**Problem Solving**

**Total absence of problems would be the beginning of death for a society or an individual. We aren’t constructed to live in that kind of world. We are problem-solvers by nature, problem-seekers, problem-requirers. *(John W. Gardner)***

**The answers to some of my problems are causing some of my other problems. *(Ashleigh Brilliant, in Pot-Shots)***

**Too often we give children answers to remember rather than problems to solve. *(Roger Lewin, science writer)***

**Don't ask a question if you're not willing to hear the answer. *(Lou Brown, in Guideposts magazine)***

**Use different tools to solve a problem than what was used to create it.  
We can’t solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them. *(Albert Einstein)***

**The problem is not that there are problems. The problem is expecting otherwise and thinking that having problems is a problem. (Theodore Isaac Rubin, psychiatrist and auther)**

**Whatever the problem, be part of the solution. Don't just sit around raising questions and pointing out obstacles. *(Tina Fey)***

**The trick to figuring out “new diseases” is less a matter of identifying bizarre killer germs than one of isolating the features of modern life and the environment that have given old microbes new power. (Michael Rogers, in Reader's Digest)**

**The first step in solving a problem is to tell someone about it. (John Peter Flynn)**

**It's so much easier to suggest solutions when you don't know too much about the problem. *(Malcolm Forbes, in The Sayings of Chairman Malcolm)***

**Goodness untempered by tough intelligence solves few human problems. (Edward Hodnett)**

**Google provides nearly instantaneous answers to more than 200 million search queries on an average day. During peak hours, the service responds to roughly 2,000 queries a second, relying on a network of more than 10,000 computers running the open-source Linux operating system. (Discover magazine, July, 2004)**

**Some questions don't have answers, which is a terribly difficult lesson to learn. *(Katharine Graham)***

**Some problems are tougher than others. Sometimes we find that it is not possible to solve one in the way that we originally planned. We have to stop, reevaluate, and come up with a different approach. Lincoln used to tell a story about Ulysses S. Grant to illustrate this point. When Grant was a boy he liked to attend the circus with the other kids of the neighborhood. One circus had a mule so trained that nobody could ride him without being thrown. A dollar was offered – big money in those days – to anyone who could hang on while the mule went around the ring. Several men tried but all were shaken off. Goaded by the other boys to try, Grant stepped forward. He hung on until almost around the ring when he slid off over the animal’s head like the others. Grant thought for a moment, then asked for another try. Once more he mounted the mule, but this time instead of facing forward he turned his back to the mule’s head, coiling his legs around the mule’s stomach and taking a firm grasp of its tail with both hands. The mule tried in vain, with head down, and then by standing on his hind legs, to shake Grant off. Around and around the ring they went until finally the mule gave up. Grant stuck on and won his dollar. (Bits & Pieces)**

**The only interesting answers are those which destroy the questions. (Susan Sontag)**

**Just as most issues are seldom black or white, so are most good solutions seldom black or white. Beware of the solution that requires one side to be totally the loser and the other side to be totally the winner. The reason there are two sides to begin with usually is because neither side has all the facts. Therefore, when the wise mediator effects a compromise, he is not acting from political motivation. Rather, he is acting from a deep sense of respect for the whole truth. (Stephen R. Schwambach)**

**A problem well stated is a problem half solved. (Charles Kettering)**

**Most of us at one time or another are like the man who was overheard telling his wife, “Now look, I know what I know, and it’s no use trying to confuse me with facts!” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**For every problem there is a solution – even if it’s learning to live with the problem. (Our Daily Bread)**

**For every complex problem, there’s a solution that is simple, neat, and wrong. (H. L. Mencken, in A Mencken Chrestomathy)**

**There are no right answers to wrong questions. (Ursula K. Le Guin, science fiction author)**

**The greatest and most important problems of life cannot be solved. They can only be outgrown. (Frank Herbert, novelist)**

**A good solution applied with vigor now is better than a perfect solution applied 10 minutes later. *(General George Patton)***

**People who believe a problem can be solved tend to get busy solving it. (William Raspberry)**

**There’s no such thing as the perfect solution. Every solution, no matter how good, creates new problems. (Bits & Pieces)**

**Only one person can solve all the world’s problems, and wherever you sit, he's usually in the chair right next to you*. (Bits & Pieces)***

**Being a philosopher, I have a problem for every solution. *(Robert Zend)***

**Dr. Frederic Flach, a New York psychiatrist and leading authority on creativity, says that restating the question can often be the first step toward discovering the solution. "Instead of asking, 'Should I get a divorce?'"suggests Dr. Flach, "you might ask, 'Does it make more sense to be on my own?' Similarly, instead of wondering, 'Should I quit my job?' you might ask, 'To what degree does the work I am doing reflect my basic interests?'" *(Dudley Lynch, in Reader's Digest)***

**God never sends us a thorn in our lives that he doesn't send a rose to bloom. (St. Catherine of Siena)**

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**Again and again the impossible problem is solved when we see that the problem is only a tough decision waiting to be made. *(Dr. Robert H. Schuller)***

**When you can't solve the problem, manage it. (The Rev. Robert H. Schuller)**

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**Solved problems have simple answers. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**"I must do something" will always solve more problems that "Something must be done." *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Sometimes it’s better to ask some of the questions than to know all the answers. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Unfortunately, answers that sound good aren’t necessarily good, sound answers. *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Stay away from negative people. They have a problem for every solution. *(Submitted by Guideposts reader Elizabeth Gold, of Briarwood, New York)***

**Robert Sheldon's classic novel, In His Steps, tells the story of a community of people who resolved to meet all life's experience by asking the question, “What would Jesus do in this situation?”(Eric Butterworth, in Discover the Power Within You, p. 18)**

**Canada and Denmark both claimed a small island off the coast of Greenland. Rather than firing shots, in 1984, Canada staked its claim by planting a flag and a bottle of Canadian whisky on the island. Denmark retaliated by planting its flag and a bottle of schnapps. This back-and-forth lasted for decades. Finally, the “Whisky Wars” ended in 2022 when the two countries simply decided to split the island. (BBC, as it appeared in the February, 2025, issue of Reader’s Digest)**

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