

Unit 2, Session 6**Solving Problems**

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| Rationale: | Identifying and valuing problem solving are elements of a positive identity, social competencies, and assets in participants development. Participants who describe or display problem solving skills are more likely to engage in positive, constructive behaviors and avoid negative, destructive behaviors. |
| Target Audience | Out-of-school participants who have completed at least secondary education |
| Facilitator Expertise | Construction Industry Class leaders and local counterparts who have been trained in how to use and adapt the Life Skills and Leadership Manual. |
| Time | 120 minutes |
| Pre-requisites | Unit 2, Session 5 |
| Version | Nov – 2014 |
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| Facilitator preparation: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copy Trainer Material 1 for each small group and cut the six steps apart on the dotted lines. |
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Materials:

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| Equipment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rope (about 12 inches for each pair of participants) or a stick for each pair (optional – see Motivation activity, “You Move First”) • Flip chart and markers |
| Prepared flip charts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flip chart 1: Conflict |
| Handouts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handout 1: PAUSE for Better Decisions (from Session 4) • Handout 2: Problem-Solving Worksheet |
| Trainer materials | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trainer Material 1: Problem-Solving Steps |

Learning Objective:

1. By sorting and categorizing cards with statements about problem solving, participants will describe all the steps in problem solving.

Instructional Sequence**Motivation (5 minutes)****Materials:**

*Rope or sticks may be needed – see Note below.

You Move First

Participants try to influence their partners to physically move first, thereby trying to “win.”

Invite participants to participate in an opening activity.

Say:

“I’d like each of you to find a partner and stand facing that partner. Put your palms against your partners’ palms* in front of you at about chest height.”

Note: You might need to decide who gets to partner with whom to ensure safety and inclusion. In these instances, select partners of the same gender and generally of the same physical size and stature.

“By touching just your palms together, try to get your partner to be the first to move her or his feet. Just shift your body in slight or small ways to get your partner to have to take a step. Take care that your partner does not fall. If you get your partner to move first, you ‘win.’”

Stop the activity after two minutes or earlier if people are able to make their partners move.

Ask some of the following questions:

If someone was successful in getting their partner to move, ask that person:

“What did you do to get your partner to move?”

If no one was able to move their partner, ask the group:

“Why was this task so difficult?” (Possible answers: We were competing. Two people cannot both be winners.)

Say:

“There is a way both of you can win. Any ideas?” (Possible answer: You and your partner can count to three and both move your feet at the same time.)

To process as a whole group, ask:

“Imagine that this activity is similar to a situation from your life when you have tried to get someone to do what you wanted. What happened then and how was it similar to this activity?” (Possible answers: It felt like the other person was really pushing me. No one really won. I wasn’t happy with the outcome. The other person won because they were so much stronger.)

Summary

Summarize by sharing:

“Conflict and problems can arise when people have different perspectives and they don’t yield or give any ground. They hold tightly to their own position. In these situations there is a sense that only one person – or one point of view – can ‘win.’ We will look at how two different perspectives can be right at the same time and how we can all be ‘winners’ when we don’t try to just push forward with our own way of seeing things and make everyone else give in to our force.”

Information (15 minutes)**Material:**

- Flip chart 1: Conflict

Blind Men and an Elephant

Participants will be able to articulate how a single person's perspective is limited.

Tell this story:

“An elephant wandered into a community. Six blind men walking together came upon the elephant. For each, it was his first experience with such an animal. The first blind man walked into the elephant's side and said, ‘The elephant is like a big wall.’

“Another man's hands fell upon the tail and declared, ‘The elephant is like a rope.’

“A third blind man encountered the elephant's foot and said, ‘You are both wrong. The elephant is like a big tree trunk.’

“The fourth felt the elephant's ear and said, ‘The elephant is like a fan.’

“The fifth blind man got poked by the end of the elephant's tusk and said, ‘You all don't know what you are talking about! The elephant is like a spear.’

“No,’ said the sixth blind man, who had taken hold of the moving trunk and said, ‘the elephant is like a snake!’

“The men stood by the elephant, arguing over who was right until another community member with sight came by and said that each was right, but all were wrong. They were wrong because they believed only what they experienced about the elephant and refused to consider what others felt or experienced.”

Facilitate a discussion about how the story relates to collaboration, problem solving, and conflict resolution.

Ask all or several of the following questions:

What lesson do you get from this story?

How is this story like a situation in your life – a situation where you might see something different than someone else?

