



*A PK-6 Lesson on Thinking Clearly, Trying New Ideas,
and Overcoming Obstacles*



Introduction for the Facilitator

This lesson focuses on the professional skill of **problem-solving**, which is the ability to pause, think, and try different solutions when faced with a challenge. For PK-6 students, this means learning how to work through both big and small problems using **calm thinking, creativity, and consistent effort**.

Problem-solving empowers students to take ownership of tricky situations instead of giving up or relying on adults to fix everything. It teaches them how to ask questions, test ideas, and grow through mistakes. When practiced early, it becomes a powerful part of their **personal competitive advantage**.

Whether students are solving a math puzzle, navigating a disagreement with a friend, or figuring out how to finish a project, problem-solving helps them move forward with confidence. It's also key to building the kind of **lifestyle** where they feel prepared, independent, and resilient.

This lesson includes:

- **A relatable Social Story**
- **8 Group Discussion Questions with follow-ups**
- **8 Journal Prompts (draw or write)**
- **10 creative classroom Activities**
- **A printable Worksheet to explore their personal problem-solving process**

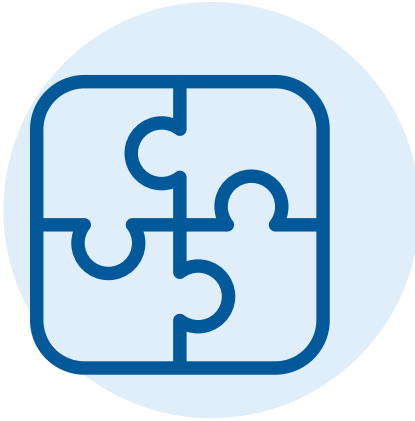
Let's help students discover that every problem is a chance to grow stronger.



Social Story: *Nina's Puzzle Piece*

Nina loved puzzles. She was the first to finish her morning math pages and always raised her hand during science. But one day, when her teacher assigned a group project, Nina froze.

Her team couldn't agree. One person wanted to draw. Another had a totally different idea. And the instructions were confusing. "This isn't working," Nina said, crossing her arms.



Ms. Ortiz walked over and whispered, "What do problem-solvers do when something gets tricky?"

Nina thought for a moment. "They don't give up. They pause...they try something new."

So Nina took a breath. "Let's list all our ideas and then vote," she suggested. Her team agreed. They made a plan and finished just in time.

Later, Ms. Ortiz smiled. "That was some impressive problem-solving."

Nina grinned. It wasn't about having the perfect answer. It was about staying curious, calm, and open. Problem-solving had just become part of her **personal competitive advantage**, and it would help her live the kind of **lifestyle** where challenges weren't roadblocks, just opportunities in disguise.



Group Discussion Questions

1. **What does problem-solving mean to you?**
Follow-up: What are some problems kids your age face every day?
2. **What happens when we don't know the answer right away?**
Follow-up: Why is it okay to take your time when solving a problem?
3. **How do you feel when something is really hard?**
Follow-up: What helps you keep trying?
4. **What are some tools or strategies you can use when you're stuck?**
Follow-up: Which ones work best for you?
5. **Why is it helpful to talk through a problem with someone else?**
Follow-up: What makes someone a good "problem-solving partner"?
6. **What's the difference between giving up and trying a new plan?**
Follow-up: Can you think of a time when you tried again and it worked out?
7. **How does problem-solving help build your personal competitive advantage?**
Follow-up: What's a problem you solved recently that you're proud of?
8. **What kind of lifestyle do you want to live?**
Follow-up: How can being a strong problem-solver help you get there?



Journal Prompts

(Students can write or draw their answers based on age and ability.)

1. **Draw or write about a time when you solved a tough problem. What helped?**
2. **What do you do first when something goes wrong?**
3. **Describe a time when you felt proud after figuring something out.**
4. **What helps you stay calm and focused when you're stuck?**
5. **How would a Problem-Solving Superpower save the world?**
6. **What would you tell a friend who was having trouble with a hard task?**
7. **How does problem-solving help you feel stronger and more independent?**
8. **How does problem-solving grow your personal competitive advantage?**



Activities

1. **Problem-Solving Toolbox**
Students create a foldable or poster showing tools like “take a breath,” “ask a question,” “try a new way.”
2. **Fix-It Scenarios**
Present short, difficult situations (e.g., lost homework, argument with a friend). Students work in pairs to brainstorm healthy solutions.
3. **Mystery Box Challenge**
Students receive a box with random objects and must solve a fun problem (e.g., build a boat, protect an egg).
4. **Comic Strip Solutions**
Students draw a simple problem and their creative way to solve it using a comic format.
5. **Try 3 Before Me**
Teach students to try three strategies before asking an adult. Create a classroom visual reminder of steps.
6. **Switch-A-Plan Game**
In small teams, students must quickly adapt to a rule change during a game. Reflect on how they solved the challenge.
7. **Sticky Situations Spinner**
Create a spinner with common challenges. Students spin and share how they would handle that situation.
8. **Team Tinker Time**
In groups, students work on small puzzles, challenges, or brain teasers, discussing their thought process aloud.
9. **“What If” Wall**
Add sticky notes with different classroom “What if?” problems. Have students take one and write their solution.
10. **Celebration of Stuck Moments**
Have students share one time they were stuck, and how they got unstuck. Celebrate the effort, not just the result.



My Problem-Solving Plan

Name: _____

Helpful Words:

- **Problem-Solving** = thinking through a challenge and finding healthy ways to move forward
- **Lifestyle Goal** = the kind of life I want to live
- **Personal Competitive Advantage** = my special strengths and habits that help me grow

Directions:

Write or draw your answers. Every problem is a chance to grow!

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

1. A problem I solved recently was:

2. What helped me stay calm was:

3. This is how I thought through the challenge:

4. The tools I used were:

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

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

7. This is how problem-solving helps me live the lifestyle I want: