

Two-Minute Tips

This Week's Topic: Problem-Solving

Problem-solving is an important skill that ELO staff can help nurture in participants. When young people have strong problem-solving skills, they are less likely to act impulsively and experience depression.¹ When they lack problem-solving skills, they are more likely to avoid problems or act out. You may see this in young people skipping school or missing assignments to avoid struggling at understanding the assignment, or, a young person who hits a peer that cuts them in line because they can't think of a better way to handle this.¹ Young people who can access problem-solving skills and solve problems on their own are happier, more independent, and better at making healthy decisions for themselves.² As skilled and positive adults working in ELO programs, we can help young people develop problem-solving skills.

Practice Tips

Here are a few quick tips to encourage problem-solving skills.

Identify the Problem

As part of daily activities, pose a problem for participants to solve.

Example: "Today we're going to start advertising our winter family dinner. Not all families have access to computers, so what are some ways can we advertise to reach all families, not just the ones with computers?"

You can also use this strategy with individual participants. If a participant is upset, restate the problem they've shared so they know you're paying attention.

Example: "So, it sounds like you feel upset because you don't feel like you have anyone to play with at recess."

Develop Solutions

Identifying multiple solutions is key. Write down the solutions a group brainstorms for all to see. If speaking one-on-one with a participant, repeat your solutions and count them out on your fingers to help the participant really understand there are many ways to solve one problem.

Discuss the Pros and Cons of Each Solution

Help participants see the potential positive and negative outcomes of each potential solution created. Verbally processing this with young people helps them

build their own internal dialogue for solving problems independently.

Example: "You're right anyone can see paper flyers outside. But what might happen to those flyers in our Washington winter weather?"

Pick a Solution

Once participants have worked to develop multiple solutions and discussed the pros and cons of each, decide on a solution together. Encourage participants to lead this decision-making process. If a solution doesn't work out, they can always try another one from the list developed earlier.

Tips in Action!

[Watch](#) staff at Launch at Maple Elementary lead participants in a group brainstorming activity.

Want more two-minute tips?

Check out:

<https://depts.washington.edu/cqel/expand-ed-learning-opportunities/>

There you will find the latest tip, an archive of past tips, and a discussion board to connect with peers!

¹ Morin, A. (2018, June 4). How to teach kids problem-solving skills. *Very Well Family*.

<https://www.verywellfamily.com/teach-kids-problem-solving-skills-1095015>

² Kumon Co. (n.d.). *Developing problem solving skills in kids*. London, England. <https://www.kumon.co.uk/blog/developing-problem-solving-skills-in-children/>