Secondary Lesson 12:
Problem Solving
(Jumping Hurdles - Part 1)
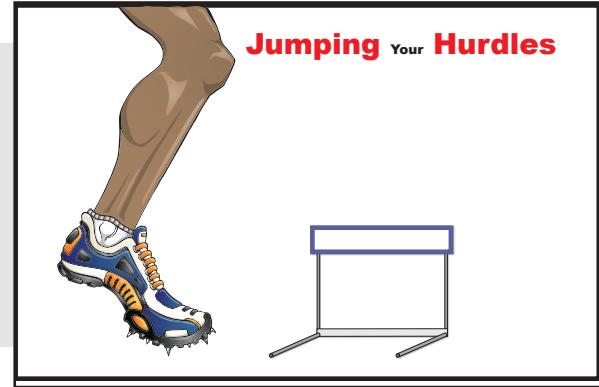
Lesson Summary:

This lesson will introduce the Jumping Hurdles. You will use video, activities and resilience boosters to help teach this lesson.

Learning Objectives:

- I can identify current hurdles in my path that need to be jumped in order to reach a goal.
- I can identify hurdles I have jumped over in the past.
- I can identify skills, traits, and abilities I have that are strengths in helping me jump hurdles.
- I can use the six step process for problem solving (jumping hurdles)
- I can explain how failure is a part of a learning process.

Lesson Tools:

- Lesson plan presentation deck (Windows)
- Lesson plan Keynote deck (Mac)
- Make sure the High School Hurdler video in the Lesson Plan works and is cued ready to go. Practice sharing the video and stopping it at key moments.
- Read through and practice the Math Problem Activity if you have never used it before.
- Read Through and practice the 15 Pencils Activity (optional) and review the slides that go with it.
- Have the supplies necessary for the student Game Plan Booster.

Note: these resources can all be accessed on this lesson's webpage.

Vocabulary:

1. **Hurdle:** A challenge or problem that gets in your way—but isn't meant to stop you forever.
   Example: "Studying for a test I don't understand yet is a hurdle, not a dead end."

2. **Options:** Different ways you can approach or solve a problem.
   Example: "If Plan A doesn't work, I need more options instead of giving up."

3. **Support System:** People who can help you when something is hard—friends, family, teachers, coaches, or mentors.
Example: "My support system helps me when I feel stuck or overwhelmed."

4. **Belief Level:** How strongly you believe that change or success is possible for you.
Example: "My belief level is higher when I've succeeded at something like this before."

5. **Resilience:** The ability to get back up and keep going after something doesn't go as planned
Example: "Messing up once doesn't mean I failed—it's a chance to build resilience."

Vocabulary Activity: "Catch It in Real Life"

Purpose
This activity helps students:

- Hear and use the vocabulary in real contexts
- Practice reframing everyday challenges
- Build awareness of their own thinking patterns
- Internalize the language without worksheets or pressure
- Transition the conversation into the metaphor walkthrough.

Facilitator Instructions:

Facilitator note:
This is not a formal assignment and does not need to be graded. This can be used after teaching this lesson to keep the conversation going and reinforce the skills and principles we are teaching in this lesson. The goal is to help students begin using this language naturally—in their thoughts, conversations, and reflections.

You can run this as:
- A 2–5 minute daily or weekly check-in
- A closing activity
- A circle or advisory prompt
- A journal quick-write (optional)

Example Frame:
"Over the next few days, I want you to pay attention to how these five words show up in real life—not just in school, but anywhere. When you notice one, just mentally 'catch it.' You don't have to write it down unless you want to.

For example:
- You notice a hurdle when something feels harder than you expected.
- You think about options when your first plan doesn't work.
- You lean on your support system instead of trying to do everything alone.
- You notice your belief level going up or down.
- You show resilience by not quitting after a setback.

We'll take a few minutes to talk about what you noticed."

Optional Daily or Weekly Discussion Prompts

Use one at a time—no need to cover all five at once.

- "Did anyone notice a hurdle they faced this week?"
- "Who tried a different option when something didn't work?"
- "Where did you see a support system make a difference?"
- "When did your belief level change—up or down?"
- "What's an example of resilience you saw in yourself or someone else?"

