

Part 11.

Problem Solving.



einstein

Problem Solving.



Is there a problem that you've been finding it difficult to solve? If so, describe the problem and the things you've done to try to solve it...

Albert's Top Problem Solving Tips.



If you've been struggling with a problem that you've been finding it difficult to solve then its possible that by learning my Top Problem Solving Tips you might be able to approach problems in a new way that brings positive results.

'I have divided my method up into two parts that should be followed for successful problem solving. These are:

1. **General Guidelines, and**
2. **Specific Steps.'**

General Guidelines.

- Get someone to help you with the problem.
- Arrange a definite time and place to discuss the problem and its solution with people who can help you.
- Make sure there are no distractions like the TV.
- Discuss one problem at a time.
- If you're dealing with a big problem divide it up into smaller parts and deal with these one at a time.
- Define the problem clearly and positively, avoid vague definitions.
- Keep your problem definitions brief.
- Keep your discussions positive by concentrating on how the problem can be solved rather than getting sidetracked about who is to blame.
- Remember that its usually the problem and not people that make life difficult.
- Acknowledge your share of responsibility for the problem.
- Try to brainstorm as many possible solutions as you can, don't worry if some seem strange or unusual at first.
- Wait until you've thought of as many solutions as possible before you explore whether or not they might work.
- Celebrate success when you effectively solve all or part of the problem.

Albert's Top Problem Solving Tips.



Specific Steps.

1. Define the problem briefly and positively.

Avoid negative, long, or vague definitions of the problem. Here's an example of a negative definition of a problem...

'I would like to fight less with my brother.'

This is a negative definition because it tells you what you should not do (fight) but it doesn't tell you what you should do! Defining the same problem in a positive way is easy. All you have to do is state what you will be doing more of when the problem is solved. Here's an example of the same problem defined in a positive way.

'I would like to get on better with my brother.'

When we define problems in a positive way it usually helps us generate more positive solutions.

2. Brainstorm for as many potential solutions as possible.

This simply means thinking up as many possible solutions as you can. Don't be afraid to be creative and think of solutions that seem strange or unusual at first. Unusual ideas often lead to novel ways of solving problems. Many people find it helpful to write out their possible solution list on a sheet of paper to help them remember all of their ideas.

3. Explore the pros and cons of your solution list.

When you have brainstormed all of the possible solutions review each suggestion and weigh-up its advantages and disadvantages.

4. Agree a plan of action with the people who are helping you.

Once you have thought about the advantages and disadvantages of each suggestion pick the best solution(s) that you have found and agree a clear plan of how you will put them into practice.

5. Implement your plan.

There is no point in having a plan if you don't put it into practice!!!

6. Review your progress.

Difficult problems take time and often a number of attempts may be needed before we can solve them. This is why its important to review the progress you are making as you put your planned solutions into practice. You should do this with the people that have helped you generate your solution list.

7. Revise your original plan.

If your plan has not solved the problem on the first attempt don't be discouraged and give up. Instead revise your plan and brainstorm modifications that you can make for another attempt. Don't give yourself a hard time for things that don't work out perfectly.

8. Celebrate your success.

If you have completely solved your problem or only partially solved it remember to celebrate the positive advances that you have made.

9. Maintain the positive changes that you have made.

Be sure not to slip back into old ways that led to the problem in the first place. Instead stay alert and keep putting successful solutions into practice.'



Here's how a vampire friend of mine set about using my problem solving method to solve the difficulty of his lack of popularity with his fellow townspeople when he wanted to run for Mayor of his hometown of Vlackan Blackan Mackan Staad which is in Transylvania.

Count Duffy For Vampire Mayor.



Count Duffy is a Vampire and has lived (well kind of) in Vlackan Blackan Mackan Staad, in Transylvania for 327 years. He's been there so long that he has grown extremely fond of the place. So much so in fact that he would like to become the first Vampire Mayor of his home town.

Sadly because he is a Vampire he is extremely unpopular with the local townspeople and at the last Mayoral Election he only got two votes. He knows that one of these was from himself and the other was from Igor his faithful servant.

