

Problem Page writing task

Example problem



Problem

I have just started going out with my first boyfriend. Though I trust him, I can't stop worrying about our relationship. I spent a great day with him recently, but afterwards doubts started to creep in. I kept looking back over things he said or reactions he made, and it's driving me crazy. The more I like him the worse it gets. He keeps asking me if anything is wrong but I don't want to unleash all this craziness on him. I know I just need to get a grip.

Response

When we really care about someone we become vulnerable because we can never guarantee that we won't get hurt. But maybe you are super-sensitive about this because you have been let down in the past, or because you lack self-confidence. You need to work on this – because only when you value yourself will you believe that others value you too. Write down all the things that are good in your relationship, and I'm sure they will outweigh your doubts. Tell your boyfriend that he isn't doing anything wrong, but because of your own self-doubt you sometimes worry if he really likes you. He sounds as if he does and will reassure you, so believe in him. Try reading *Self Esteem* by Gael Lindenfield.

(Written extract taken from Mail on Sunday magazine; 7th Feb. 2010)

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Instructions for Group Work

1. One person to be spokesperson who feeds back group reply to the rest of the group.
2. All ideas are important – **all should join in discussion.**
3. Ask yourselves these questions when thinking about the problem:
 - a. **What does this person want to achieve?**
 - b. **What /who is stopping them from doing this?**
 - c. **What advice would you give this person?**
4. Create a group response to the problem.

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5. Each member of the group should fill in an individual 'speech bubble' sheet, writing the group's response on it.
6. Take care with **punctuation and spelling** (use dictionary / ask if unsure of spelling).
7. Aim to offer advice in the style of a 'problem page' writer e.g. personal / informal / fairly simple language / short sentences.
8. Response should be no more than 60 words.
9. Feedback group responses.
10. When feedback is taking place **listen carefully** to what is being said. You will all be asked to give your opinion on which group you felt gave the closest answer to the 'model' reply given by the newspaper writer.
11. **Have fun – and remember – all ideas are welcome!**



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Teaching notes

I created these hand-outs for my Entry 1 to Level 1 learners and used them to accompany Saul Pope's E3-L2 Problem Page resource.

I found the resources very useful for both motivational purposes (all students enjoyed the discussion aspect) and also to inform future planning (all students found it difficult putting pen to paper when writing their response).

The initial hand-out (page 1) is an example problem and response taken from a contemporary magazine. I read out the problem to the group (in case Entry learners struggled with some of the more complex language) and then asked for their response. I also built in some Socratic questioning techniques into this activity.

I followed up the Socratic questioning in the second hand-out (p 2-3) which provides instructions for group discussions.

The Socratic questioning techniques were useful for both the students and me and helped keep the group on task.