

Creative Problem-Solving Curriculum

Lesson 4

Problem Solving Mindsets

Lesson Overview:

Students will continue exploring ways to successfully approach creative problem solving by considering the mindsets that underlie their thinking. They will complete the following steps: 1) screening the Problem-Solving Mindsets video and considering how mindsets impact success 2) reading a poem from two different perspectives and discussing how the two perspectives are related to mindsets 3) taking a 21-day challenge to change or develop a creative problem-solving mindset.

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Creative Problem Solving

Lesson 4 – Problem Solving Mindsets

Lesson Overview:

During this lesson, you will guide students to consider how their mindsets can affect their success as creative problem solvers. Students will then select a mindset that they would like to change or grow and commit to taking small actions each day for 21 days in order to slowly impact their “habit of the mind.” Students will journal daily reflections on their experience as well as write a final reflection at the end of the challenge.

Time Frame:

45-60 minutes in class time

Up to 10 minutes/day out of class time for 21 days

30-minute reflection that could be in class or as homework

Core Concepts:

- Our mindsets, or habits of mind, have the power to impact our behavior and even our outcomes such as success or failure.
- We can train ourselves to change our mindsets.
- The mindsets most commonly associated with successful creative problem solving include growth mindset, ill-defined problem-solving mindset, optimistic/positive mindset, curious mindset, empathetic mindset, and creative mindset.

Lesson Objectives:

In this lesson students will:

- Consider how our mindset can impact our view of our own power and potential.
- Experience a poem from two very different perspectives.
- Complete a 21-day mindset challenge in which they work to change or develop a creative problem-solving mindset.

Materials Needed:

- [Lesson 4 Video: Change Your Mindset to Solve Problems](#)
- [Optional Video: How Your Thoughts Shape Your Reality](#)
- Method to project or display the poem, Lost Generation (see final page of this lesson plan) so that everyone in the class can see it. Consider projecting it onto a screen.

Part 1:**Step 1: Activate Prior Knowledge****(5-10 minutes)**

Ask students to write about a mistake they have made recently or a problem they have not been able to solve. Ask them to also write how they feel about the mistake or the problem.

Step 2: Present the Change Your Mindset to Solve Problems video**(15-20 minutes)**

Show the video and then facilitate a discussion after the viewing. You may wish to solicit questions and comments from the students first. You can use these suggested discussion points to deepen the conversation and student thinking:

- What is your initial reaction to the video and the idea of mindsets?
- After watching the video, do you feel any differently about the problem or mistake that you wrote about at the beginning of class? How so?
- What experiences have you had in which your mindset made a difference in the outcomes?
- What kinds of problem-solving mindsets do you feel like you already have?
- Which problem-solving mindsets would you like to grow or work on?
- What questions do you have about problem solving mindsets?

Step 3: Lost Generation Poem by Jonathan Reed**(15 minutes)**

Display a copy of the poem, The Lost Generation, by Jonathan Reed so that all of the student can see it. Ask a student to read it out loud, line by line. Ask students to reflect silently on how they feel after hearing/reading the poem.

Now ask another student to read the poem in a different way. This time they should read the poem line by line, but start with the last line and work their way up. It may be helpful for you to point to each line as it is read.

ALTERNATIVE: Rather than displaying and reading the poem out loud, show the video that Jonathan Reed created for a 2007 AARP video contest.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=42E2fAWM6rA>

Ask the students to discuss the poem with a partner or in small groups. Discussion prompts can include:

- How did you feel after the first reading? What changed after the second reading?
- How did a change of perspective change the message of the poem?
- What does this poem have to do with mindsets?
- How can a change of mindset change how we see and approach challenging and messy problems?

