Group Application

Problem Solving

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Apply a structured problem-solving approach to personal challenges

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Dry erase board/flip chart and markers
- Index cards (3-5 per participant)
- Pens/pencils
- Timer
- Scenarios printed on separate cards

PART 1: ICEBREAKER

Problem Solving Relay

10 MINUTES

PURPOSE:

To build rapport, encourage teamwork, and introduce the concept of collaborative problem-solving in a fun, low-pressure environment.

FACILITATOR SCRIPT:

"Today we're going to explore some practical skills that can help you navigate life's challenges more effectively. Before we dive into the main lesson, let's start with a quick team activity. We're going to play something called a 'Problem Solving Relay.' I'll divide you into small teams of 3-4 people. Each team will receive a scenario card describing a challenging situation that many young people face. Your team's job is to come up with as many potential solutions as possible in just 4 minutes. The solutions don't have to be perfect—we're going for quantity over quality at this stage.

Here's the relay part: One person on your team will write down the first solution, then pass the paper to the next teammate who adds another solution, and so on until time is up. Keep the paper moving through your team as quickly as possible! The team with the most reasonable solutions wins. Remember, this is about being creative and working together. There are no wrong answers at this stage—we're just brainstorming. Ready?"

Activity Steps:

1. Divide participants into small teams
2. Distribute a scenario card to each team, each card containing one scenario below:
    1. Conflict with parent/guardian
    2. Falling behind in school
    3. Needing a job
    4. Conflict with a romantic partner
3. Set timer for 4 minutes
4. Facilitate quick sharing of solutions after time expires (1 minute per team)

WRAP-UP:

"Great job everyone! You've already demonstrated something important: when we face problems, having multiple perspectives and ideas can be incredibly helpful. We just practiced brainstorming, which is actually the first step in effective problem-solving. Now let's build on that and develop a more structured approach to handling life's challenges."

PART 2: MAIN LESSON

The POWER Problem-Solving Method

20 MINUTES

FACILITATOR SCRIPT:

"In our icebreaker, we generated lots of possible solutions to problems. Now we're going to learn a systematic approach that can help you work through almost any challenge you face. It's called the POWER method.

POWER stands for [write this on a board or large paper]:

P	**PROBLEM**	Clearly define what the issue is
O	**OPTIONS**	Brainstorm possible solutions (like we just did!)
W	**WEIGH PROS AND CONS**	Weigh the pros and cons of each option
E	**EXECUTE A PLAN**	Choose an option and take action
R	**REVIEW RESULTS**	See how it worked and adjust if needed

Let's break this down with an example that might feel familiar."

EXAMPLE:

Finding Employment with Limited Transportation Options

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

Tasha is an 18-year-old who needs a job to help support her family and save for community college. The challenge is that she lives in a neighborhood with few job opportunities, has no car, and public transportation is unreliable. She has applied to several places within walking distance without success. She needs to expand her job search but is unsure how to overcome the transportation barrier.

OPTIONS

Tasha brainstorms possible solutions:

1. Look for jobs within walking distance
2. Look for jobs close to the bus or train
3. Look for work from home jobs
4. Look into carpooling with a neighbor, friend, or family member
5. Save for a bicycle to travel farther
6. Look for community programs that offer transportation
7. Apply for delivery or rideshare jobs that would include a vehicle
8. Check if school offers job placement
9. Look for jobs that have a shuttle service

WEIGH PROS AND CONS

Tasha goes through her list of options and considers the pros and cons of the strongest choices:

Option 2: Look for jobs close to public transit

- **Pros:** Expands opportunities; low-cost;
- **Cons:** Trains and buses aren't always on time; safety concerns late at night

Option 3: Work-from-home opportunities

- **Pros:** Don't need transportation; flexible hours; could start immediately
- **Cons:** Might need special skills; less positions for a new person; potential scams

Option 5: Save for a bicycle

- **Pros:** Expands opportunities; no schedule dependencies
- **Cons:** Difficult when raining or snowing; safety concerns; costs money

Option 7: Community transportation

- **Pros:** Professional support; could be free; might connect to better job opportunities
- **Cons:** May have eligibility requirements; limited availability; dependent on program schedules

EXECUTE A PLAN

Tasha decides on an approach:

1. Immediately register with her school's career center and local employment agency to get help identifying opportunities and transportation assistance programs
2. Map out all bus routes within a reasonable distance and create a list of businesses to apply to along those routes
3. Apply for a weekend position at a retail store near her aunt's workplace where she can get a ride
4. Start saving $20 per week toward a bicycle while continuing her job search
5. Research legitimate online customer service positions for weekday evening hours

REVIEW RESULTS

After one month, Tasha looks at her progress:

- The career center connected her with a retail job training program that includes a bus pass for participants
- She secured a weekend position at the store near her aunt, providing immediate income
- She's saved $80 toward a bicycle
- She discovered her local library offers free computer skills courses that would qualify her for better-paying remote work

TASHA DECIDES TO:

- Continue with her weekend job
- Enroll in the job training program for weekdays
- Fast-track her bicycle savings with her new income
- Take the library computer courses to qualify for better opportunities in the future

PART 3: CLOSING ACTIVITY

"Challenge Cards"

15 MINUTES

FACILITATOR SCRIPT:

"We've covered a lot today! To wrap up, we're going to practice applying what we've learned with an activity called 'Challenge Cards.' I'm going to give each of you an index card. On the card, write down one challenge or problem you're currently facing or might face in the future. It can be something small or something bigger, whatever feels relevant to your life right now.

Then, on the back of each card, you'll apply what we've learned today:

- Write one step from the POWER method you could use
- Note one way you could advocate for yourself in this situation
- Identify one community resource that might help

This is just for you—you won't have to share unless you want to. These cards can be a resource you take with you when you leave today."

ACTIVITY STEPS:

1. Distribute index cards (3 per participant)
2. Allow 3 minutes for writing
3. Invite 1-2 volunteers to share an example (if comfortable)

"Thank you all for your participation today. Remember, problem-solving is a skill that improves with practice. The more you use these approaches, the more natural they'll become. Before our next session, I encourage you to try using the POWER method on at least one challenge you face this week. Also, keep your resource guide handy—it's there to help you navigate challenges. You don't have to face problems alone.

Next time, we'll check in on how these strategies worked for you and build on what we've learned today. with practice. The more you use these approaches, the more natural they'll become. Before our next session, I encourage you to try using the POWER method on at least one challenge you face this week. Also, keep your resource guide handy—it's there to help you navigate challenges. You don't have to face problems alone. Next time, we'll check in on how these strategies worked for you and build on what we've learned today."

FACILITATOR NOTES:

- Follow-up/Homework
    - Apply the POWER method to one real-life challenge before next session
    - Review community resource guide and identify one resource to explore further
- Note quality of solutions generated during problem-solving exercises