



This document is a guide for presenting the **Behavior Guidance: Problem Solving in the Moment** in-service suite. Please use the materials as you see fit. This in-service suite includes PowerPoint slides and supporting materials.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Presenter PowerPoint slides (14)
- Projector and audio equipment
- Learning Activity:
 - » *Problem Solve*
- Optional Learning Activities:
 - » *Anticipating Problem Situations*
 - » *Brainstorming Multiple Solutions*
 - » *Celebrate Success*
- Tips for Teachers
- Tools for Teachers
- Tools for Supervisors
- Helpful Resources
- Flip chart or other large paper and markers for writing participant ideas

BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- The focus of this in-service suite is to learn how to support children as they problem solve in the moment.
- *Problem Solving in the Moment* familiarizes teachers with ways to create a well-organized classroom to help anticipate and avoid the escalation of problematic situations in the classroom.
- This is one of a series of in-service suites on *Behavior Guidance*.
- *Problem Solving in the Moment* introduces five straightforward steps, called THINK FIVE, for teachers as they help children when problems arise in the preschool classroom.
- Optional learning activities offer participants opportunities to reflect on their classroom practices, generate ideas and design visual supports to encourage effective problem solving in their classrooms. These optional learning activities are described in detail at the end of this document.

NOTE

The information presented in this in-service suite is designed to augment and build on a program's current approach to problem solving. The THINK FIVE steps provide staff with guidelines to ensure consistent and efficient use of proactive problem solving during teachable moments of the day.



SLIDE 1: INTRODUCTION

- Begin the training by giving participants background information about yourself.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves.
- Conduct an icebreaker activity.

Introduce topic.

Learning how to solve problems is a difficult skill for young children. During the preschool years children are just beginning to learn how to share, play with friends and interact in group settings. Conflicts may arise and children need help and guidance from an adult in learning to reach a solution.

Problem Solving in the Moment focuses on the **role of the teacher** in guiding children's behavior.

The presentation introduces a problem solving strategy that consists of five actions called THINK FIVE which assists in supporting and guiding children as they navigate challenging social situations.

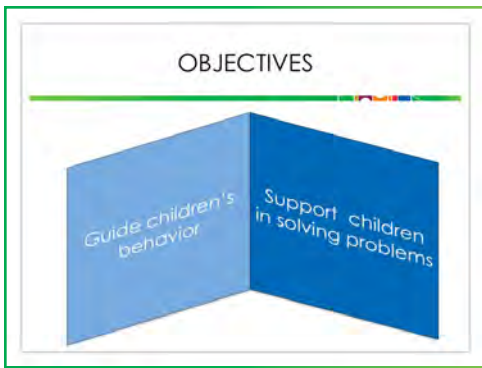


SLIDE 2: FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

Review NCQTL framework for effective practice.

- Integrating the House structure framework in everyday classroom practice supports school readiness for all children.
- The foundation represents effective and engaging interactions and environments.
- The pillars represent research-based curricula and teaching practices, and ongoing child assessment.
- The roof represents highly individualized teaching and learning.
- All components interact with each other and are essential for effective everyday practice for all children.
 - » The foundation of the House represents the fundamental elements of quality preschool practice. These include a well-organized and managed classroom, positive emotional support and meaningful teacher-child interactions that support children's development and learning.
 - » *Problem Solving in the Moment* fits into the foundation of the house, the well-organized classroom. *Problem Solving in the Moment* assists teachers in behavior guidance so that they are proactive and effective when problems occur in preschool classrooms.

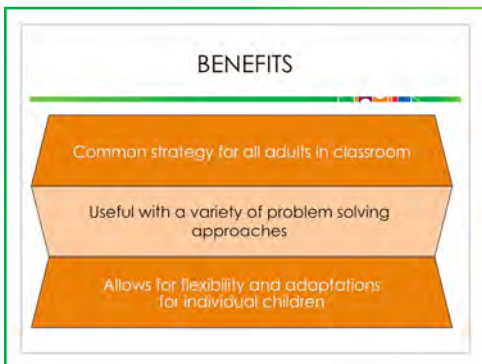




SLIDE 3: OBJECTIVES

The objective of *Problem Solving in the Moment* is to share five straightforward steps, called THINK FIVE. THINK FIVE assists in:

1. Guiding children's behavior and;
2. Supporting children as they solve social problems in the ordinary course of the preschool day.



