

YOUTH SPIRIT PROGRAM



Chapter 9: Overcoming Obstacles: Solving Problems



The goals of this chapter

...are to learn how to define a problem, brainstorm solutions, pick the best solution, make and act on a plan, and review and revise the plan if needed. Information about nicotine is also included.

Age Groups: Middle and High School Youth

Time: 40 minutes

Youth will:

- learn how to recognize when we are having a problem
- learn how to problem solve systematically and effectively
- learn how to make good decisions
- learn about where to go for support and help
- learn how to make mistakes or errors right

Materials

- Whiteboard/flipchart + marker(s)
- Youth Handouts
- Question Box/ paper
- Timer or phone for keeping track of activity times
- Pencils/ pens
- Paper for snowball activity

*Optional: clipboards for Seven Steps to Problem Solving handout

Preparation

- Preview Lesson plan
- Preview the Handouts for this lesson to determine what is most appropriate for your youths' levels and your goals. Print enough copies of the lesson handouts for each youth.

Cultural Component Option(s)

Note: additional time needed for this activity

Materials

- A print-out of the booklet, "The Swinomish Totem Pole: Tribal Legends"

Preparation:

- Consider inviting an elder to share traditional problem-solving strategies



Welcome & Group Check in

5 minutes

Welcome youth, introduce yourself, have guest speakers and youth introduce themselves and direct youth where to sit.

Say, "Before we continue, do you have any questions or comments about the last chapter?"

Question Box Q&A

Respond to questions left in the question box

Icebreaker

Time Varies

Use the "[Icebreaker](https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/stand-alone-lessons/)" activity guide found on Healthy Native Youth (<https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/stand-alone-lessons/>) to find an icebreaker appropriate for your group (i.e. small or large group, new or established group, etc.)



Doodle Page

Feel free to draw while you listen.
It can help you learn better!



Overcoming Obstacles

2 minutes

Say, "Say, "Today, we're going to talk about overcoming obstacles by learning the seven steps to problem solving. Why do you think having a strategy for problem solving would be helpful?"

Allow time for responses.

Say, "In real life, people often make choices out of habit without carefully going through decision-making steps. They are more likely to go on what they have experienced so far. Decisions are often made under pressure from your inner and outer circles and time. That kind of pressure can get in the way of thinking carefully about possible options and consequences. When people don't have enough information or skills, they may make decisions that might not be the best. Knowing problem solving steps will help you avoid the problems that come with poor decision-making. How do you think the Swinomish beliefs and culture traditionally solve problems?"

Allow time for responses.

Ask youth what they typically do when faced with a problem. What advice would they give other youth today?

Say, "One really great thing is that you don't always have to solve a problem on your own. And, you can definitely help others solve their problems too."



Seven Problem Solving Steps

10 minutes

Say, "We are going to share with you a structured and efficient way to solve problems. Even if we didn't create a problem, it is always helpful to have tools to help solve it."

Distribute handout - Seven Steps to Problem Solving. Go over seven steps to problem solving together.

Step 1: Define the Problem

Say, "So the first step to solving a problem is to define it. This means, clearly stating what it is. Be very specific and detailed. Sometimes this sounds easier said than done, but this step is crucial. You must be able to say what the problem is, in order to come up with a good solution.

Say, "We are going to look at a problem together and go through the steps, before you think of a problem or challenge that you want to make a plan for.

Say, "For the problem we solve together, let's say we have a leak in our canoe."

Say, "First we must define the problem: a leak in our canoe. Is there anything else that might be important to think about when looking at this problem?"

Allow time for participants to respond.

Say, "Great! These are the specifics and the details that are important to think about. You could also ask yourself the following questions:

- Where is the leak?
- How big is the leak?
- Is it a big enough problem to address?
- How immediately serious is the problem?



Seven Problem Solving Steps

Continued...

Step 2: Brainstorm Solutions

Say, "For Step 2, we need to brainstorm solutions, possible ways that could solve the problem. Throw all ideas out there, even if they don't completely make sense. When your mind is free enough to think of crazy ideas, it is then free enough to think of new ideas that might work."

Brainstorm solutions for a leak in the canoe. Ask the participants to think of possible solutions and write them on the board. List may include:

- Plug it up with chewing gum
- Stop and jump in the water to patch it
- Take it on shore and then fix it
- Have someone stick their finger in the hole
- Call the support boat

Step 3: Find Someone You Can Go to For Help

Say, "Step 3 is to find someone you can ask for help. Sometimes it can be super helpful to find someone in your family or community who you can go to and ask for ideas and solutions. This may be a hard step for some to do. Why do you think some might find it hard to ask others for help? Who are some people you could you go to for help?"

Allow time for participants to respond.

Step 4: Pick the Solution That You Think Is Best

Say, "Step 4 is to pick a solution you think will work best."

