

**How to deal with ongoing problems**

Version 1.0

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I made this mindmap to help organize my thoughts about how to deal with ongoing problems involving two or more people (like in a family), where all the people involved can read/write.

**Purple** nodes need work.

**Red** nodes are criticisms.

How to deal with ongoing problems (I quit this mindmap to make the one below instead)

- Problems involving only one person.
- Problems involving two or more people, like a family.

How to deal with multi-person problems (like in a family)

- Many problems are solved quickly with just talking in person or over the phone in just one instance of trying to solve them.
- Some problems resurface and keep resurfacing despite people's efforts to solve them with talking in person or over the phone.
- If somebody is getting upset about a problem, it could be that the problem is ongoing and the person is frustrated about it. He wants the problem to be solved already and he sees it as not solved yet.
- People sometimes recognize that they should put in more effort into problems that keep resurfacing, but their idea of putting in more effort is just doing more of the same things they were doing before. This is a mistake. More effort should include using better methods that are available to the people involved. If you just keep using the same methods that didn't work before, you shouldn't expect them to work now.

Writing down one's ideas and doing written discussion is another.

Writing down one's ideas is one such method. Written discussion is another.

Maybe better to split up into (1) writing one's ideas (self-discussion) and (2) written discussion with other people

**Completely forgetting our most important ideas:** If we don't write down our ideas and track them longterm, then we'll forget a bunch of them, including some of the most important ideas. And then later we will run into trouble that could have been prevented had we remembered those important ideas.

**Inaccurate memory:** With written discussion, as compared with non-written discussion, people can go back to previous comments to review what was said. That helps fix misunderstandings. With non-written discussion, it's way too hard to accurately remember what was said earlier in the discussion, especially when the discussion spans a long time, like months or years.

**More effort to say useful things:** Written discussion requires that you put in extra effort to say what you mean, as compared to non-written discussion. That helps prevent misunderstandings. It also has the effect of giving you extra time to check what you wrote before sending it. You may recognize that what you said is hostile, so you change it to be friendly.

**Account for bias:** Written discussion helps prevent bias in ways that non-written discussion can't. Bias is something we should all be trying to account for. No one is perfectly unbiased, so we should put in effort to prevent bias. Sure we can make an effort to prevent bias even in non-written discussion, but it's way easier to prevent bias with written discussion because we can go back to read what was said in the past instead of relying on our memory. And how much we care to prevent bias should be linked with how big we think a problem is. So if people are getting very upset, that indicates a big problem, so we should escalate things by doing written discussion instead of just relying on non-written discussion.

**Emotional hygiene:** If you read what somebody wrote, compared to hearing what somebody said in person or over the phone, you have a much better chance of not getting upset about the thing being said. Getting upset makes it harder to think rationally. And getting upset has the added effect of causing other people to get upset. I'll call this "emotional resonance". Note that getting upset alone cannot cause another person to get upset — there are other factors required. So written discussion has the effect of protecting us from each other's negative emotions. Written discussion helps us be more rational. Trying to prevent "emotional resonance" by doing written discussion is analogous to trying to prevent us from getting sick from each other by not sharing spoons.

**Find unseen problems:** Putting in more effort to organize one's thoughts in writing gives one more opportunity to discover unseen problems.

**Criticism:** "Why does written discussion require more effort to say what you mean? Lots of people make sloppy, vague written statements." Elliot Temple

**More effort to say useful things:** Often times people say things without much effort to say the most useful thing, and in lots of cases that's ok. But when there is an ongoing problem, people should put in more effort. With written discussion, as compared to non-written discussion, you can spend more time and effort to say what you mean, to reconsider what would be the best thing to say next, etc. That helps prevent misunderstandings.

**Criticism:** "You don't say what ways written discussion does this, besides mentioning memory again." Elliot Temple

**Account for bias:** Bias is something we should all be trying to account for. No one is perfectly unbiased, so we should put in effort to prevent bias. This is especially the case for ongoing problems. Maybe bias is one of the causes of the ongoing problem not getting resolved. Sure we can make an effort to prevent bias even in non-written discussion, but it's way easier to prevent bias with written discussion because we can spend more time thinking about our communications and thus correct errors (like bias errors) before sending those communications. We can also go back to read what was said in the past instead of relying on our (biased) memory.

**Criticism:** "Why [better chance]?" Elliot Temple

**Emotional hygiene:** Getting upset makes it harder to think rationally. And getting upset has the added effect of causing other people to get upset. I'll call this "emotional resonance". Note that getting upset by itself cannot cause another person to get upset — there are other factors required. But ~everyone has those factors. So basically everyone should try to avoid emotional resonance.

Written discussion can help avoid emotional resonance. There are a few of reasons for this: (1) Translating speech into writing omits lots of things that reliably get other people to get emotional, like tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language. Sure somebody can try to use caps to express anger, **but that does not have the same effect** as angry facial expressions, angry tones of voice, and angry body language. (2) With live talking, compared with written discussion, people don't have much time to interpret a communication. Part of the problem is that people feel rushed when there really isn't a rush. The problem has been ongoing for months or years, so there's no reason to demand immediate replies. People should take their time to reply. **They can do this with live speech, but it's much much much easier to do it with written discussion.** (3) With written discussion, if you do get emotional, you can take your time to calm down before writing your communication.

So written discussion has the effect of protecting us from each other's negative emotions. Written discussion helps us be more rational. Trying to prevent emotional resonance by doing written discussion is analogous to trying to prevent us from getting sick from each other by not sharing spoons.

criticism: of first red sentence: why? Static memes adopted by child via live interactions, not written discussion.

criticism: of 2nd red sentence: why easier? And why say it at all?

Criticism of criticism: I don't think I should raise the issue of static memes in this piece.

Potential solution: talk about it without static memes.

**Criticism:** "You don't explain the emphasis on multi-person." Elliot Temple

Maybe I should mention somewhere near the beginning about seen vs unseen problems. Thinking about this helped me make the node to the right.