARGUMENTATIVE ARTHUR**

Arthur is a very good student. He is bright and quick and a good talker. But Arthur has one big problem: Arthur likes to argue.

No matter what you say, Arthur will take the opposite side. If you tell him it's raining outside, Arthur will say the sun is shining. If you say it's hot, Arthur thinks it's cold. If you like the book or the teacher, Arthur doesn't.

Arthur knows about a lot of things. He reads books and watches educational programs on TV. He goes to lots of movies. He keeps up with the news and current events. Arthur likes to argue about everything he reads. Your opinion doesn't count. Arthur is interested only in what he thinks.

People like Arthur when they first meet him. He's exciting and fun to be with--until he begins to argue. Then everyone slowly drifts away, leaving Arthur standing there all alone, with no one to argue with. Arthur drives them all away. To make his point, Arthur will sometimes get so carried away that he insults the person he is talking with at the time--even if that person is a teacher.

## **PAM THE PEOPLE-PLEASER**

Pam wants to be liked. Her main goal in life is to be the most popular girl in her class. Pam will do anything to be popular.

Pam always wears the "right" clothes. She always wears designer jeans, the latest tops and the most expensive shoes. But Pam looks like a carbon copy of everyone else. She doesn't try to dress for herself. She just tries to look like the most popular girls in school.

Pam tries hard to make everyone like her. She uses her parents' credit cards to buy gifts for people who really aren't her friends. She brings candy from home and gives everyone a piece, even though she knows it's against the rules. She thinks she can buy her way into friendships, but she can't.

Pam always goes along with the group. If the girls she's trying to imitate make fun of another girl who talks differently or doesn't dress in the latest styles, Pam makes fun of her too. She won't be friends with a girl she thinks is unpopular because she wants so much to be in the "in crowd."

Pam isn't in charge of her own life. She lets other people make decisions for her. When other people decide to stay out late, Pam stays out with them, even though it's past the time she promised her parents that she would be home. When people around her try cigarettes or alcohol or drugs, Pam does it too, because she's so afraid of being different.

Pam's whole life is spent trying to please other people. Whatever you say, Pam agrees with you. She never thinks about what she wants to do or what she likes, because she doesn't know. Pam's insecurity can get her into trouble because she is so willing to follow anyone, even if the example is a bad one. Pam's whole life is spent being a people-pleaser.

## **IRVING THE INDIVIDUALIST**

Irving is considered the "lone wolf" in his class. He doesn't have any friends and says he doesn't need any. He eats lunch alone. He goes home alone after school. He spends his free time alone.

Irving is a good student. He's also a good athlete, but he doesn't like team sports. He likes things he can do alone. When people ask him to join them, Irving always has an excuse. He just wants to be left alone.

Irving doesn't cooperate on class projects. He either says they're silly and stupid, or he gets angry at the people working on the project. He doesn't get along with other students or with his teachers. Irving is not only an individualist. He's also very lonely. He doesn't yet know that he needs other people. Maybe he'll never learn the value of friendship and sharing.

## ***WHY PEOPLE HAVE PROBLEMS RELATING***

Junior high or middle school students are in a transitional period in their lives--meaning that they're between elementary and high school. Sometimes they feel very grown-up and self-reliant. At other times, they feel like scared little children.

Those feelings are normal; even adults have the same feelings at times. But what happens is that people over-react, or give the wrong response to living in this in-between stage. As a result, people sometimes do such things as:

- Argue, get angry or lose their tempers
- Withdraw from school activities and friends
- Get depressed
- Sleep or eat too much or too little
- Spend all their time thinking about hair, clothes, weight problems, etc., instead of trying to live a balanced life

- Make fun of other students who are different, or call them names (This makes them feel that their own faults aren't so bad after all)
- Rebel against teachers or principals or other people in authority
- Refuse to cooperate
- Become moody and difficult to get along with--"up" one day and "down" the next

People who have trouble with relationships often don't respect the rights of others. They tend to be very self-centered and absorbed in themselves and their problems. They frequently fail to look at situations from the other person's point of view.

Some people have trouble with relationships because they are people-pleasers, like Pam. They spend all their time trying to "fit in," to become a member of the most popular and most "in" group. Others try hard to be accepted by the "out" group. This is usually an easy group to be accepted by in school. Either way, these students' lives are spent trying to impress and please others. They're afraid of being different. They want to be clones of everyone else.