Optional Reframing Prompts (Very Powerful for Teens)

These help students practice replacing negative self-talk:

- "Instead of saying 'I can't do this,' try saying: This is a hurdle."
- "Instead of 'I failed,' try: That was a setback—what's my next option?"
- "Instead of 'I have to do this alone,' try: Who's part of my support system?"
- "Instead of 'This will never change,' try: What's my belief level right now?"

Welcome & Tone Setting

Facilitator note:
Open the lesson with warmth and confidence. The goal is to create psychological safety and let students know this lesson is about real life, not just school. Keep this brief.

Example Frame:
"Hey everyone, I'm really glad you're here today. We're going to talk about something that applies to school, relationships, goals—really anything in life where you run into challenges."


Question of the Day – Attention Getter

Facilitator note:
This question is designed purely to engage students and get them talking early. No deep processing yet. Keep it light and fun.

Example Frame:
"Let's start with a question of the day. If life were a video game, what kind of obstacle would you rather jump over: lava pits, spiky traps, or hungry alligators? There's no right answer—just pick the one you'd least want to deal with."

Optional engagement: "Turn to someone next to you and tell them which one you picked and why."

Video Setup & Framing

Facilitator note:
Students get more value from videos when they know what to watch for. Frame this as a perspective-taking exercise.
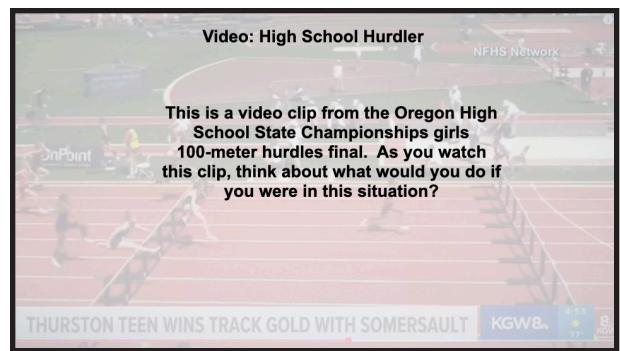
Example Frame:
"We're going to watch a short video clip from an Oregon high school state championships girls 100 meter hurdles race. As you watch, don't focus on winning or losing yet. I want you to think about this question: What would you do if you were in this situation? Just keep that in mind as you watch."

Watch the Video

Facilitator note:
Play the video without pausing or commentary.

Example Frame:
"Alright, here we go."

Video Processing

1: What stood out?
Facilitator note: Let students respond first. Model only if needed.
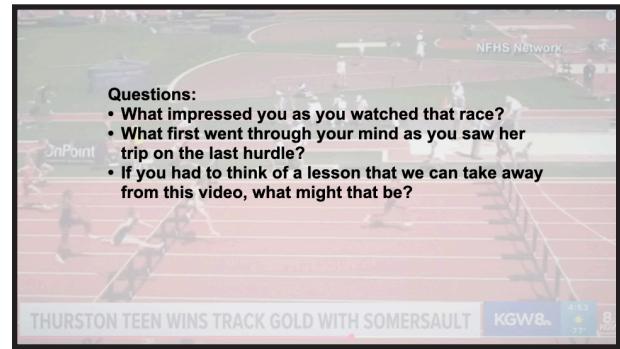
Example Frame:
"Now that we've watched that, what impressed you as you watched the race? Was there something that really stood out to you?"

Model if needed: "One thing that stands out to me is how far ahead she was. She was clearly the best at jumping hurdles—faster and cleaner than everyone else."

2: Reaction to the trip

Facilitator note: This question helps students emotionally connect to the moment of setback.

Example Frame:
"What was the first thing that went through your mind when you saw her hit that last hurdle?"
Model if needed: "My first thought was, 'Oh no—she just lost.' She was so far ahead and then suddenly it looked like it was over."

3: Life lesson

Facilitator note:This bridges the video to the metaphor. Keep it open-ended.

Example Frame:
"If you had to take a lesson away from that video, what do you think it would be? Is there a life lesson we can learn from watching something like this?"

Model if needed: "For me, one lesson is don't give up. She didn't stop, pout, or quit—she reacted and kept going."