SLIDE 4: BENEFITS

The approach described in this *Problem Solving in the Moment* in-service suite presents several advantages for teachers.

- All adults in the classroom use a common strategy.
 - » When a problem situation arises, it is important that adults respond. A consistent response aids in teaching children how to solve social problems without being chastised as they learn these complex skills.
 - » Sometimes adults in the classroom do not know how to handle problem situations. Using a common strategy assures that adult responses are appropriate to the classroom.
- The steps in THINK FIVE: *Problem Solving in the Moment* are not specific to any one problem solving strategy. In fact, one of the strengths is that it is useful with both formalized (four steps to solve a problem) and informal ("pick a number," "eenie, meenie, minie, moe" or "rocks, paper, scissors") problem-solving approaches.
- When teachers help children solve problems in the moment, the classroom environment is better poised to be effective and engaging.





SLIDE 5: THINK FIVE

Here are five steps to help teachers guide children's behavior to encourage problem solving in the moment.

1. Anticipate – the first and very important step.
 - a. Effective teachers have been described as having “eyes-in-the-back-of-their-heads” and “appear to be one step ahead of problems.”
 - b. In his book, *The Power of Guidance*, Dan Gartrell mentions the term “with-it-ness.” “With-it-ness” is defined as the ability to diagnose key situations that need to be addressed.
2. Be close.
 - a. Teachers are very busy in the classroom and cannot always be physically close to every problem situation. They can, however, move to be near the location of the problem as soon as it occurs—or better yet, before it develops.
 - b. By being near the problem situations, teachers are able to model calm, quiet, and gentle approaches to problem solving.
3. Provide support.
 - a. Children may have been taught how to solve problems during circle and/or small groups but USING those strategies when needed is often difficult.
 - b. Teachers provide support by assisting children with words to use, strategies to try, and with visual reminders of how to solve problems.
4. Generate multiple solutions.
 - a. As children attempt to solve problems, they learn that several solutions may be effective.
 - b. Often, several solutions to a problem must be tried before the right “fit” is found. Children need to be encouraged to persist in finding the right solution for a situation.
5. Celebrate success.
 - a. Problem solving is hard work!
 - b. When problems are solved, that hard work should be recognized.



STEP 1: ANTICIPATE



SLIDE 6: STEP 1: ANTICIPATE

Expect problem situations to arise in your classroom. Problem situations are common when over a dozen children are in a classroom with few adults.

For example,

- Children arrive at school from a wide variety of home settings and circumstances. When teachers observe children closely, they are able to **sense** when children are experiencing difficulty.

Some classroom situations often elicit problems—like limited access to favorite toys or distributing food at meal times. When teachers are aware of and anticipate these circumstances, it is easier to prevent problem situations.

DISCUSSION

- What might a teacher “sense”?
- What might a teacher need to be aware of in an outdoor setting?
- Are there other settings in which problems occur frequently?
- Are there times of the day in which problems may likely occur?

OPTIONAL

LEARNING ACTIVITY: ANTICIPATING PROBLEM SITUATIONS

This optional learning activity offers participants an opportunity to practice anticipating potentially problematic situations that might arise in the early childhood classroom.



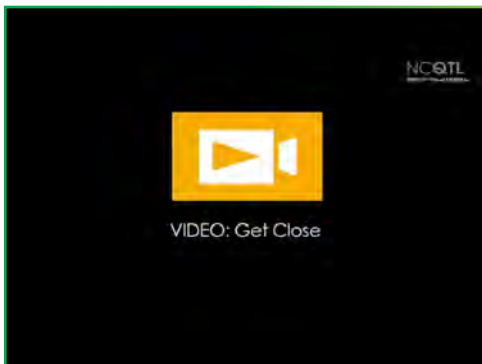
STEP 2: BE CLOSE



SLIDE 7: STEP 2: BE CLOSE

The next step in helping to solve problems in the moment is being close to the problem situation.

- When teachers are busy with small groups of children it is helpful to scan the classroom.
- A teacher may also walk around during free choice and observe to ascertain if the teacher needs to get close to a particular area or group of children.
- Moving to where the problem is happening helps a teacher stop a problem behavior before it escalates.
- Getting close also puts a teacher near enough to prompt a child through the problem solving steps.
- On occasion, some children will be overwhelmed. Being close helps a teacher walk a child through intermediate steps prior to thinking of solutions. These intermediate steps may include calming exercises, slow breathing, etc.



