Track 2: Leadership and Teamwork

SESSION 3: PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION-MAKING

Overview: Problem-solving and decision-making equips youth with the tools to think critically, evaluate options, and make thoughtful choices in group settings. This session emphasizes collaboration, creativity, and resilience as participants tackle challenges that require planning, communication, and strategic thinking. Whether navigating an outdoor scenario or resolving a team conflict, youth learn how to assess situations, brainstorm solutions, and reflect on outcomes—skills essential for leadership and life.

Objectives

- Identify steps in effective problem-solving.
- Practice decision-making in group scenarios.
- Understand how different approaches affect outcomes.
- Collaborate to solve challenges using logic and teamwork.

Supplies

- Spaghetti
- Mini marshmallows
- Paper
- Tape
- Rope
- Blindfolds
- Water containers
- Sponges
- Whiteboard or flip chart
- Markers
- Timer or stopwatch
- Optional: sticky notes, index cards

Advisor Notes

- This session emphasizes critical thinking and collaboration — keep activities hands-on and engaging.
- Encourage youth to explore different problem-solving strategies and reflect on their effectiveness.
- Watch for group dynamics and help balance participation.
- Use real-world examples to show how decisions impact outcomes.
- Allow time for teams to revise their approaches after feedback to reinforce learning.

SESSION OUTLINE

Welcome and Icebreaker Activity: Tower of Power (10-15 min)

- Teams are given limited materials (for example, spaghetti, mini marshmallows, tape, paper) to build the tallest free-standing tower.
- Goal: Encourage creative problem-solving, teamwork, and decision-making under pressure.

Safety Moment: Know Your Surroundings (3-5 min)

- Before starting any group activity, take a moment to scan the area: Are there trip hazards? Is the weather changing? Is the equipment safe?
- Leaders should do a quick safety check and share any concerns with the group.
- Ask: "What are some things you should look for before leading a group outside?"
- Teach youth to think ahead and plan for safety. This builds confidence and trust.

Problem-Solving Basics (15-20 min)

- Introduce steps in problem-solving — Define, Brainstorm, Decide, Act, Reflect.
- Discussion: What makes a solution effective? What causes poor decisions?
- Handout: Problem-Solving Template

Decision-Making Skills: Blindfold Navigation (15-20 min)

- One person is blindfolded and guided through a course.
- Debrief: What made decision-making difficult? What helped?
- Tips: STOP model, ABCDE model, evaluating options

Team Problem Challenge (20-30 min)

- Teams receive a challenge (for example, water transport, knot puzzle).
- Use problem-solving steps to create and test a solution.
- Present solutions to the group.
- Debrief: What worked well? What could be improved?

REFLECTION SECTION

Advisor note: These are sample questions. They are designed to help the participants apply what they have learned to their own interests. You are welcome to use these questions or develop your own questions.

Focusing Questions

- What challenge did your team solve today?
- What role did you play in the decision-making process?
- How did your team make choices together?

Analysis Questions

- What strategies helped your team solve problems?
- How did communication affect your team's decisions?
- What obstacles did your team face, and how did you overcome them?

Generalization Questions

- How can you use problem-solving skills in school or other activities?
- What's one thing you'll do differently next time you face a tough decision?
- Why is it important to consider multiple options before deciding?

Optional Extensions

- Invite a guest speaker (for example, emergency responder, outdoor guide) to share decision-making tips.
- Have youth solve a real upcoming club challenge using today's tools.

Track 2: Leadership and Teamwork

SESSION 3: PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION-MAKING

PRINTABLE HANDOUT: DECISION-MAKING MODELS REFERENCE SHEET

Instructions: Use these models to guide thoughtful decision-making and problem-solving during activities.

STOP Model

- A simple framework to pause and think before acting:
- S – Stop: Take a moment before reacting or making a decision.
- T – Think: Consider the situation. What are your choices? What are the consequences?
- O – Observe: Look around. What resources do you have? Who is involved? What's happening?
- P – Plan: Decide on a course of action. What steps will you take?

ABCDE Model

- A structured approach to solving problems and making decisions:
- A – Assess the situation: What's the problem? Who is affected? What needs to be solved?
- B – Brainstorm solutions: List all possible options, even the wild ones.
- C – Consider consequences: What are the pros and cons of each option?
- D – Decide and do: Pick the best solution and act on it.
- E – Evaluate the outcome: Did it work? What did you learn? What would you change?

Evaluating Options: Use these tools to compare and choose between possible solutions

- Pros and Cons Lists: Simple and effective for visualizing trade-offs.
- Impact vs. Effort Matrix: Which options have the biggest impact with the least effort?
- Group Voting or Consensus: Encourage discussion and democratic decision-making.

Track 2: Leadership and Teamwork

SESSION 3: PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION-MAKING

PRINTABLE HANDOUT: TEAM PROBLEM CHALLENGE INSTRUCTIONS

Instructions: Use these challenges to promote teamwork, creativity, and decision-making.

Water Transport Challenge

Objective
Transport water from one container to another using limited tools, without spilling or directly pouring.

Materials
- Two buckets or containers (one filled with water, one empty)
- Sponges, cups, straws, string, plastic bags
- Timer

Setup
1. Place the full container at one end of the activity area and the empty container at the other.
2. Provide each team with identical sets of tools.
3. Set a time limit (e.g., 10–15 minutes).

Rules
- No direct pouring or carrying the container.
- Teams must use only the provided tools.
- Spilled water does not count toward the total.

Debrief Prompts
- What strategies did your team try?
- How did you decide which tools to use?
- What would you do differently next time?

Knot Puzzle Challenge

Objective
Untangle a rope web or solve a human knot using communication and strategy.

Option A: Rope Web Puzzle

Materials
- Long ropes tied into a web or knot-like structure
- Optional: boundary markers (e.g., cones or tape)

Setup
1. Create a tangled rope structure that teams must untangle.
2. Optionally, restrict movement (e.g., no stepping inside the web).

Rules
- No cutting or untying knots.
- Teams must work together to loosen and separate the ropes.
- Time limit: 10–15 minutes.

Option B: Human Knot

Setup
1. Teams stand in a circle, and each person grabs hands with two different people across the circle.
2. Without letting go, the group must untangle into a circle.

Debrief Prompts
- What communication strategies helped?
- Did your team assign roles or work organically?
- How did you handle frustration or confusion?

Track 2: Leadership and Teamwork

SESSION 3: PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION-MAKING

PRINTABLE HANDOUT: PROBLEM-SOLVING TEMPLATE

Instructions: Use this template to work through challenges and make thoughtful decisions.

1. Define the Problem
What is the issue or challenge you are facing?

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Brainstorm Possible Solutions
List all the ideas your team can think of. Be creative!

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Evaluate Each Option
What are the pros and cons of each idea?

Option 1: _____
Pros: _____
Cons: _____

Option 2: _____
Pros: _____
Cons: _____

4. Choose the Best Solution
Which solution will you try and why?

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Plan Your Action Steps
What steps will you take to put your solution into action?
Step 1: _____
Step 2: _____
Step 3: _____

6. Reflect on the Outcome
What happened? What did you learn? What would you do differently?

_____
_____
_____
_____