Say, "Let's look at one of the solutions we came up with for a leak in our canoe...Solution 1: Plug the hole up with chewing gum."



Seven Problem Solving Steps

Continued...

Say, "When carefully thinking about this solution, let's ask ourselves a few questions:

- What will happen if we use this solution?
- Is the solution practical?
- Does the solution get us what we want?
- Are there any problems associated with this solution?
- What affect will this solution have on others?
- What is involved in the process of carrying out the solution?
- How much will it cost?
- How long will it take to carry out the solution?
- How much energy will it take to carry out the solution?
- Who else is needed to carry out the solution?

If time allows, examine some other solutions:

- Solution 2: Stop, jump in the water, and patch it
- Solution 3: Take it on shore and then fix it
- Solution 4: Have someone stick his or her finger in the hole

Step 5: Make A Plan Based on This Solution

Say, "Now that we have 1) defined our problem, 2) brainstormed solutions, 3) thought of others who can help, and 4) picked a solution, we are now 5) going to make a plan."

Say, "In Step 5, we can ask ourselves the following questions regarding the solution we picked (i.e. plugging the hole with chewing gum).

- What should I do first?
- What is the best way to carry the idea through?
- How much time should you give the solution to work before you decide to ditch the idea?"

Step 6: Act on The Plan

Say, "Step 6, is to act on your plan. This is where you go-for-it and take the first step that you mapped out."

Say, "For our solution, we are going to find some gum and plug it with chewing gum."



Seven Problem Solving Steps

Continued...

Step 7: Review and Revise Your Plan

Say, "Step 7 is perhaps one of the most important steps because this is where you reflect on what you have learned. Step 7 is to review and revise your plan. You can ask yourself:

- If your plan didn't work, what went wrong?
- If your plan did work, why do you think it worked so well?
- If your first plan didn't work, you have a list of ideas to work from."

Putting it all together

5 minutes

Say, "Now is your chance to think about a problem, a challenge, something you would like to change and start to map out a plan to fix it."

Say, "Please take out your Seven Steps to Problem Solving handout."

If possible, let students move around their space and find somewhere they feel comfortable writing (e.g. on the floor, under desk, outside). If needed, distribute clipboards and pens.

Say, "Now I would like for you to start mapping out your plan. Some of you may only get through the first five steps, but we will find a time to get back to the act and reflect steps. I will give you 5 minutes, then we will come back together. Any questions before we get started? Okay, go!"

Time students. Give one-minute warning. If appropriate, ask youth if anyone would like to share or, follow-up with youth individually. Remind youth that a great person to talk through problem solving plans is (insert counselor name, location, and times).

Seven Steps to Problem Solving

Think of a problem or a challenge that could use some attention, then follow the seven steps to problem solving to come up with some solutions.

Step 1: Define the Problem

Step 2: Brainstorm some solutions

Idea #1

.....

Idea #2

.....

Idea #3

Step 3: Find Someone You Can Go to For Help

Name/ Contact Info

.....

Name/ Contact Info

.....

Name/ Contact Info

Step 4: Pick the Best Solution

Seven Steps to Problem Solving

Keep up the good work!

Step 5: Make A Plan Based on This Solution

What should I do first?

What is the best way to carry the idea through?

How much time should you give the solution to work before you decide to ditch the idea?"

Step 6: Act on The Plan

Step 7: Review and Revise Your Plan

How did it work?

What could you do differently?



10 minutes

Snowball Activity: Problem Solving

Say, "Now that we solved some problems together and you have a started a plan for some challenges in your life, let's start practicing."

Say, "I would like you think of a "real life" problem, maybe one that you wrote down earlier that you would like some help with. In this activity, no one will know whose problem is whose, I'll tell you more about next, so please feel free to be honest. This problem can be one that you have had in the past or are having currently."

Say, "Give me a thumbs up if you have one in your head."

Wait until everyone gives you a thumbs up.

Say, "Now we are going to play the Snowball Game to share our problems."

Distribute paper and pens.

Say, "Without talking and without writing your name, find the top of your page and write down your real-life problem. Don't do anything with the bottom part, just set it down at your place for now. I'll tell you what to do with that in a sec. Any questions?"

Say, "When you are finished put your pencil down and look at me."

Wait until everyone is done.

Say, "Now I would like you to wad up your papers into a 'snowball'. When I say 'throw' I would like for you to close your eyes and respectfully throw them (insert - give target area: in the center of the circle, or near the front/ back of room only). Remember our group agreements! Ready? Close your eyes. Throw!"

Say, "Thanks for respectfully throwing your snowballs! Okay, now pick up one 'snowball' closest to you, then go back to your seats. Without talking to anyone, unwrinkled your paper and read it. Think about a solution that might be helpful for this person and some encourage or comfort you could give the person who wrote it. Write your response on the back of the paper. When you are finished put your pencil down and look at me."