Collaboration means working with others to get something done. How can you collaborate with others if you have different perspectives or points of view?

How might the blind men in the story have been right collectively; what would have needed to happen? (Possible response: Trade places with others to “see” their perspectives.)

How can different points of view actually make solving a problem easier or result in a better solution?

Ask participants to come up with other words that mean “conflict” and write them on Flip chart 1:

Conflict. Ask:

“What does ‘conflict’ mean?”

What are some other words or phrases that mean ‘conflict’?”

(Examples might include: fight, struggle, don’t get along, disagreement, etc.)

Define “conflict resolution” and add ideas to Flip chart 1: Conflict, adding the sentence “Conflict resolution is ...”

Ask:

“What does ‘conflict resolution’ mean?” (Possible responses: Coming to an agreement. Agreeing to disagree.)

“What are peaceful and non-peaceful ways that conflicts get addressed?” (Possible responses: Talking things over. Speaking with others, such as adults/ leaders/ pastors/ teachers/ counselors.)

Summary

Summarize by saying:

“We each have our own stories, our own perspectives. If we are to work, live, and play together, we need to find ways to respect each other’s points of views. Also, we can learn from each other and get a fuller picture of possibilities when we include others’ perspectives – like the blind men.”

Practice (40 minutes)**Materials:**

- Trainer Material 1: Problem-Solving Steps (one copy cut apart for each group)
- Handout 1: PAUSE for Better Decisions

Where to Begin?

Participants describe specific steps for problem solving and how they lead to decision making.

Place participants in groups of six (e.g., one way to do this is to have participants line up by height and select six in a row until all of the participants are grouped – it is OK if there is a group with less than six).

Give each group the six statements and ask each person to take one of the pieces of paper. (With a group of less than six, ask for class leaders to take another statement or two.)

Instruct.

Say:

“These are the steps in problem solving. Put yourselves in the order that you think the problem-solving steps should go. The person in front should be the first step.”

Once groups have completed the task, reveal the statements in the order they are presented above (see Trainer Material 1: Problem Solving Steps). Suggested order:

Define the problem

Include others

Describe the best possible outcome

List options

Weigh the pros and cons

Decide which option to take

If groups put the statements into a different order, ask them for their reasoning:

“What can you tell us about the order you have selected? While the steps are all important, you might have a good reason for putting the steps in a different order.”

Note: The order of the steps is less important than the fact that the participants are thinking about the steps and elements of problem solving. Also, some of their responses might make good sense for the participants – such as including and involving others from the very beginning.

To ensure that everyone understands the steps, have a brief discussion about each step, such as:

Define the problem – The way a person defines the problem helps determine the kind of result you are going to get. (Refer to the results of the blind men as they encountered the elephant.) What is considered a problem by one person might not be a problem to another.

Include others – Think about who else the problem affects, who can help you, or who has information about the problem.

Describe the best possible outcome – What would you like to happen?

List options – What are possible strategies, things you can do, to achieve the best possible outcome? Often there are several paths one could take.

Weigh the pros and cons – Take the top two or three options and break them down into the pluses and minuses of each option; what’s good and easy – what’s not good (or less good) and more difficult.

Decide which option to take – Refer participants to the PAUSE decision-making process from Unit 2, Session 3. Remind them that “U” stands for Understand. This is a time they could consider, “What are the consequences?” which is the question to ask at Understand. The “S” for Select would also be helpful at this point. Participants might want to choose an option based on using their Head, Heart, Hands, or Hopes.

Encourage participants to think about how decision making with PAUSE has a place in problem solving. (Distribute copies of Handout 1: PAUSE for Better Decisions).

Ask:

“Once you get to the step ‘Decide,’ how does the PAUSE decision-making model fit?”
(Possible answer: You can use some of the steps of PAUSE to decide which option is best.)

Note: Encourage participants to see how the problem-solving model creates a bigger context for decisions, especially when there are issues where conflict is involved.

Practice with the steps.

Share the following situation:

“Let’s talk about a situation and how these steps of problem solving might be used. There is a conflict in a town. Most people keep their houses and property very neat and tidy. Their properties are well-cared for and maintained.”

Note: You might ask the group what a well-cared for property in their community looks like.

“There is, however, one person in the center of the town who tries to keep up his house and property, but for reasons such as money or illness, he cannot maintain his house at the same standards as his neighbors.”