Introduce the Visual Metaphor: Jumping Hurdles

Facilitator note: Slow your pace here. This metaphor anchors the entire lesson.

Example Frame:
"Today we're going to talk about hurdles. Hurdles are tricky because even people who are really good can still trip and fall. A hurdle is basically something in your way that you have to get over.
If you think of a race like life, where you are right now is one spot on the track. Your future is further down the track—tomorrow, the next day, the day after that. Life is a path, and along that path we all have challenges. That's what we're really talking about today—problem solving."
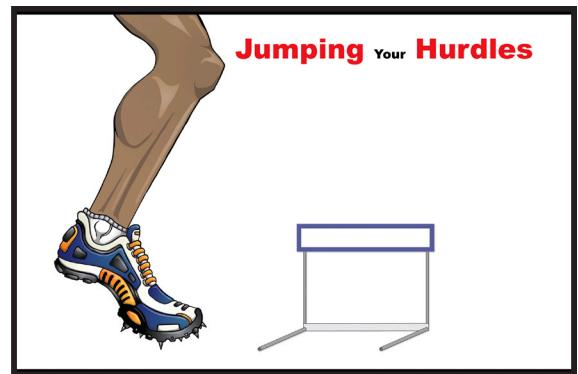
Identify a Personal Hurdle

Facilitator note:
Encourage students to choose a realistic, current challenge.

Example Frame:
"I want you to think about a challenge or problem you're trying to overcome—something that feels like it's in your way right now. It doesn't have to be huge, just something real. Write it down."
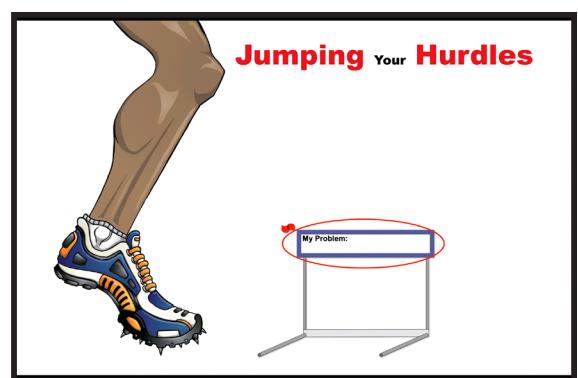
Confidence Check: Past Accomplishments

Facilitator note:
This builds self-efficacy before introducing the steps.

Example Frame:
"Now think about this—what have you accomplished before? Have you ever accomplished something similar to the problem you just wrote down?
If you've done something like this before, you can tell yourself, 'I've handled this before—I can do it again.' And if it's something new, ask yourself: am I ready for this, or is this a stretch?"

Realistic Hurdles – Story Callout: Adjustable Hurdle

Facilitator note:
This story helps students understand pacing and scale.

Example Frame:
"I'll give you an example. I know a teacher who brought an actual hurdle into a classroom. When it was set really low, most of the kids could jump it. When she raised it just one notch, suddenly none of them could. And when she showed them how high a men's hurdle goes, it was completely unrealistic.
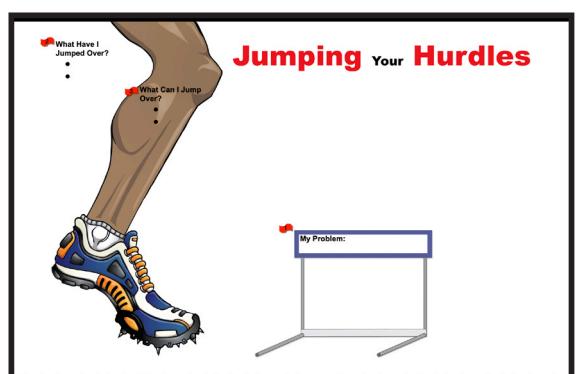
Sometimes people—especially teenagers—try to solve problems that are like trying to jump a men's high hurdle. It's not that they're lazy. It's just too much right now. So the question becomes: Is there a lower hurdle I could start with?"


Why Jump the Hurdle & Identify Strengths

Facilitator note:
This connects motivation to outcomes.

