



COOL IT DOWN!

Stop pointing fingers, start finding solutions

Avoid the blame game. Instead, focus on how to solve problems.

When things go wrong, some people immediately try to single out whose fault it is. That can lead to everyone blaming each other. In the end, nothing gets done about whatever went wrong.

For example, let's say Will gets dengue fever. The doctor says it is the mosquito's fault. She scolds Will for not using insect repellent. The doctor also accuses his parents of allowing mosquitos to breed at home. And, that is all she does — blame mosquito, blame Will and blame parents. The most urgent issue (his illness) is neglected.

Instead of pointing fingers of blame, the doctor should be asking: **“What treatment will help Will to recover?”** and **“How can we prevent dengue fever spreading?”** It should be less about whose fault it is. It should be more about how to make things better.

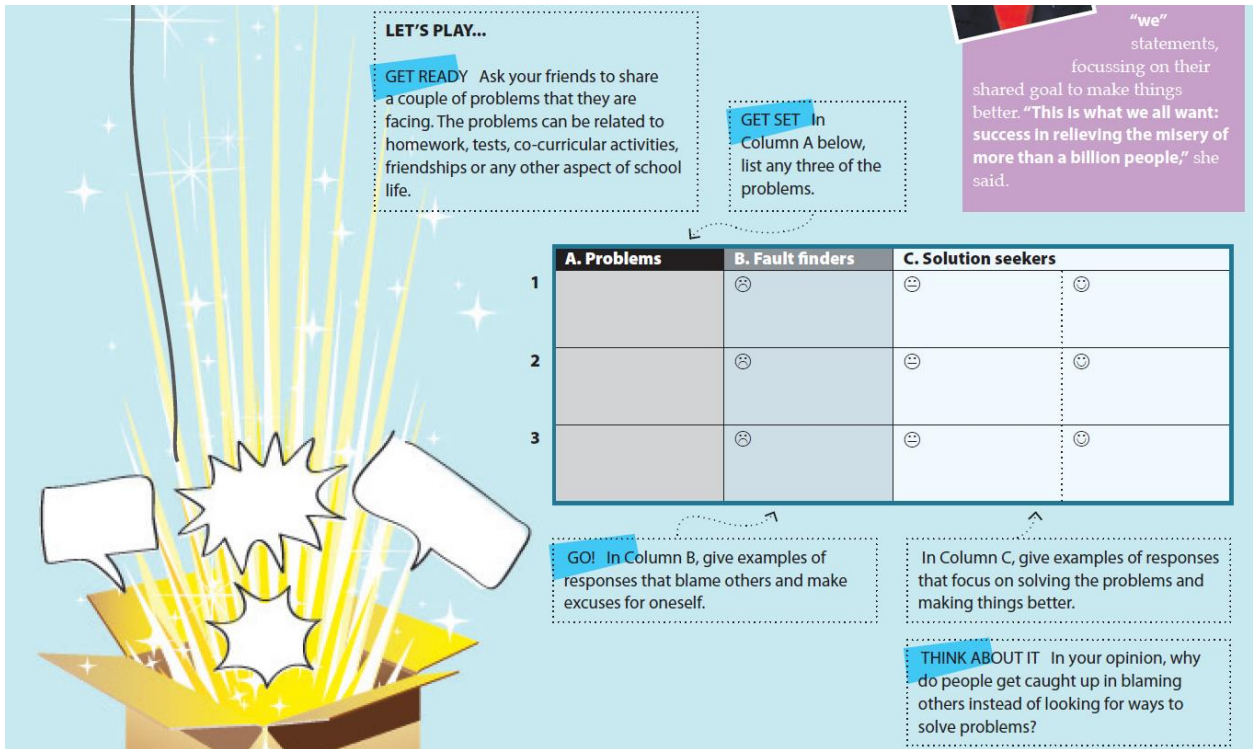
When you encounter a problem, do you blame others or make excuses for yourself? If you do, then stop, rewind and start again. This time, try to pinpoint what exactly went wrong (your diagnosis). Then, figure out how to make it right again (your treatment). And, stop it from repeating (your prevention plan). Can you see how this second route is about solutions rather than blame?

Your choice of words can steer you straight into finger pointing or towards healthy solution seeking. For instance, see how different these feel:

- ☹️ **“Who messed up?” “It’s your fault.” “Don’t blame me!”**
- 😐 **“I wonder what went wrong.” “How can it be fixed?”**
- 😊 **“Surely we can make it better. Let’s figure out how.”**

Notice how the ☹️ questions feel negative? The 😐 questions are neutral and good to ask. The 😊 statements are inclusive: **“we”** and **“us”** mean that you and I are in this together. The 😊 statements also offer hope. Use a combination of 😐 and 😊 responses when something goes wrong in your life.

Activity



LET'S PLAY...

GET READY Ask your friends to share a couple of problems that they are facing. The problems can be related to homework, tests, co-curricular activities, friendships or any other aspect of school life.

GET SET In Column A below, list any three of the problems.

GO! In Column B, give examples of responses that blame others and make excuses for oneself.

In Column C, give examples of responses that focus on solving the problems and making things better.

THINK ABOUT IT In your opinion, why do people get caught up in blaming others instead of looking for ways to solve problems?

“we” statements, focussing on their shared goal to make things better. “This is what we all want: success in relieving the misery of more than a billion people,” she said.

	A. Problems	B. Fault finders	C. Solution seekers	
1		☹	☺	☺
2		☹	☺	☺
3		☹	☺	☺

Cool It Down! is a series about choosing words wisely when you speak. The series is brought to you by *What's Up* in partnership with the Speak Good English Movement of Singapore

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