Trouble and difficulty

1 Complete the idioms so that they mean the same as the phrase in italics. Use the correct form of any verbs. Then use the words to complete the crossword.

Across
2 They have a very difficult task to do, involving a lot of hard work if they’re going to solve the problem. They have a mountain to climb .

4 The main problem which stops us achieving something has been people’s attitudes.

5 His comments have landed him in a difficult situation in which people are angry with him.

6 Her next job was even worse. She had moved from a bad situation to an even worse one.

8 As with all projects, we had a few problems in the early stages.

Down
1 I didn’t really think it would work – I was just trying anything that might succeed because I was desperate.

2 They have a mountain to climb .

3 She gets cross with me, so I get cross with her and of course, this makes her even more angry – it’s a situation in which one problem causes another problem, which then makes the first problem worse.

4 The main problem which stops us achieving something has been people’s attitudes.

5 His comments have landed him in a difficult situation in which people are angry with him.

6 Her next job was even worse. She had moved from a bad situation to an even worse one.

8 As with all projects, we had a few problems in the early stages.

7 They had an extremely upsetting and difficult time when Julia went missing.

9 I was new to the job and I didn’t want to do anything to cause trouble in the situation.

Complete the idioms in the dialogue with these words.

- stone
- tall
- fire
- rough
- bears

Ava: How are you, Sara?

Sara: Oh, tired and stressed, but otherwise okay!

Ava: Oh, poor you! Is it the studying that’s getting you down?

Sara: Yes, and Tom is so grumpy these days. He’s under a lot of stress at work. It’s his first proper job, and he’s managing three other people. So it’s a real baptism of fire for him.

Ava: Yes, it must be. Does he talk to you about how he’s feeling?

Sara: No. You know Tom! Getting him to tell me anything is like getting blood out of a stone!

Ava: And what about your exams? How’s the studying going?

Sara: It’s hard. I knew that taking four exams in the same year would be a rough order, but I didn’t realize how tough it would be.

Ava: Is your mum being supportive?

Sara: Yes, but it’s hard for her. I’m often quite irritable with her. It’s not her fault that I’m having these problems, but she takes the brunt of it. She’s having a ride at work, too. Her boss treats her badly.

Ava: Oh poor thing, she doesn’t deserve that!
3 Read these statements about the conversation in exercise 2. Are they true (T) or false (F)?

1 Tom’s first real experience of work has been easy. ......... F

2 Sara thinks her mother is affected by her bad moods more than anyone else. .........

3 Tom talks freely to Sara about his feelings. .........

4 Sara knew that it would not be easy to take four exams in the same year. .........

5 Sara’s mother is having problems herself at work at the moment. .........

4 Write the idioms from the conversation in exercise 2 next to the correct definition.

1 something that will be very difficult to do ....................................................... a tall order

2 to suffer the most in a situation .................................................................

3 (of information or money) extremely difficult to get .................................................................

4 a first experience of a situation that is very difficult .................................................................

5 a lot of problems .................................................................
Trouble and difficulty – Answer key

Exercise 1

Across
2 climb
4 stumbling
5 hot
6 fire
8 troubles

Down
1 clutching
3 vicious
7 went
9 rock

Exercise 2

1 fire
2 stone
3 tall
4 bears
5 rough

Exercise 3

1 F
2 T
3 F
4 T
5 T

Exercise 4

1 a tall order
2 bear the brunt
3 like getting blood out of a stone
4 a baptism of fire
5 a rough ride