Example Frame:
"Why should you jump this hurdle? How would your life improve if you solved this problem? And what strengths do you already have that could help you?"
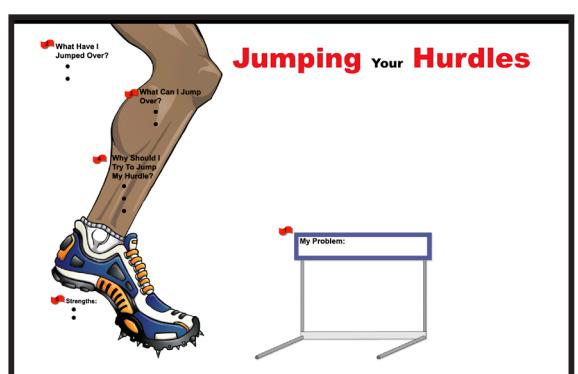
Introduce the Problem-Solving Model

Facilitator note:
Create buy-in by emphasizing long-term value.

Example Frame:
"I'm going to show you something really powerful. If you understand this, you'll understand something a lot of people don't learn until much later in life. You don't need special talent—you just need to understand the process."
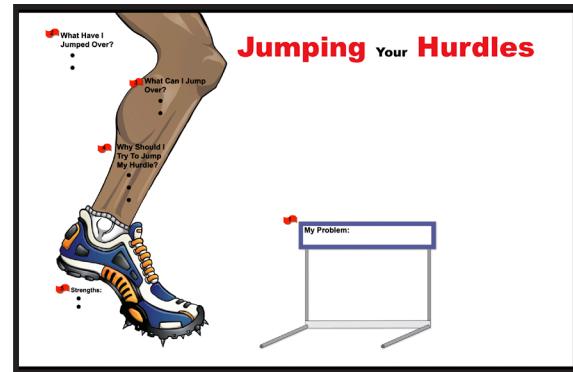

The Six Steps to Problem Solving
Step 1: Identify the Problem

Facilitator note:
Writing creates commitment.

Example Frame:
"What's a problem you really want to overcome? Write it down. When you write it down, it turns from a wish into something you're actually working on."
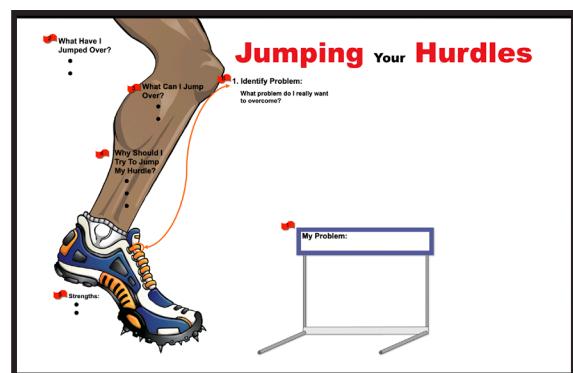
Step 2: Create Options

Facilitator note:
Normalize trial and error.

Example Frame:
"Step two is create options. Come up with at least three—Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C—because usually the first thing you try doesn't work. If Plan A doesn't work, you don't quit—you move to Plan B."
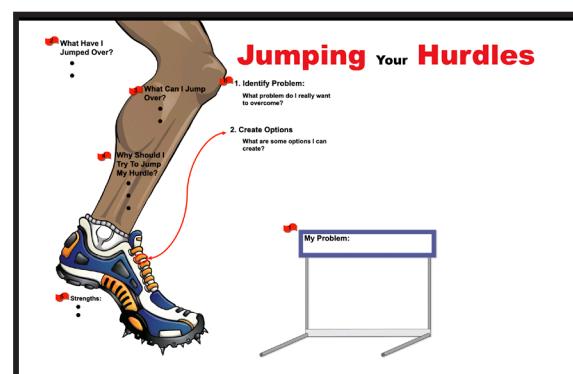
Step 3: Get Help

Facilitator note:
Students often equate independence with strength and see asking for help as weakness. This is one of the most common thinking errors adolescents make. This step reframes help-seeking as a strength and connects to broader WhyTry concepts like support systems and the Reality Ride.

Example Frame:

"Step three is get help. Do you ever hesitate to ask for help because you want to see if you can handle something on your own? That's really common. A lot of students think, 'If I have to get help, that means I'm weak.'

