



12: The Power of Problem-Solving

7-12

*A 7-12 Lesson on Thinking Critically, Taking Initiative,
and Creating Real-World Solutions*



Introduction for the Facilitator

This lesson empowers students with the skill of **problem-solving** so they can approach challenges with logic, creativity, and a willingness to take action. In the classroom, workplace, and life, problem-solvers are the people others rely on to move things forward.

Problem-solving is more than finding the “right” answer. It’s about staying calm under pressure, identifying what’s really going on, brainstorming options, and choosing a thoughtful response. Great problem-solvers are also great teammates because they listen, adapt, and help others succeed.

This ability becomes a powerful part of each student’s **personal competitive advantage**, helping them take ownership of situations, overcome obstacles, and work toward a **lifestyle** marked by purpose, agency, and progress.

This lesson includes:

- A Real-World Scenario that highlights everyday problem solving
- 8 Group Discussion Questions with follow-ups
- 8 Journal Prompts (draw or write)
- 10 Activities that build confidence and creativity in problem solving
- A printable Worksheet for personalized reflection and application



Real-Life Scenario

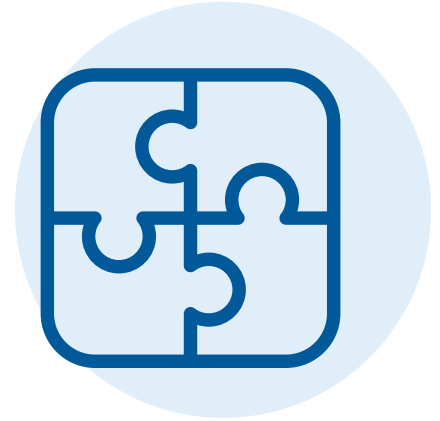
You're leading a school fundraiser, and suddenly the venue cancels. The event is in three days. People are counting on you.

Panic sets in—but then you pause and ask, “What *can* we do?”

You call the local library. You rethink the setup. You simplify the plan.

It's not what you imagined, but it works. People show up. The event matters.

That's problem-solving. It's not about having all the answers. It's about facing problems with courage, creativity, and the belief that something can always be done.



Group Discussion Questions

1. What does it mean to be a problem-solver?

Follow-up: What skills or habits do problem-solvers have?

2. Why do some people avoid solving problems, and how can we change that mindset?

Follow-up: What helps you take the first step when a situation feels overwhelming?

3. What's the difference between reacting and solving?

Follow-up: How can slowing down help in a problem-solving moment?

4. Why is it important to stay calm when a problem shows up?

Follow-up: What helps you stay grounded or focused in tough moments?

5. What role does creativity play in solving problems?

Follow-up: Can “unusual” ideas sometimes become the best ones?

6. How do strong problem-solvers treat mistakes or failure?

Follow-up: How do you bounce back from a solution that didn't work?

7. How does problem-solving grow your personal competitive advantage?

Follow-up: Where in your life or future could this skill be a game-changer?

8. What kind of lifestyle do you want to live?

Follow-up: How can being a problem-solver help build that life, especially when things go wrong?



Journal Prompts

(Students can write or draw their responses depending on learning style or preference.)

1. **Write or draw about a time you solved a problem. What steps did you take?**
2. **Describe a problem that felt big at the time but taught you something important.**
3. **What's one problem in your daily life you'd like to solve better?**
4. **Sketch or list your personal "problem-solving steps." How do you work through challenges?**
5. **What helps you stay focused instead of overwhelmed when facing a problem?**
6. **Write about a time when someone else's problem-solving helped you. How did they handle it?**
7. **What's one mindset you want to practice when solving problems: patience, persistence, optimism, etc.?**
8. **How does strong problem-solving help grow your personal competitive advantage?**



Activities

1. **What's the Real Problem? Game**
Share complex or messy scenarios. Have students identify the true root of the problem, not just the symptoms.
2. **Creative Constraints Challenge**
Give students a task (like building a structure or planning an event) with random limitations. Reflect on how it shaped their thinking.
3. **Problem-Solving Brainstorm Web**
Present one real-world challenge. Students brainstorm as many solutions as possible—no judgment, just creative flow.
4. **Past Problem Reflection**
Students journal about a past problem they faced, the solution they chose, and what they'd do differently now.
5. **Obstacle Course Decisions**
Create a mini obstacle course that includes "decision stations" where students must choose paths or strategies to move forward.
6. **Problem Solver Role Models**
Students research someone who solved a big problem (activist, entrepreneur, inventor, etc.) and share how they approached it.
7. **Skits With a Twist**
Groups act out short skits where something goes wrong. Other students jump in with alternate solutions mid-scene.
8. **"Yes, But..." to "Yes, And..."**
Students practice building on ideas instead of shooting them down, shifting from negative to possibility thinking.
9. **Design a Solution Challenge**
Identify a school-based or community issue and brainstorm practical solutions students could realistically contribute to.
10. **Build Your Toolbox**
As a class, create a visual "Problem-Solving Toolbox" of strategies: pause, ask for help, list options, break it down, test it, etc.



My Problem-Solving Toolkit

Name: _____

Helpful Words:

- **Problem-Solving** = facing challenges with courage, clarity, and action
- **Lifestyle Goal** = the kind of life I want to live
- **Personal Competitive Advantage** = the ability to find and create solutions when things go wrong

Directions:

Use **writing or drawing** to reflect on how you solve problems and where you want to grow.

Use the back of this sheet if you need more space.

1. A problem I recently solved was:

2. Here's how I handled it:

3. A challenge I'm facing now is:

4. My Problem-Solving Superpower helps me do these things:

5. One thing I'll try next time a problem shows up is:

6. Problem-solving helps me grow my personal competitive advantage by:

7. This is how problem-solving supports the lifestyle I want to live: