

# Workshop

**I do not run away from problems.  
I try to solve them.**

1/3

- 1 **Explanation:** In life we are faced with various obstacles, challenges and problems. How we take them on makes a great difference. Successful problem solving contributes to a healthy self-image and personal resilience while failures to solve problems create psychological burdens and can even lead to a psychological crisis. It is very important that we strive to identify these problems and solve them without running from them. Problem solving is more successful when we **focus on the problem** and do our best to deal with it. It is less successful when we focus solely upon the psychological tension brought about by the problem. Such behaviours only exacerbate our difficulties while the real problem remains.

We develop our personal resilience by:

- changing the problem into a **challenge**; trying to interpret it as an opportunity for personal development and growth instead of viewing it as a threat or a loss;
- we should focus on **activities** that will lead us to the solution and we should do it with confidence, dedication and a lot of energy;
- when we are dealing with our problems we get the feeling we are in control of our lives, feeling we are in charge, having **control** over what is happening in our lives.

- 2 **Goal:** to develop a positive attitude to life, together with the belief that proactive approach to life's challenges builds personal resilience; to teach problem-solving strategies to adolescents - from problem identification to assessing the suitability of possible solutions.
- 3 **Target group:** pupils from 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, first-year high-school pupils.
- 4 **Equipment:** pens, worksheets, empty A4 sheets, blackboard.
- 5 **Work methods:** introductory explanation, work in small groups, closing summaries.
- 6 **Moderator guidelines:** The moderator explains to the pupils the importance of early problem recognition and of active problem solving. This explanation must be illustrated with examples. One example of how an adolescent might focus on a problem (or on relieving the emotional tension): ... A pupil gets a second poor grade in one particular subject. The pupil can now either blame the teacher, act cruelly towards parents and friends, cry and become withdrawn - or the pupil can work on improving the grade. It is especially important that the adolescents start feeling the fundamental difference between withdrawal and running from problems and active problem solving. They need to realise that although giving up seems easier it doesn't solve any problems - it can often make things even worse.

After the introductory explanation and a discussion that follows, the moderator assigns the pupils to groups of 4 to 5. The moderator then informs the pupils that they are about to start learning **how** to solve problems and which steps constitute successful problem solving.

*The moderator writes the first step on the blackboard: I recognise, identify and name the problem.*

The pupils are asked to provide an example of a problem they will then try to solve together. The pupils suggest various problems and the moderator writes these suggestions on the blackboard.

*For example: - I'm about to get a poor grade or fail a subject, /how to improve a negative grade/or: - I like a girl in my class and she never notices me, /how to attract a classmate's attention/...*

The pupils choose the suggestion they all consider the best material for practice.



**TO SEM**  
**JAZ.**

[www.tosemiaz.net](http://www.tosemiaz.net)  
e-cards, chat, useful advice and much more...

# Workshop

**I do not run away from problems.  
I try to solve them.**

2/3

*The moderator writes the second step on the table: I'm trying to find as many solutions as possible.*

The moderator then encourages the pupils to brainstorm in small groups and come up with as many possible solutions to the problem as they can. It must be pointed out that the pupils are not to judge answers as they come up; instead, they are to write down as many suggested solutions as they can, ignoring their practical value. When the pupils run out of ideas, a representative of each group reads out the proposed solutions to the moderator who then lists them on the blackboard. (The problem of a pending failing grade - the pupils might come up with: I'll act as if I don't care, I'll find a tutor, I'll ask my classmates for help, I'll play truant/hooky when this subject is on the schedule, I will sit as far away from the teacher as possible, I'll ask my parents what to do, I'll report the unjust teacher to my class teacher, I'll stop going to school, I will ask the school counsellor or the teacher to tell me how to study, I'll ignore the teacher during classes, I might try to make my problems less serious with alcohol and pot, I'll start organising my time better and studying more ...)

*The moderator writes the third step on the table: From all options I select those that are good and make sense.*

The moderator together with the pupils selects suitable solutions from all those suggested and marks (circles, underlines) them. (For example: I'll find a tutor, I'll ask classmates for help ...)

**Step four: I assess positive and negative consequences of each possible solution I'm considering.** Pupils again work in groups. For each selected solution, they write down positive and negative consequences and try to figure out which consequences prevail. (When assessing the potential solution "I'll find a tutor", positive consequences might be that a tutor will explain the subject matter clearly, the pupil will stand a better chance of improving the grade, etc., while the negative consequences are that travelling to the tutor and back will take a lot of time, the tutor will explain the subject in a different way than the teacher would, tutoring is rather expensive etc.)

Group members report their findings. Groups then compare their conclusions and together they make the fifth step: **I choose one or several good solutions to the problem which will work for me best.** (In the above case, the following solutions would be suitable: I'll ask the school counsellor or the teacher to tell me how I should study and/or I will start to manage my time better and study more, possibly: I will ask my classmates for help).

**Steps six and seven: I implement the solution(s) I've chosen AND I figure out whether the selected approach was good and whether it led me to the solution of my problem,** the moderator and all the pupils conduct the evaluation together. The moderator highlights the difficulties that arise on the path from selecting a solution to finally implementing it.

**7 Workshop conclusion:** Together with pupils, the moderator summarises the main points learnt during the workshop:

- In life, people are faced with numerous obstacles and problems - how we deal with them makes a great difference;
- It is very important that we don't run from problems - we must try to solve them when they arise;
- Running from problems creates new difficulties and leads to even bigger problems. Problem solving helps us satisfy our needs, reach our goals and successfully adapt to our environment;
- Problem solving skills can be learnt; we can monitor and evaluate the individual steps ourselves.
- Focusing on the problem and actively dealing with it helps us build a positive self-image and personal resilience.

**8 Evaluation:** The moderator fills out an evaluation questionnaire after the workshop.



*Workshop author and moderator: Alenka Tacol, BA (Psychology)*

*Education within the programme This is Me,  
Institute of Public Health Celje*

**TO SEM  
JAZ.**

**www.tosemiaz.net**  
e-cards, chat, useful advice and much more...

## **Steps of problem solving**

Step one: I recognise, identify and name the problem.

Step two: I try to find as many solutions as possible.

Step three: From all options I select those that are good and make sense.

Step four: I assess positive and negative consequences of each possible solution I'm considering.

Step five: I choose one or several good solutions to the problem which will work for me best.

Step six: I implement the solution(s) I've chosen.

Step seven: I figure out whether the selected approach was good and whether it led me to the solution of my problem.