Facilitator Commentary:

In my opinion, that's one of the biggest thinking errors people make. Getting help isn't a weakness—it's the opposite. It's a strength. The more help you can tap into, the more likely you are to overcome your challenge. None of us are meant to be an island when things get hard.
So ask yourself: Who could help me with this? And how could I reach out and tap into that support?"

Step 4: Take Action

Facilitator note:
Focus on behavior change and flexibility.

Example Frame:

"Step four is take action. What specific behaviors do you need to stop, and what new behaviors do you need to add? If something isn't working, don't keep doing the same thing over and over and expect a different result. Try a different approach. Stop what isn't working and add something new."
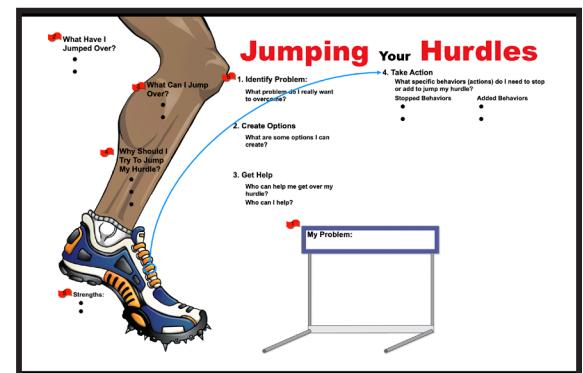

Step 5: Believe in Change

Facilitator note:
Belief is diagnostic, not judgment.

Example Frame:

"Step five is belief. On a scale from one to ten, how much do you believe change is possible? One means 'I can't change.' Five is a maybe. Ten is 'I know I can do it.'
If your belief is low, that doesn't mean you're stuck—it means something in the process needs adjusting. Maybe the hurdle is too high, the options aren't strong enough, or you need more help."
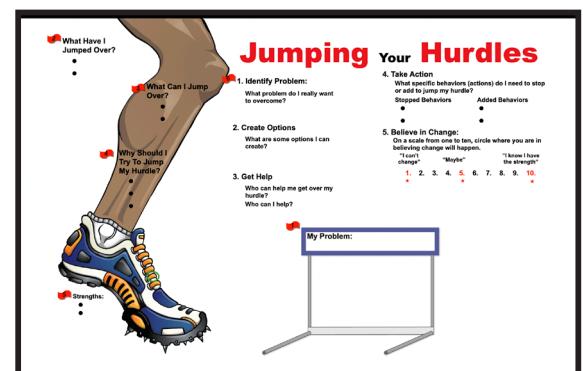
Step 6: Jump Back Up

Facilitator note:
This is the core resilience message.

Example Frame:
"Step six is jump back up. Tripping isn't failure. Giving up is. Even if you don't win, finishing matters. Life isn't always about racing other people—sometimes you're running your own race."
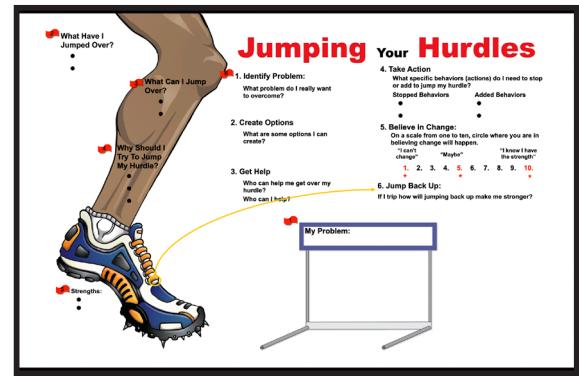
Story Callout: Thomas Edison

Facilitator note:
Use this to reframe failure as feedback.

Example Frame:
"Thomas Edison and his team tried over 10,000 experiments before the light bulb worked. When someone asked him how he dealt with failure so well. In response Edison he gave the person a strange look and then he said "What do you mean? I never failed once in creating the lightbulb—it was just a 10,000-step process."

He treated every attempt as and opportunity to learn, make adjustments, create new options, and kept going. That's the resilient mindset we all need to have when we are facing difficult problems or challenges!"


Game Plan Booster – Apply the Model

Facilitator note:
Students apply the full model independently.

