

# Problem-Solving Activity

Teen teachers need to learn to plan for problems. That is, they should be encouraged to think about problems that could arise during an activity, how they might prevent the problem from occurring, and how they might resolve it. Teenagers who feel confident that they can handle difficult situations are more successful as teachers.

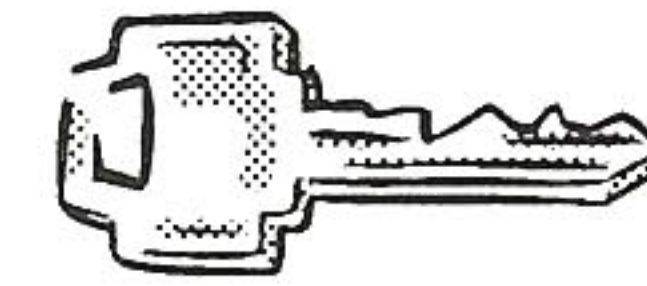
## Preparation

- Use the situations common to group activities with young children, below, or think of some of your own. Print each situation on a separate index card. (Do not include the key ideas on the index card.) You will need at least one situation for each pair of teenagers.

## Activity Directions

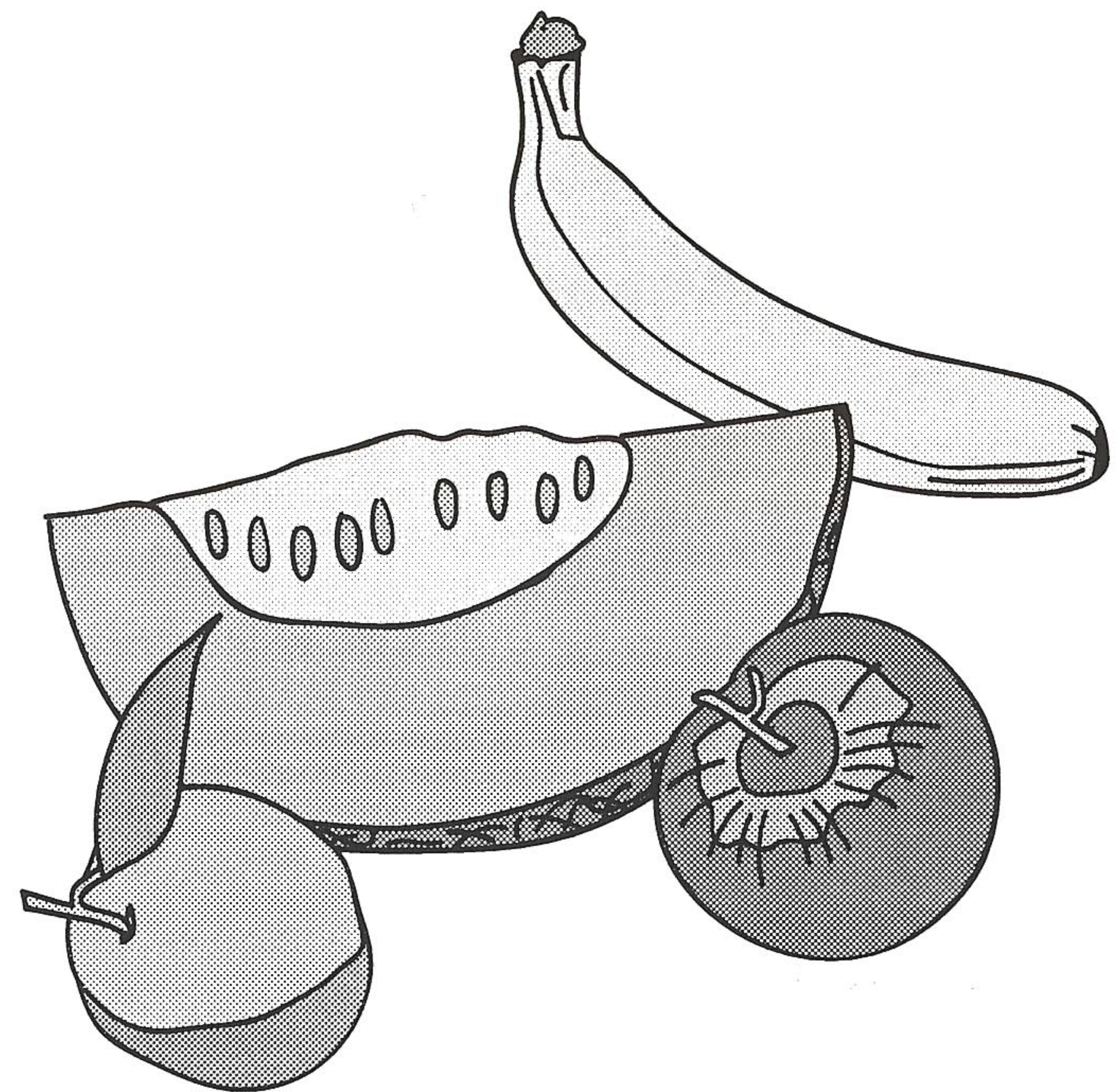
- Teenagers are paired. Each pair of teens pulls a card from a “hat” and discusses the situation for 5 to 10 minutes. They should write down ideas for preventing and resolving the problem.
- Reconvene the large group. Ask a teen from each pair to read their situation and to describe the ideas they wrote.
- Invite the entire group to give additional ideas. Mention any of the key ideas from the list below that the pair did not include.
- Continue until all situations have been discussed.