Pick, or have youth volunteer to read both parts of their 'snowballs'.



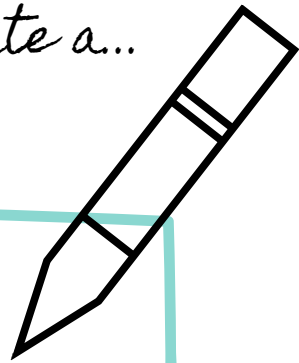
Snowball Activity

Person creating the Snowball, please write...

YOUR REAL-LIFE PROBLEM:

Person picking up the Snowball, please write a...

Possible Solution
& Encouragement



Cultural Component Option(s)

If time allows, consider:

Sharing Totem Pole Stories: The Mink & the Fox. Invite an elder to tell the story. If appropriate, have elder share beliefs or quotes from Swin related to problem solving.

Follow up questions:

1. Think about whether or not [the trickster] is a good problem solver.
2. Was the problem-solving approach effective?
3. What could make it more effective?

**If you choose this option, this will add additional time allotted in the outline.*





Nicotine

5 minutes

Say, "The next drug that we will be addressing is nicotine. Before we look at the handout, let's see how much you already know. What do you think is so bad about smoking?"

Allow for responses.

Say, "In fact, 1,000 Americans die every day by smoking-caused diseases and smoking causes 80% of lung cancer. The nicotine particles act on every cell in your body. Nicotine can increase stomach acid, causes diarrhea and increases heart rate and blood pressure. What do you think makes nicotine so addictive?"

Allow for responses.

Say, "Nicotine causes the release of dopamine in the brain that causes the pleasure experienced by many smokers. Nicotine can act as a psychomotor stimulant, increases alertness, increases concentration, increases attention, and can make you feel less hungry. These symptoms are what draw users into repeated use but chronic use produces tolerance and dependence in as little as a week! What do you think the dangers of smokeless tobacco are?"

Allow for responses.

Say, "Chewing tobacco [AG1] causes cancer of the mouth, pharynx, larynx and esophagus and causes damage to gums causing tooth loss. If you have ever used smokeless tobacco, either now or in the past, you should look for some of these early signs of oral cancer: a sore in the mouth that does not heal, a lump or white patch, a prolonged sore throat, difficulty in chewing, restricted movement of the tongue or jaws."

Distribute handout - Nicotine and briefly discuss contents.

Say, "What about using tobacco ceremonially? Some Natives use tobacco because it is a sacred herb that is used for purification and healing. How is using it ceremonially different than using it as a drug?"

Allow for responses.

Say, "Also, ceremonial use of tobacco occurs only on special occasions and not on a daily basis."

Nicotine

What is So Bad About Smoking?

Tobacco smoke contains over 4,000 chemical compounds including:

- carbon monoxide (exhaust fumes from our cars)
- formaldehyde (used to preserve dead bodies)
- ammonia (kitchen and bathroom cleaner)
- carbon dioxide (which contributes to global warming)

Tobacco smoke also contains 43 different cancer-causing substances. Harmful metals found in cigarettes include: aluminum, copper, lead, mercury and zinc.

Why is Nicotine So Addictive?

Nicotine causes the release of dopamine in the brain that causes the pleasure experienced by many smokers. Nicotine can act as a psychomotor stimulant, increases alertness, increases concentration, increases attention, and can make you feel less hungry. These symptoms are what draw users into repeated use but chronic use produces tolerance and dependence in as little as a week!

What is Nicotine Abuse?

A destructive pattern of nicotine use leads to significant social, occupational, or medical impairment. Nicotine tolerance occurs where increasing amounts of nicotine are needed to achieve intoxication. Nicotine withdrawal occurs within several hours of your last fix and lasts about one week long. This is what stops many people from quitting.

What are Withdrawal Symptoms?

Two or more of the following symptoms will develop within several hours to a few days of reduction in heavy or prolonged nicotine use:

- intense cravings
- sweating or rapid pulse
- insomnia
- physical agitation
- nausea or vomiting
- irritability
- less concentration
- increased hand tremor
- anxiety

Effects of Smoking

1,000 Americans die every day by smoking-caused diseases and smoking causes 80% of lung cancer. The nicotine particles act on every cell in your body. Nicotine can increase stomach acid, causes diarrhea and increases heart rate and blood pressure.

Smokeless Tobacco Danger Signs

Chewing tobacco causes cancer of the mouth, pharynx, larynx and esophagus and causes damage to gums causing tooth loss. If you have ever used smokeless tobacco, either now or in the past, you should look for some of these early signs of oral cancer: a sore in the mouth that does not heal, a lump or white patch, a prolonged sore throat, difficulty in chewing, restricted movement of the tongue or jaws.