Step 4: Mindset 21 Day Challenge

(10 minutes today; 5-10 minutes/day homework for 21 days)

Ask students to choose a mindset that they would like to change or build for themselves. Choices from the video include:

- Ill-defined problem-solving mindset – accepting that some problems are hard to understand and can be open to interpretation.
- Optimistic/positive mindset – believing that solutions do exist or can be created if we keep working at it.
- Curious mindset – the drive to continue digging until the problem is finally understood.
- Empathetic mindset – helps us to understand the problem from the viewpoint of the person suffering from it.
- Creative mindset – embraces innovation and ambiguity and opens up problem solving to limitless opportunities and possibilities.
- Growth mindset – highlights that people can learn new skills and become better at physical, as well as mental/academic, challenges.

Challenge students to complete one action each day to grow the mindset they have chosen. Each day should be a new action. In other words, they cannot do exactly the same thing each day. No repeats. The assignment will last 21 days, as it is commonly said that it takes 21 days to create a habit. This habit will be a habit of the mind! At the end of each day, they should spend about 5 minutes journaling about the action they

took.

The challenge may be easy in the beginning, but may force students to become more creative, take greater risks, and push them out of their comfort zone as the challenge continues.

Clarify that these actions need not take a lot of time and do not need to be used to solve a problem. Here are a few ideas to get students thinking:

- Ill-defined problem-solving mindset – Each day, brainstorm a new solution to a big problem, such as climate change. The solutions do not need to solve the entire problem. Think of it as a design thinking brainstorm with one idea each day. For this example, students may choose a different solution each day or may even choose to change up the problem, as well.
- Optimistic/positive mindset – Look for and journal about 3 positive events from the day. As an added challenge, a student could choose to journal about 3 silver linings each day. In other words, they might challenge themselves to look for the good, even in the face of challenge or negativity. OR a student could challenge themselves to do one positive thing each day to make the lives of others better.
- Curious mindset – Journal 3 questions that they are curious about each day. Each day should be different questions.
- Empathetic mindset – Ask someone new about their day and really listen to their response – asking additional questions to understand their highs and lows from the day. Each day should be someone new. Alternatively, a student could challenge themselves to do one (or more) kind and helpful acts each day above and beyond how they usually behave.
- Creative mindset – Create something new each day. An even greater challenge would be to use different media each day; One day might be a song and another day might be a painting, but no two days should be the same *kind* of creation.
- Growth mindset – Practice a skill in a new way each day.

Let students know that they can choose from the examples or make their own challenge. Ask them to write down their planned challenge and turn it in before the end of class so that you can review and give any feedback before the challenge begins.

Once the challenge begins, students should journal each day – recording their action and any reflections they might have about the specific action, how they feel about the action, or reflections and thoughts about the cumulative effects of making an effort each day to shift their mindset towards their goal. This journaling is *in addition to* journaling that they may complete for the action, itself.

Step 5: Final Reflection
(30 minutes – could be homework)

Ask students to review their daily journal entries, as well as any other physical relics from the 21-day challenge. Then give students this writing prompt and ask them to write a one to two-page reflection on the experience.

PROMPT: What mindset did you hope to grow or change during the 21-day mindset challenge and how you think this challenge has or will impact your effectiveness as a creative problem solver? Give examples from your challenge experience and reflections or from other aspects of your life. Include any interesting outcomes or insights that you have gained from completing the challenge.

Lost Generation

by Jonathan Reed

I am part of a lost generation
and I refuse to believe that
I can change the world
I realize this may be a shock but
“Happiness comes from within.”
is a lie, and
“Money will make me happy.”
So in 30 years I will tell my children
they are not the most important thing in my life
My employer will know that
I have my priorities straight because
work
is more important than
family
I tell you this
Once upon a time
Families stayed together
but this will not be true in my era
This is a quick fix society
Experts tell me
30 years from now, I will be celebrating the 10th anniversary of my divorce
I do not concede that
I will live in a country of my own making
In the future
Environmental destruction will be the norm
No longer can it be said that
My peers and I care about this earth
It will be evident that
My generation is apathetic and lethargic
It is foolish to presume that

There is hope.

And all of this will come true unless we choose to reverse it.