Length of video: Approximately 20 seconds

SLIDE 8: GET CLOSE VIDEO

Introduce the video.

In this example, we see a teacher who is sitting with children as they play with chalk outdoors.

VIDEO 

DISCUSSION 

Potential discussion questions:

- What potential problems might arise between the two children who are playing with chalk?
- Why was it important for the teacher to be close?

KEY IDEAS

- This teacher prevented problematic behavior because of her proximity to the situation.
- One child wanted to draw a “red, pink” flower while another child wanted to draw a blue flower. By saying, “You mixed the colors,” and communicating that it was OK to use both colors, the teacher prevented a potential conflict between the two children.



STEP 3: PROVIDE SUPPORT



Sometimes support means...
Helping children stay near

Sometimes support means...
Prompting

Sometimes support means...
Visuals

SLIDE 9: STEP 3: PROVIDE SUPPORT

Young children need support from the teacher to remember the problem-solving steps and to stay in the situation. Children who feel they are not skilled at problem solving are prone to flee the situation.

Sometimes support means:

- Keeping the child physically in proximity to the other child or children involved.
- Support also means prompting the child through the problem solving steps.
 - » Verbal prompting – “Do you remember what we do when..”
 - » Use a peer – “Let’s ask our friend Dao..”
 - » Use a puppet – “Let’s see what our friend Rabbit does when she has a problem.”
- For learners with limited verbal skills, this can be done with the added support of visual prompts that depict the problem solving steps.
 - » These visuals can be placed strategically around the room to remind children of problem-solving steps when an adult is not available.

NOTE

The presenter may want to distribute and review examples of visuals included in the *Tools for Teachers: Visuals of Problem Solving Ideas*.





SLIDE 10: STEP 4: MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS

Even though one solution may be a good solution, it almost certainly cannot work all of the time. Children need to be encouraged to generate multiple solutions.

- When children cannot think of any more solutions, they can be prompted to look at the “solution board” or select a solution from a solution box or kit.
 - » These materials provide children with picture cues of various solutions to interpersonal problems.
 - » Solutions need not be complicated, here are some examples of simple solutions.
 - “Rocks, paper, scissors”
 - Flip a coin.
 - Use a timer.
 - Wait patiently.

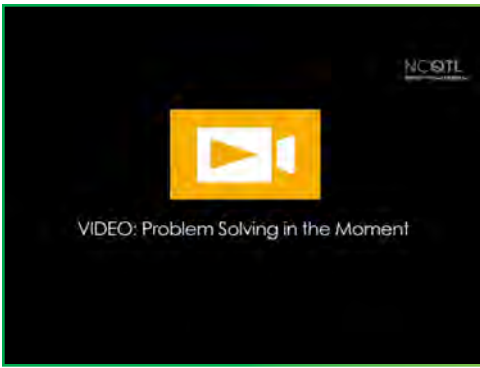
NOTE

Picture cues of solutions are provided in the *Tools for Teachers: Visuals of Problem Solving Ideas*.

Children may also need support to remain in the situation and keep trying in the face of adversity.

- After each try, it is essential that an adult praise a child’s efforts (“Wow!! You have thought of two really good solutions! I know you have some other ideas.”).
- Encourage persistence. (“Boy, this is a tough problem, and you have thought of so many good solutions. You are such an amazing problem solver. What else can you think of?”)





Length of video: Approximately 1 minute and 13 seconds

SLIDE 11: PROBLEM SOLVING IN THE MOMENT VIDEO

Introduce the video.

This clip illustrates how multiple solutions are used in a play situation outdoors.

NOTE

Children's voices may be difficult to hear. Notice how the teacher provides verbal support throughout the process of generating solutions.

The first solution generated by the child is "I say we can keep room." This a direct quote from the child.

The second solution is that children can "scoot over to another side of the house."

The third solution is to paint the house and have some friends come over.

Painting the house, the third suggestion, is the one that worked.

VIDEO

DISCUSSION

Potential discussion questions:

- When might children have the need to generate multiple solutions?
- How could you introduce the idea of multiple solutions to the children in your classroom?

KEY IDEAS

- Problems need to be solved where they occur so visual prompts need to be transportable.
- This is a difficult step for children and may require the most support.





LEARNING ACTIVITY:

PROBLEM SOLVE

This learning activity provides participants an opportunity to think through how they can support children in problem solving situations.

