

Your Journey to Self-Determination

Course 5: Collaborative Problem Solving

Lessons 1-2

Lesson 1

Slide 1

Narrator

Welcome to the Collaborative Problem Solving Course. Being able to solve problems is key to becoming self-determined and reaching your goals. In this lesson, we're going to show you the basic steps that can be used in problem solving.

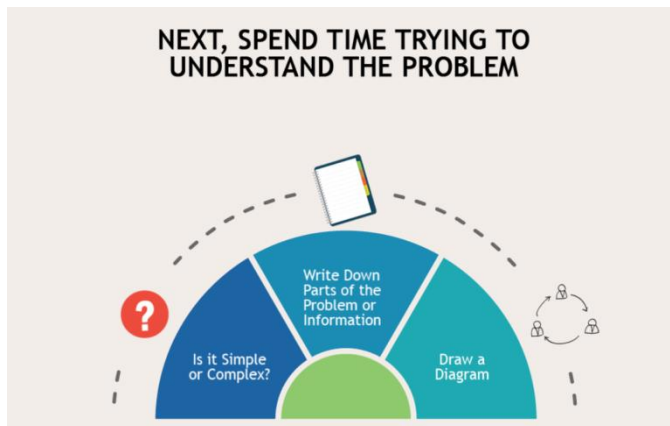
Slide 2

Narrator

In order for us to problem solve effectively, we need to be calm. So, before you even begin to problem solve, check your emotions. Are you so angry, you're about to blow? If so, take a break and come back to the problem later when you can think clearly.

It is also important to check to see if your mind is open to different possibilities. Some of the best solutions to a problem come to us when we are open to other ideas.

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Narrator

Next, it's important to spend some time fully understanding the problem. Are you facing a simple problem or is this a complex problem? If it is more complex, you might find it helpful to write down the different parts of the problem and any other useful information. Some people find it easier to understand the problem if they draw a diagram.

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Narrator

Once you understand the problem, it's time to decide if this is a problem you can easily solve on your own. Here are some questions to think about before you decide:

Is this a simple problem?

Have you been able to solve similar problems on your own in the past?

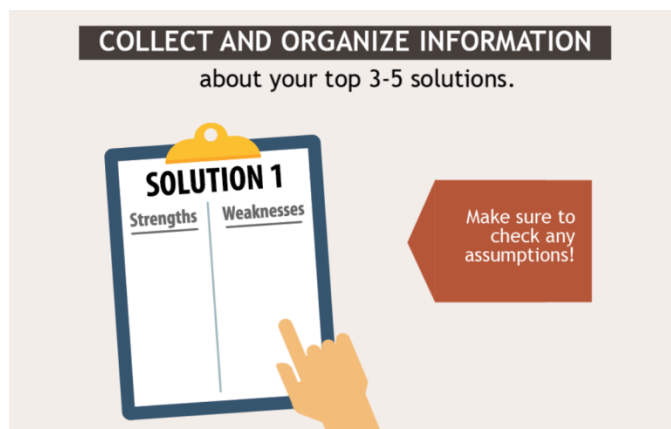
Would it help you to have other people sharing their knowledge, ideas and support?

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Narrator

This time, you think you can solve the problem on your own. Now, it's time to start brainstorming possible solutions. Many people find it helpful to write down all of their ideas. Don't start crossing off ideas yet... get them all out there first. Are there any solutions that can be combined? Can you build off of any of the other ideas? You don't need to come up with all of your ideas at one time. Sometimes we come up with our most creative solutions when we take a break or are relaxing and doing something we enjoy. Once you have a list of possible solutions, you may need to narrow it down to your top 3-5 solutions.

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Narrator

The next step is to collect and organize information about each solution. Many people like to organize the information by creating two lists for each solution. One of the lists outlines the strengths of the solution and the other outlines its weaknesses. Make sure to check any of your assumptions. For example, let's say you have the bus as a solution to your transportation problem. You think that the bus is going to take too long but don't have any facts to support this.... You should check the bus schedule to see if your assumption is true before listing this as a mark against this solution.

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Narrator

Once you have collected and organized the information for each solution, it may be very clear which solution is the best. However, we often find that there is no clear winner. So, now what? Well, there are a couple of options. You might find that some of the strengths or weaknesses listed for a solution are more important to you than others. This can help you with your decision.

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Narrator

Another possible approach is to try out a solution for a limited time and see if works. If it does, great. If it doesn't, it might be time to try out one of the other solutions.

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You've completed your first lesson of the *Collaborative Problem Solving* course.

