



12: The Power of Problem-Solving

13-16
ADULT

*A Lesson on Solutions, Initiative, and Building a Competitive Advantage
by Navigating Challenges*



Introduction for the Facilitator

Problem-solving is a skill that sets learners apart in school, training, and the workforce. Whether it's technical issues, people problems, or unexpected obstacles, the ability to work through it instead of freeze in it is a key marker of long-term success.

This lesson helps students and workforce learners build their **personal competitive advantage** through practical, resilient problem-solving habits. It teaches that being a strong problem solver isn't about having all the answers; it's about staying calm, curious, and committed to finding a next step.

In life, problem-solving shows up every day. Learning to navigate challenges with confidence becomes a cheat code to earning trust, leading others, and achieving personal goals.

Adult learners in all educational and training environments can become better problem-solvers through this lesson, which includes:

- A relatable Scenario to illustrate real-world problem-solving
- 8 Guided Group Discussion Questions with follow-up questions
- 8 Journal Prompts to reflect on why problem-solving is vital
- 8 personal Skill-Building Strategies
- A printable Action Planner for reflection and application

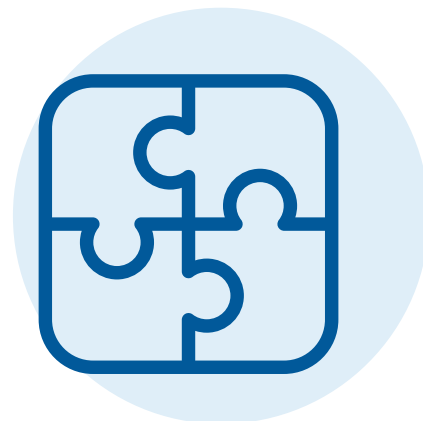


Scenario: One Small Mistake, One Big Lesson

Ari, 20, is in an HVAC certification program. During a client simulation, he miswires a component that sets off an error. The instructor notices but instead of panicking, Ari takes a breath and walks through the system step by step to find the issue.

His instructor says, "You owned it. That's what matters. We don't expect perfect. We expect you to troubleshoot, ask smart questions, and solve problems."

Ari leaves with more confidence than before, realizing that how he handled the problem was more important than the mistake itself.



Guided Group Discussion Questions

1. **What does it mean to be a good problem-solver in your daily life or work?**
Follow-up: What habits or mindsets help?
2. **Why do some people freeze or give up when they face a problem?**
Follow-up: How can we shift into action?
3. **What's the difference between solving a problem and avoiding it?**
Follow-up: How does each one affect momentum and trust?
4. **What does problem-solving look like in team settings?**
Follow-up: How do you balance ideas, roles, and solutions?
5. **How can strong problem-solving skills strengthen your personal competitive advantage?**
Follow-up: What do employers or instructors notice about problem-solvers?
6. **What role do emotions play in solving problems?**
Follow-up: How can we manage frustration or fear during challenges?
7. **When is asking for help part of the problem-solving process?**
Follow-up: How do we know when to push through and when to collaborate?
8. **Think of a recent challenge. What would you do differently now using what you've learned?**
Follow-up: What did that experience teach you?



Journal Prompts

1. **Describe a recent challenge and how you approached solving it.**
2. **What's your first instinct when a problem shows up: avoid, overthink, dive in, ask for help?**
3. **What habits help you stay calm and think clearly when something unexpected happens?**
4. **Write about someone you know who is a strong problem-solver. What do they model?**
5. **When have you solved a problem that surprised even you?**
6. **What's a problem in your school, job, or life that could be solved more creatively?**
7. **How do you want people to see you when things go wrong?**
8. **What's one small problem you've been avoiding? What's a first step you could take today?**



Skill-Building Strategies

1. **5-Step Problem Process:** Define the problem → Gather facts → Brainstorm options → Choose a next step → Reflect and learn.
2. **Reframe the Issue:** Ask: "What's the opportunity inside this problem?"
3. **Break It Down:** Turn a big issue into smaller parts. Solve one piece at a time.
4. **Ask Better Questions:** Try "What's really causing this?" or "What haven't we tried yet?"
5. **Use a Reset Tool:** When stuck, step away, breathe, then return with a fresh lens.
6. **Assumption Check:** List your assumptions about the problem. Challenge one.
7. **Scenario Simulation:** Practice solving a mock challenge with a partner once per week.
8. **Post-Problem Review:** After solving something, write down: What worked? What would I do differently?



Reflect and Prepare

Name: _____

What Is Problem-Solving?

Problem-solving means responding to challenges with action, creativity, and strategy. It's a learnable skill that helps you stand out and move forward, especially when others freeze.

Why This Matters to Me

Why is problem-solving important in your life, career goals, or training program?

My Challenge Response Style

When problems show up, I usually:

- ☐ Panic or freeze
- ☐ Get creative
- ☐ Push through
- ☐ Avoid it
- ☐ Ask for help
- ☐ Something else: _____
- ☐ What I'd like to change: _____

Belief Shift

Circle or write a belief that helps you solve problems:

"Every problem has a first step."

"Mistakes are part of the learning curve."

"Problem-solving builds trust and value."

"I don't need to know everything—I need to stay resourceful."

Other: _____



Problem-Solving Practice + Progress

Name: _____

My 28-Day Problem-Solving Habit

What problem-solving habit or mindset will you practice this month?

When will you apply it (situation, setting, or time)? _____

How will you track or reflect on progress?

☐ Daily challenge log ☐ Weekly reflection ☐ Peer or mentor feedback

Restart Plan

When I get stuck or overwhelmed, I will:

☐ Break it into steps

☐ Take a pause and return

☐ Use my anchor phrase: " _____ "

☐ Ask someone to help me think through it

Weekly Reflection Prompts

1. What problems did I face this week and how did I respond?

2. What worked well, and where did I feel stuck?

3. How did problem-solving impact my confidence or results?

4. What would I approach differently next week?

28-Day Problem-Solving Tracker

Focus habit or situation: _____

Week 1 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 1 go? Circle one word:

✓ Resourceful ✓ Stuck ✓ Creative

✓ Strategic ✓ Overwhelmed ✓ Clear

Week 3 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 3 go? Circle one word:

✓ Resourceful ✓ Stuck ✓ Creative

✓ Strategic ✓ Overwhelmed ✓ Clear

Week 2 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 2 go? Circle one word:

✓ Resourceful ✓ Stuck ✓ Creative

✓ Strategic ✓ Overwhelmed ✓ Clear

Week 4 ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

How did week 4 go? Circle one word:

✓ Resourceful ✓ Stuck ✓ Creative

✓ Strategic ✓ Overwhelmed ✓ Clear