

Parent Resources: Lesson 12

“Problem Solving” (Jumping Hurdles) - Part 1



What This Lesson Is About

In this lesson, students are learning about problem solving—the ability to recognize challenges, think through options, and take action rather than shutting down, giving up, or reacting impulsively.

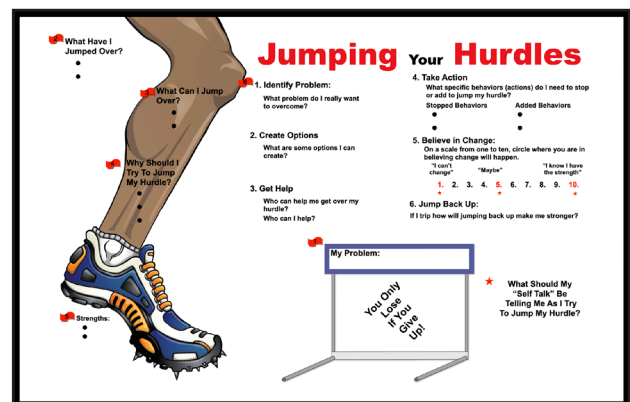
Middle school and high school students face challenges every day. Academic pressure, peer relationships, family expectations, social media, and uncertainty about the future can all feel overwhelming. When problems feel too big or personal, teens may avoid them, react emotionally, or believe they've failed.

This lesson helps students slow those moments down and learn that challenges are part of life—not a sign that something is wrong with them. The focus is not on solving every problem perfectly, but on learning how to respond when challenges show up.

The Visual Metaphor: Jumping Hurdles

In this lesson, students are taught problem solving using the visual metaphor of Jumping Hurdles.

Life is compared to running a race. Where your teen is today represents one spot on the track, and their future lies further down the lane. Along the way, everyone encounters hurdles—challenges or problems that interrupt progress.



Students discussed how:

- Everyone encounters hurdles in life
- Even skilled and prepared people can trip and fall
- Hurdles are meant to be overcome, not avoided
- Some hurdles may need to be lowered or approached differently
- What matters most is learning how to jump back up after a setback

This metaphor helps teens talk about challenges without shame and builds persistence instead of discouragement.

Key Vocabulary:

- **Hurdle:** A challenge or problem that gets in the way—but isn't meant to stop you forever.
- **Options:** Different ways to approach or solve a problem.
- **Support System:** People who can help when something feels hard (family, friends, teachers, coaches, mentors).
- **Belief Level:** How strongly someone believes that change or success is possible.
- **Resilience:** The ability to get back up and keep going after a setback.



At-Home Vocabulary Activity: “Catch It in Real Life”

This activity is designed to be simple, flexible, and realistic for busy families. There is no set schedule and no expectation to cover everything. Even short, casual conversations can reinforce what your teen is learning.

Try this:

Choose one vocabulary word and connect it to a real situation your teen might recognize. Keep the conversation brief—often five minutes or less—and let it happen naturally.

Use the prompts below as conversation guides (not a checklist):

Hurdle

“Was there something recently that felt harder than you expected?”

Options

“What different options did you have in that situation?”

“What else could you try if that happens again?”

Support System

“Who could you go to for help with something like that?”

“What makes it hard to ask for help sometimes?”

Belief Level

“On a scale from 1–10, how possible did change feel in that moment?”

Resilience

“What did it look like to keep going after that didn't work the first time?”

Important Note: The goal is not to fix the problem for your teen, but to help them notice patterns and practice the language they are learning at school.



What Students Are Learning at School

At school, students are practicing how to:

- Identify challenges instead of avoiding them
- Break problems into manageable steps
- Create more than one option instead of giving up
- Ask for help without seeing it as a weakness
- Recognize how belief influences effort
- Learn how to respond after setbacks

A key idea students learned:

You don't fail when you trip—you fail when you stop trying.



At Home – Try This!

Why this matters:

When teens don't have a process for problem solving, challenges can quickly turn into frustration, avoidance, or hopeless thinking. Learning how to approach problems step by step builds confidence, motivation, and long-term resilience.

Reinforcing these ideas at home helps teens:

- Feel less alone when facing challenges
- Build confidence in their ability to problem solve
- Learn that setbacks are part of growth
- Develop healthier help-seeking habits

Conversation Starters:

Use these when things are calm—during a drive, at dinner, or while doing something together:

- “What’s a hurdle you’re dealing with right now?”
- “What options do you have if your first plan doesn’t work?”
- “Who could be part of your support system for this?”
- “How strong was your belief that things could improve in that moment?”
- “What would resilience look like if this happens again?” “Looking back, did that reaction help—or make things harder later?”

Practice Together:

When challenges come up at home, try modeling the same language your teen is learning:

Instead of: “You should’ve known better,”

try: “That sounds like a tough hurdle.”

Instead of: “Just try harder,”

try: “What other options could you try?”

Instead of: “Do it yourself,”

try: “Who could be part of your support system?”

Small language shifts help teens see challenges as opportunities to learn—not as personal failures.



Parent Takeaway

Problem solving isn’t about having all the answers—it’s about having a process.

Teens are still developing the parts of the brain responsible for planning, impulse control, and decision-making. Learning these skills now helps them navigate challenges more confidently in school, relationships, work, and life.

Progress matters more than perfection. Thank you for partnering with us as your teen builds lifelong resilience skills.