Lesson 2

Slide 1

Narrator

Can you think of a time when you had to work with other people on a project or problem? Although there are a lot of benefits to hearing other people's perspectives and possible solutions to a problem, it's not always easy to reach agreement. This lesson will introduce you to a collaborative problem-solving process and some strategies that can help.

Slide 2

Narrator

The collaborative problem-solving process is a lot like the independent problem-solving process we went over in the first lesson of this course, except it involves a team or group of people working on a problem together. Just like before, in order to effectively use the collaborative problem-solving process, the group will need to make sure that everyone is emotionally ready and open to hearing a variety of possible solutions.

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Narrator

The group begins by identifying the problem and sharing information. This is where some challenges may begin. People may have different perspectives, ideas, and beliefs about what the problem is and what they want. So, what can we do to get closer to coming up with a solution that works for everyone?

Slide 4

Narrator

We can begin by focusing on why people want something instead of what they want. They may want something to happen because it matches their beliefs, priorities, and hopes or they have some concern or fear about what will happen if their solution isn't used. By focusing on why people want something, we can often come up with better solutions that work for everyone. Unfortunately, it's not always easy to figure out why a person wants a specific solution.

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Narrator

It's a good idea to start by identifying why you want something to happen a certain way. Ask yourself, "What do I hope to accomplish? What is motivating me? What do I think will happen if I don't get my way? What am I afraid of?"

Once you know why, tell others what is important to you before you start to share any possible solutions to the problem. This will help people understand where you are coming from. It also might encourage them to open up and share more about what is important to them. Maybe his friend responds, "I'm worried that we won't hang out much anymore because you'll be too busy with practice."

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Narrator

Check out the following situation. Remember to pay attention to why people want something.

José goes to his parents and asks them to help him figure out what he should do this summer. His mom tells him that he should forget about the camp and work with his uncle this summer. She begins to list out all the reasons why José should do this. She thinks it will give him real work experience, he could make good money, and he could learn a lot from his uncle. His mom also believes that this local band might be a bad influence on him but she doesn't tell him that.

José's dad thinks he should go to the summer camp and have fun with his friends this summer. He tells Jose that he might not get another chance to go to a summer camp with all of his friends and learn from musicians who have been successful. Jose's dad also tells him that he can get a job with his uncle next summer. His dad, however, doesn't tell him that he hopes he and José can continue to connect through their love of music.

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Narrator

What is the core reason why José's mom doesn't want him to go to the summer camp?

- A. [José will never have another chance to work with his uncle.](#)
- B. [The local band might be a bad influence on José.](#)
- C. [Summer camp is really expensive.](#)

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Narrator

What is the core reason why José's dad wants him to go to the summer camp?

- A. [He thinks construction work is dangerous.](#)
- B. [He wants José to have more friends.](#)
- C. [He hopes he and José can continue to connect through their love of music.](#)

Slide 7 Responses

What is the core reason why José's mom doesn't want him to go to the summer camp?

Response to Option A. (José will never have another chance to work with his uncle.)- No, that's not the core reason José's mom doesn't want him to go. She is worried that the local band might be a bad influence on José.

[Continue](#)

Response to Option B. (The local band might be a bad influence on José.)- That's right. Although she lists a number of reasons, the core reason comes from her fear that the local band might be a bad influence on José.

[Continue](#)

Response to Option C. (Summer camp is really expensive.)- No, that's not the core reason José's mom doesn't want him to go. She is worried that the local band might be a bad influence on José.

[Continue](#)

Slide 8 Responses

Response to Option A. (He thinks construction work is dangerous.)- No, that's not the reason. José's dad hopes he can continue to connect with José through their love of music.

[Continue](#)

Response to Option B. (He wants José to have more friends.)- No, that's not the reason. José's dad hopes he can continue to connect with José through their love of music.

[Continue](#)

Response to Option C. (He hopes he and José can continue to connect through their love of music.)- That's right. José's dad hopes he can continue to connect with José through their love of music.

[Continue](#)

Slide 9

Narrator

Without asking questions (and his parents sharing more), José may never find out the core reasons why his parents are committed to different solutions. He may be able to learn what their core reasons are by asking questions like, "Why is that solution so important to you? What concerns do you have about _____? What do you think will happen if _____? What do you hope will happen if _____?"

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Narrator

Once you know where people are coming from, you can start to brainstorm solutions. By sharing and thinking about everyone's interests and motivation, José and his parents were able to come up with some new creative solutions that will work for everyone. José decides to work with his uncle this summer, learn about woodworking and save money for more musical equipment. And on the weekends and some evenings, José's dad is going to help him and his friends work on their music. José knows his dad is an awesome musician and can really help them improve. He's really excited about this and thinks his friends will be too.

Slide 11

You've completed your second lesson of the *Collaborative Problem Solving* course.