This activity may be conducted individually or in small groups.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Tools for Teachers: Visuals of Problem Solving Ideas* and the *Problem Solve* learning activity and review the directions.

DISCUSSION

Have small groups share back with the larger group.

OPTIONAL

LEARNING ACTIVITY:

MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS

In this activity participants view photos of classroom situations and practice generating multiple solutions to potential problems.



SLIDE 12: STEP 5: CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Reinforcing a child's success in problem solving supports their development as effective problem solvers. This celebration can be informal or formal.

- Informally, teachers can give children high-fives, thumbs-up, a wink, verbal praise, hugs and so on.
- Formally, teachers can plan mini-celebrations when a child has done a great job of problem solving.
 - » These “mini-celebrations” send a clear message to all of the children that peaceful and persistent problem solving is valued.
 - » Copies of certificates may be a way to collect information as part of on-going assessment. Copies of certificates also inform families of positive child behavior.

OPTIONAL

LEARNING ACTIVITY: CELEBRATE SUCCESS

This optional learning activity offers participants an opportunity to discuss ways to celebrate when children successfully solve a problem.





SLIDE 13: REVIEW

Problem Solving in the Moment contains five straightforward steps called THINK FIVE intended for adults in the preschool classroom as they guide children's learning. The steps are:

- Anticipate – Adults sense and are aware of possible difficult situations for children.
- Get close – Adults are near to the problem situation.
- Support – Adults give children the help they need to solve problems.
- Multiple solutions – Adults have helpful suggestions ready ahead of time so if the first solution is ineffective, other choices are available and a solution can be found.
- Celebrate success – Acknowledge the hard work it takes to solve problems both formally and informally.

HANDOUT

Distribute handouts if not distributed during the presentation.

Based on participant roles:

- Distribute and review the *Tips for Teachers* handout.
- Distribute and review the *Tools for Teachers* handout. State that the materials included in the *Tools for Teachers* are products of the Head Start Center for Inclusion. These materials are available for free at **Head Start Center for Inclusion** – <http://www.headstartinclusion.org>
- Distribute and review the *Tools for Supervisors*, a guided observation.
- Distribute the *Helpful Resources* list, further information about *Problem Solving in the Moment* for classroom staff and/or supervisors.





SLIDE 14: CLOSING

Provide participants with NCQTL contact information and encourage them to visit our website for additional resources.

OPTIONAL FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES:

- Ask participants to observe children and to determine potential problem situations. Invite participants to send/ e-mail a copy of the observation to you or to a colleague for comment.
- Ask participants to create a solution kit, solution box or board.
- With team, generate ways in which problem solving can be supported.
- “Letter to Myself.” Give participants some stationery and an envelope or a post card. Have them address the envelope and write a letter to themselves indicating what they plan to do as a result of the workshop. Collect the materials and mail back to participants at a later date.



OPTIONAL

LEARNING ACTIVITY: ANTICIPATING PROBLEM SITUATIONS

Suggested placement after Slide 6.

This activity is intended to assist in detecting potentially problematic situations in the early childhood classroom.

This activity may be conducted individually or in small groups.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Anticipating Problem Situations* handout and review directions.

DISCUSSION

Have small groups share back with the larger group.

NOTE

The focus for this activity is on describing anticipated problems, not on proposing solutions. Learning activities for practicing proposing solutions are addressed later in this presentation after Slide 11.



OPTIONAL



LEARNING ACTIVITY: MULTIPLE SOLUTIONS

Suggested placement after Slide 11.

Participants view several photos. Each photo illustrates a classroom situation that might elicit a potential problem. Participants will identify, and then generate multiple solutions to the problem.

This activity may be conducted in a large group or in small groups.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Multiple Solutions* handout and review directions.

DISCUSSION

Have small groups or individuals share back with the larger group.

NOTE

The first picture is of a child on the verge of throwing a glass into the clean up bin.

The second picture is of a child trying to climb onto a swing while the swing is moving.

The third picture is of children lining up close to materials that may be a source of distraction while they wait.



OPTIONAL



LEARNING ACTIVITY: CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Suggested placement after Slide 12.

This reflection activity consists of creating three ways to celebrate when children successfully solve problems in the moment.

NOTE

If desired, conduct this learning activity as a “make and take.” Provide materials for participants to create items that celebrate problem solving in the classroom.

HANDOUT

Distribute the *Celebrate Success* handout and review directions.