Other people, like Arthur and Irving, try to put people off. They argue or get angry or isolate themselves from others. They won't cooperate. They don't try to get along because they are being too self-centered.

Either extreme can result in problems. Acting like Pam can cause you to do things you know are foolish or wrong, just because "everyone is doing it." Acting like Irving can lead to being cut off from people and never being able to ask for help, even when you need it. Acting like Arthur can result in not being able to get along with anybody. These are all undesirable characteristics.

## ***WHAT HAPPENS WITH RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS***

A school is a place to learn, develop skills, prepare for the future, work together and make friends. The school is a community that depends on people being able to work together in groups for many different purposes.

One or two people can disrupt a community. They can destroy what it has taken a long time for others to build.

People like Pam, who just go along with the crowd and do everything that's expected of them, may think that what they are doing is good for the community. Actually, it's not. By not standing up for what they believe and consider right, they have a negative effect on others. When Pam doesn't speak up against smoking or drinking, or doesn't reach out to be friendly toward an unpopular girl, her actions take something away from the values being taught at school.

People like Irving and Arthur have a negative impact on their school because they argue or isolate themselves instead of extending themselves and cooperating with others. Imagine what the school would be like if everyone acted that way! There would be no team sports, no class projects, no faculty meetings, no parents' groups. Almost everything we do depends to some extent on our getting along with others.

## ***WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO IN THE FUTURE***

Everybody knows that having problems with relationships can create other problems. For example, people who work as store clerks have to get along well with their customers or they might lose their jobs. The important thing is for you to find a way to get along better with other people. Try to figure out why you have had problems with relationships in the past so that you can change your approach in the future.

You may benefit from setting some goals for yourself. The questions on the Response sheets that follow will help you to think about ways to improve the way you are relating or working with others.

# STUDENT RESPONSE PACKET # 11.1

## *PROBLEMS WITH RELATIONSHIPS*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_ HOMEROOM \_\_\_\_\_

### *WHAT TO DO*

Below are some questions about what you have read. These questions will help you learn why you get into trouble and how you can avoid getting into trouble in the future. Your teacher, a counselor, the principal, or your parents may read your answers. Your answers will not be graded.

Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, use good grammar, and write in complete sentences. If you don't understand what you are supposed to do, ask your detention supervisor.

When you finish, give your Learning Packet and Response sheets to the detention supervisor and return to your desk. The supervisor will tell you when to leave.

1. In your opinion, what is your biggest problem in relating to or working with others (be honest!)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What recent problem with relations caused you to serve this detention? What were you thinking or feeling when the problem started?

3. In your own mind, do you think you have problems in getting along with others? Why or why not?
  
4. You've read three stories about students who had problems with relationships. What problem does Arthur have in relating to others?
  
5. What problem does Pam have in relating to others?
  
6. What problem does Irving have in relating to others?
  
7. How can having problems in getting along with others create more problems?
  
8. Write two goals that will help you have fewer problems with relationships in the future.



# STUDENT RESPONSE PACKET # 11.2

## *PROBLEMS WITH RELATIONSHIPS*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

GRADE \_\_ HOMEROOM \_\_\_\_\_

### *WHAT TO DO*

Below are some questions about what you have read. These questions will help you learn why you get into trouble and how you can avoid getting into trouble in the future. Your teacher, a counselor, the principal, or your parents may read your answers. Your answers will not be graded.

Write your answers in the spaces below the questions. If there is not enough room, write on the backs of these sheets. Be neat, spell correctly, use good grammar, and write in complete sentences. If you don't understand what you are supposed to do, ask your detention supervisor.

When you finish, give the Learning Packet and your Response sheets to the detention supervisor and return to your desk. The supervisor will tell you when to leave.

1. You have been having problems relating to others again. What happened this time?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. If this problem is different from the one you had last time, explain the difference. If it is the same, tell why this problem came up again.

3. Do you have any relationships that are free from problems? Describe them. (For example, a person may get along with his or her parents but not with brothers or sisters).
  
4. You've read three stories about people who have problems with relationships. Write a goal that would help Arthur to improve his relationships with other people.
  
5. Write a goal for Pam.
  
6. What advice would you give Irving?
  
7. Last time you were in detention, you wrote two goals for yourself. Why didn't you achieve them?
  
8. Write another goal for yourself. Remember why you didn't reach your goals last time.