Ask the groups to use the problem-solving steps to address the scenario:

“How would you define the problem? (Possible responses: The man needs help maintaining his house. The man is too busy working and earning money for his family to maintain his house.)

Who should be included? (Possible responses: The man. His closest neighbors. A social worker. Someone from the town office.)

Describe the best possible outcome. (Possible response: The man’s house would be maintained at the same standard as the rest of the town.)

List options. (Possible responses: The man’s neighbors could take turns helping him. The man could barter for maintenance help. The town could relax its rules for him for a while.)

Weigh the pros and cons. (Possible responses: [This will depend on the options listed. Think about the possible consequences.]

Decide which option to take. (Possible responses: [What would your Head, Heart, Hands, and Hopes tell you if you were in this situation?])

Answer questions participants have about the problem-solving steps.

Summary

Conclude the exercise by discussing the importance of clearly stating and agreeing upon plans to address a problem.

Say:

“It’s really important to talk to others about your plans to address a problem. They can be resources to you. Their different perspectives might strengthen your plan. It’s also critical to make sure you are all in agreement. Communication is key. Otherwise, conflict could arise.”

Application (20 minutes)

Materials:

- Handout 2: Problem-Solving Worksheet

Solve This!

Participants use the problem-solving steps on their own.

Invite participants to use the problem-solving steps.

Ask:

“I’d like to use these problem solving steps in a situation that is more common for you. What is an example of an issue or conflict that has not been resolved in your school or community?”

Note (from previous session): Be prepared to suggest some potential issues in the community that you already know about, such as the need for more desks in the school, a lack of computers in the participants center, no place for participants to hang out, rubbish on the street or on the beach, neighborhood gangs, etc.

Remind participants of the story of the abandoned cars in Chicago to give them an idea of the type of situation they might think of. Divide participants in groups of four to six and distribute at least one copy of Handout 2: Problem-Solving Worksheet to each group.

Say:

“Work with your group to analyze and decide upon a solution to the problem we have identified. Use the worksheet as a guide and be ready to share your ideas. Remember that various answers are ‘correct,’ as there are many possible outcomes to this situation.”

Give participants about 10 minutes to work and then ask each group to report.

Say:

“Let’s hear what you have come up with so far. First I would like each group to report about what they decided was the problem.”

Take the problem-solving process step by step, inviting each group to share its answers. Most likely this will produce some interesting insights because the groups will probably define the problem differently or think of and choose different options. Be prepared to talk about these differences without thinking you have to determine which is correct. This will be a good demonstration that each of us (each group) has valuable insight into a problem but that no one has the full picture – just like the blind men and the elephant.

Summary

Conclude the activity by saying:

“There are many advantages to following the steps of problem solving. You can see that the way we define a problem determines how we will try to solve it. The variety of the answers to the problem we just worked on shows how important it is to include different people when solving a problem. Describing the outcome gives us a goal to work toward. Listing the options and weighing the pros and cons means we are more likely to get a better solution once we decide which option to take.”

Assessment (10 minutes)

Materials: (None)

Power Review

Participants recall the essential purpose of each step of problem solving.

Set up the activity.

Say:

“I’d like you to review the steps of problem solving and what you would do at each step. I’d like you to stand and move silently and randomly around the learning space. When I say ‘Stop!’ I’d like you to choose a partner who is standing close to you.

Get people up and moving.

Tell them to stop, and then say:

“I’ll give you and your partner just a moment to think about your answer to the question I’m going to ask. I’m thinking of one of the steps of problem solving. I’ll ask the question and on my signal, I want you and your partner to shout the name of the problem-solving step that’s your answer. Here’s the question:

In this step you would probably talk to lots of different people.” (2. Include others)

Wait a moment for participants to confer with their partners, then give a signal and confirm the correct answer. Tell the participants to move around the room again until you ask them to stop and find a different partner. Repeat this process until you have asked all the questions below:

“In this step you would think of many different solutions. (4. List options)

In this step you would try to figure out what’s wrong or what’s not working right. (1. Define the problem)

In this step you would choose a solution. (6. Decide which option to take)

In this step you would think about the way you would like the problem to be solved. (3. Describe the best possible outcome)

In this step you would figure out what is good or not so good about each possible solution.” (5. Weigh the pros and cons)

Note: Steps of this activity are an assessment of Learning Objective 1.

Summary

Summarize by stating:

“It seems like you are able to identify the different steps of solving a problem! Next time we will be talking about conflict and what you have learned today will be helpful in solving problems where conflict is a factor.”

References: (None)