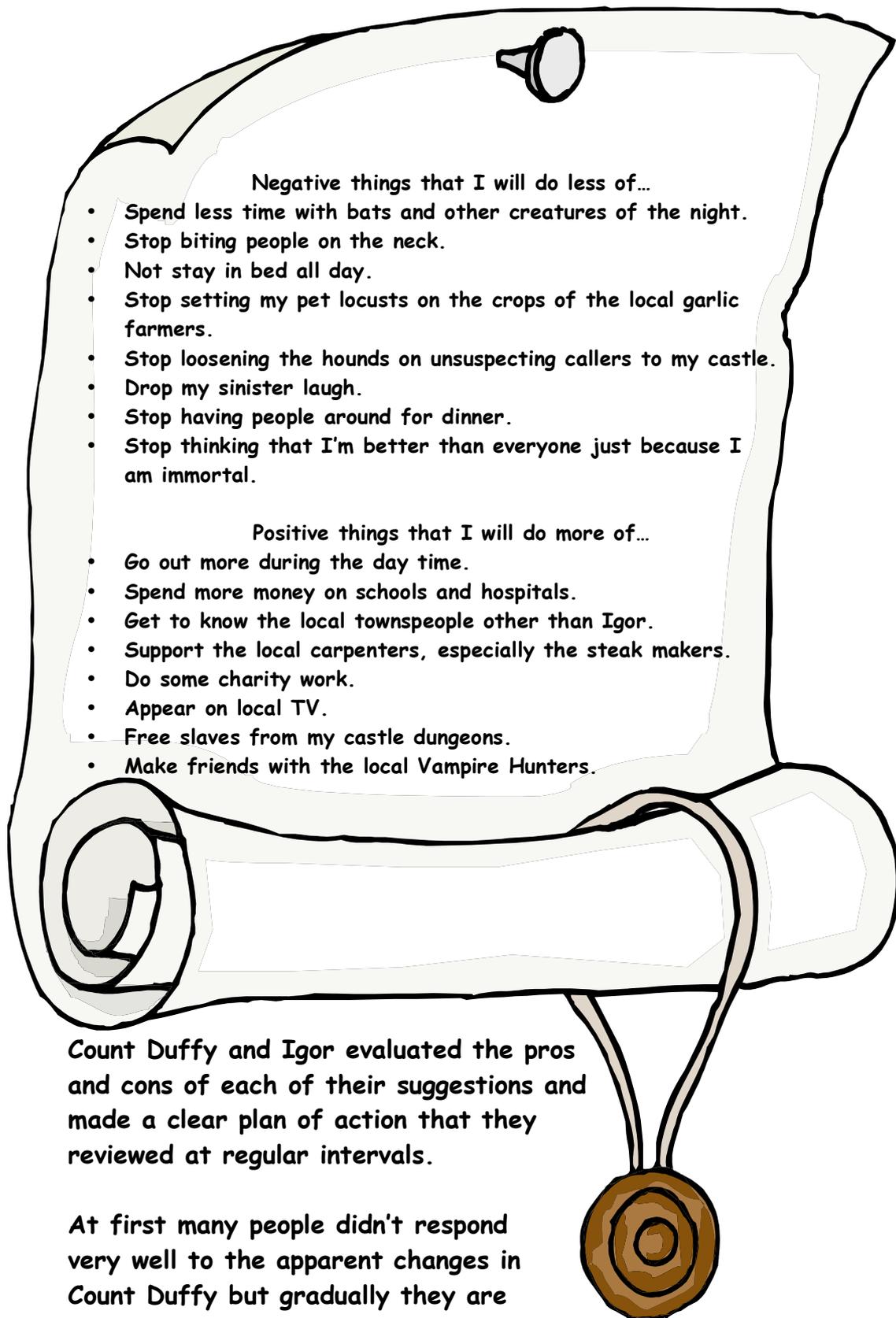
Count Duffy recognised that he could not solve the problem of his unpopularity on his own and asked Igor to help him to begin to put Albert's Top Problem Solving Tips into practice.



First of all they read through the general and specific guidelines. They set aside some time and then positively defined Count Duffy's problem as:

'I would like to make myself more popular with the townspeople of Vlackan Blackan Mackan Staad in the hope that more of them will vote for me at the next Mayoral Election.'

They then brainstormed the following potential solutions list. See what you think of the pros and cons of each of their suggestions...



Negative things that I will do less of...

- Spend less time with bats and other creatures of the night.
- Stop biting people on the neck.
- Not stay in bed all day.
- Stop setting my pet locusts on the crops of the local garlic farmers.
- Stop loosening the hounds on unsuspecting callers to my castle.
- Drop my sinister laugh.
- Stop having people around for dinner.
- Stop thinking that I'm better than everyone just because I am immortal.

Positive things that I will do more of...

- Go out more during the day time.
- Spend more money on schools and hospitals.
- Get to know the local townspeople other than Igor.
- Support the local carpenters, especially the steak makers.
- Do some charity work.
- Appear on local TV.
- Free slaves from my castle dungeons.
- Make friends with the local Vampire Hunters.

Count Duffy and Igor evaluated the pros and cons of each of their suggestions and made a clear plan of action that they reviewed at regular intervals.

At first many people didn't respond very well to the apparent changes in Count Duffy but gradually they are coming around. The Count is hopeful that he will get more than two votes at the next election...

Problem Solving.

Think back on the problem that you described earlier and use these two pages to apply Albert's Top Problem Solving Tips for yourself.

The people who are going to help me are...

We have agreed to have our problem solving meeting on...

We have reviewed Albert's *General and Specific Problem Solving Guidelines* and our positive definition of the problem is....

Our brainstorming for solutions has generated the following list...



Pros and Cons of these solutions are...

The solutions we have chosen to put into practice are...

Our plan of action is...

We will review our progress on...

Modifications to our plan are...

Successes for us to celebrate are...



Problem Solving.

From completing this part of my guidebook I think these are the most important things for me about problem solving...

