

## Problem of Practice Fishbowl

There is a great deal of structure in this following “problem of practice” exercise. This structure is important though, because it eliminates some of the most common barriers to finding creative solutions.

- Sequential
- Non-Sequential
- Optional Empty Chair

(1) Rotating Empty Chair;

(2) Anyone from the outside can join the inner circle, make a suggestion and return to the observing group;

(3) A volunteer shares a work-related problem;

(4) The volunteer has:

**Some uninterrupted time to describe the issue/problem**

(5) Inner-circle participants can ask clarifying questions;

(6) Inner circle (and empty chair participants):

**Make suggestions without interruption from the volunteer, and to the extent possible, little affect**

- Declarative statements (not questions);
- Someone should take notes for the volunteer to record all brainstormed ideas;

(7) Suggestions are handed to the volunteer;

(8) The volunteer reads the list aloud;

(9) The volunteer chooses one or more of the suggestions on the list to commit to publicly to trying/doing within a specified amount of time;

(10) The volunteer should avoid making evaluative statements about what he/she will **not** do;

(11) The group should give a round of applause (!) to the person who shared the problem.

### The Empty Chair

Place an empty chair in the inner circle. Those in the outer circle are invited to leave their seats and sit in the empty chair to participate *briefly* in the discussion (by making a comment rather than by re-directing the discussion with a question). After they say what they want, they return to their original seats, leaving the empty chair available for anyone else who wishes to participate. The empty chair is a helpful tool in fishbowls because even if members of the outer circle do not use the empty chair, they know they could, which helps them pay more attention to the task.