Closing and Final Reflections

5 minutes

Distribute the handout - What have I learned today? Encourage youth to write what they have learned. If necessary, draw on the board and give the youth a few examples of what they may have learned from this chapter.

Say, "Each of you did such an amazing job today! I am so proud of you for taking the time to think about how you will solve the challenges and problems in your life. Thinking clearly about how you will solve them and reaching out for help will help you tackle problems throughout your life. Go you!"

Say, "We learned how to problem solve systematically. We learned how brainstorming can help us come up with lots of solutions. We learned to apply the steps to solving some real-life problems. We considered the fact that problem solving is no easy task and it takes time and effort to acquire the skills. This addresses our Mental health."

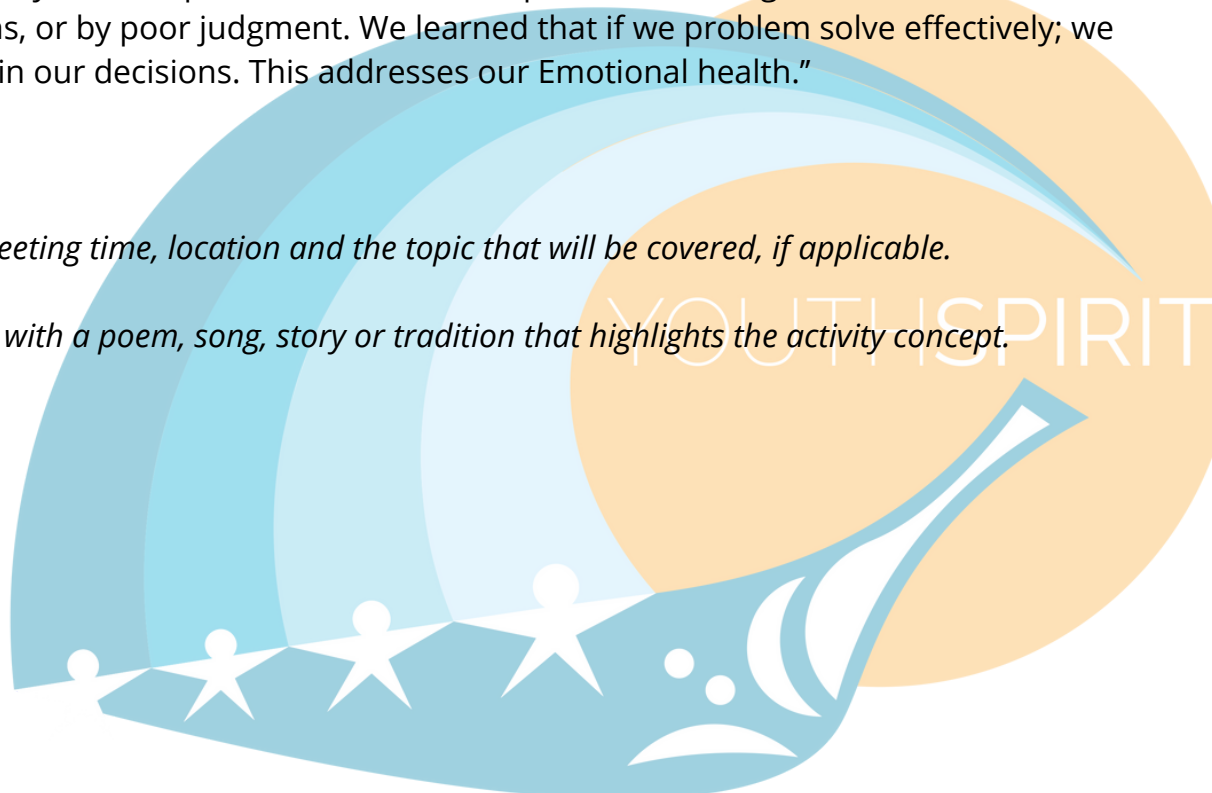
Say, "By using our mental powers to solve problems, we are honoring the Creator for giving us the faculties for problem solving. We also have our spiritual nature to help us cope with problems. When faced with a problem we can always ask the Creator for guidance. This addresses our Spiritual health."

Say, "We learned that problem solving can involve physical activity. We considered how problem solving can involve endurance, stamina, and inner strength. We learned that a lack of problem-solving skills can be detrimental to our Physical health."

Say, "By following a systematic plan, we can avoid the pitfalls of making decisions based on out-of-control emotions, or by poor judgment. We learned that if we problem solve effectively; we can feel confident in our decisions. This addresses our Emotional health."

Mention the next meeting time, location and the topic that will be covered, if applicable.

If time allows, close with a poem, song, story or tradition that highlights the activity concept.



Chapter 9
Youth Handout
#4

Journal Space

What have I learned Today?

Think about your mental, spiritual, social, and physical self.
Then draw, doodle, or write about what you have strengthened
today.