**Situation 1.** There are 10 children in your group. They are going to make a fruit salad. You have 1 peach, 1 cantaloupe, 1 banana, and 1 plum. All the children want to cut up fruit. What should you have done to avoid this and what do you do now?



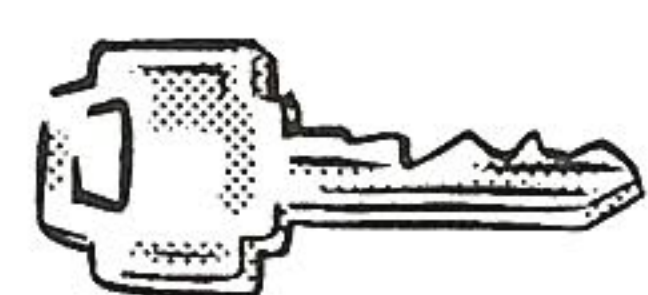
## Key Ideas for Situation 1

- Each child must be able to participate.
- When children have nothing to do, they become bored and problems arise.
- Precut some large pieces of fruit so there is something for each child to cut.
- If some children do not get to cut fruit, give them another important job like serving the salad; however, do not punish them with cleanup.





**Situation 2.** Your group of children is going to prepare the garden for planting. While you are giving instructions, children pick up the tools (some are sharp) and begin playing with them. What should you have done to avoid this and what do you do now?

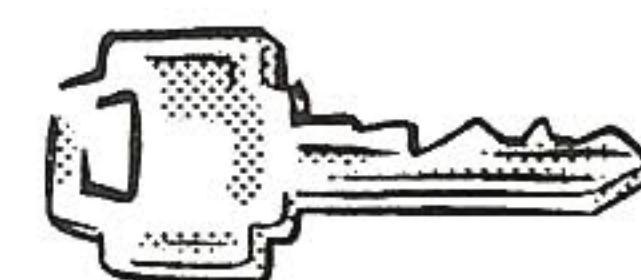


### Key Ideas for Situation 2

- The tools should not be accessible until you are ready to begin the activity.
- Be sure the children know safety rules before being allowed to use tools.
- Pair older children with younger ones.
- When children play with the tools, take the tools away until they demonstrate they can handle them safely.



**Situation 3.** Your group has finished preparing and eating their afternoon snack. The table is sticky, there are crumbs on the floor, and the children are running around. You yell at them to clean up but they don't listen to you and they don't help. What should you have done to avoid this and what do you do now?



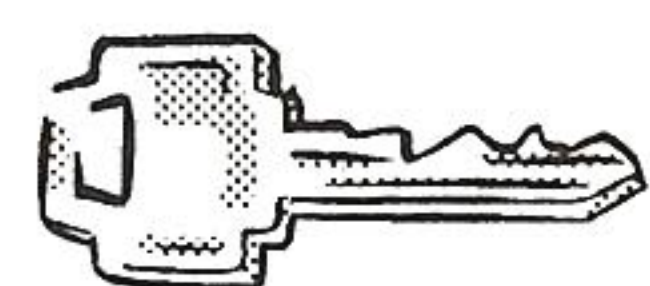
### Key Ideas for Situation 3

- Have the children clean up before letting them eat their snack.
- Have enough cleaning materials (rags, etc.) so they can all help.
- Give specific instructions such as: Wash the table until it no longer feels sticky.
- Don't yell. Use a soft whistle, a bell, or a soft voice to get attention.





**Situation 4.** Your group is mixing poster paint. John is measuring water into a cup over the bowl of dry paint when the cup overflows and turns the paint very watery. The other children yell at him and he begins to cry. What should you have done to avoid this and what do you do now?

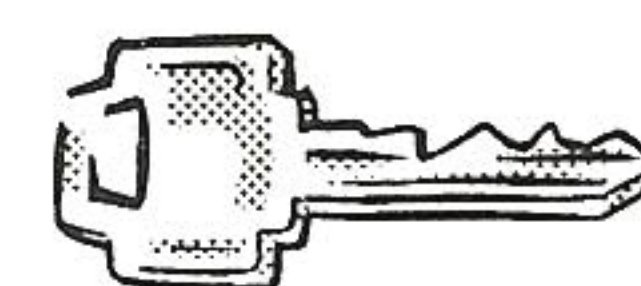


### Key Ideas for Situation 4

- Have children measure materials away from the final product.
- Use resilient recipes that can be fixed.
- Let the group know that put-downs are not allowed.
- Have John fix the paint by draining off water or adding more powder: It is important to his self-esteem that he, and not you, correct the mistake.



**Situation 5.** You decide to play a team game. You pick two children to be captains and to choose their own teams. Most children noisily volunteer for the team of their choice, the quiet children refuse to play, and the selection process takes a very long time. What should you have done to avoid this and what do you do now?



### Key Ideas for Situation 5

- Do not use this method for creating teams. It creates hurt feelings and becomes a game of popularity.
- Use an alternate method, such as numbering off, dividing by color of clothing, or putting in pairs, and then put half on one team and half on the other.
- Stop a process if it is not working and use another method.