Example Frame:
"Now you're going to apply this to your own life. Use the six steps to create a game plan for the problem you wrote down. If your first plan doesn't work, think about how you'll adjust and jump back up."
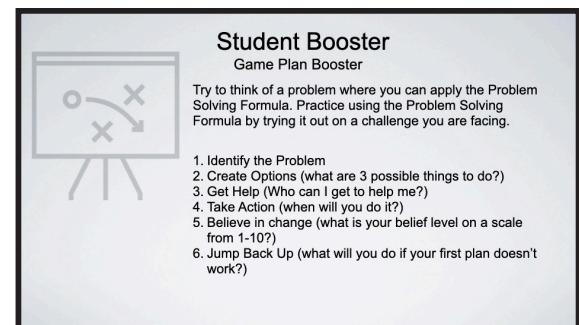
Optional Activity
15 Pencils

Activity: 15 Pencils

Introduction:
When we use lucky guesses to get through life, it can become difficult to overcome problems and reach our goals. Successful people, on the other hand, follow a "model of success" that makes it easier for them to consistently jump the hurdles of life. This activity will demonstrate that knowing the "pattern" or formula for success makes jumping hurdles possible.
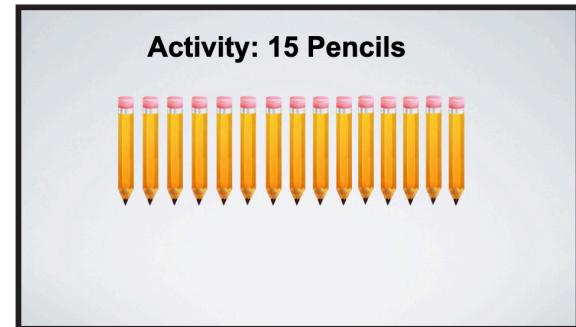
Details:
Space: Any
Activity Type: Object Lesson
Grades: 3-12
Group Size: Any
**Time:** 5-10 minutes

Materials:
Any combination of pencils, pens, or markers – 15 total
(Optional) Use the digital slide deck in this lesson

Activity Instructions:
Before you begin, spread the writing utensils across your display surface so they are visible to all. Two people play this game at a time, taking turns picking up one, two, or three writing utensils. To win, the other player must be the last one to pick up a utensil.
There is a secret to winning this game. You, the instructor, will go first, taking two writing utensils. The other player will take one, two, or three. On your next turn, take enough to equal six utensils between the two of you. When the opposite player goes again, take enough to equal ten between the two of you, and on your final turn, take enough utensils to leave the opposite player with one.

Be boastful and confident in your ability to win this game before explaining the rules and beginning play. The other player may begin, as long as you adhere to the "two, six, and ten" rule. For example, if the other player goes first and takes one, you need to take one to meet the "two" rule. You may play several rounds, challenging a different member of the class each time. If someone does beat you once, explain that they were lucky, but that true achievement means repeating success again and again. Then challenge the player to see if they are LUCKY enough to win again.

Once they understand the pattern or are sufficiently frustrated, ask them, "How do you win this activity?" Explain that there is a system or pattern for everything.

Processing the Experience:

- What made this game difficult?
- Were you able to figure out the pattern? If so, how?
- How did you feel when class members continued to lose?
- How does the pattern in this game apply to the formula for jumping hurdles?
- Which will help us solve our problems or jump our hurdles more: waiting to see what happens or following a formula? Why?
- What does this statement mean: "You only lose (fail) if you give up."
- What behaviors can you change to help you be successful? What behaviors can you keep in your life to help you achieve success?

Activity: 15 Pencils

Questions:

- What made this game difficult?
- Were you able to figure out the pattern? If so, how?
- How did you feel when class members continued to lose?
- How does the pattern in this game apply to the formula for jumping hurdles?
- Which will help us solve our problems or jump our hurdles more: waiting to see what happens or following a formula? Why?
- What does this statement mean: "You only lose (fail) if you give up."
- What behaviors can you change to help you be successful? What behaviors can you keep in your life to help you achieve success?

Closing

Facilitator note:
End relationally and positively.

Example Frame:
"Thanks for being here today. I appreciate you, and I'm looking forward to working together again next time."

Thanks for Coming!