

# Problem Solving

This lesson is designed to help students develop their problem-solving skills. We will review effective and ineffective ways to handle problems and give students an opportunity to practice implementing these skills.

## Essential Question

How can I develop the expertise and mindsets I need to accomplish my most important goals, despite the challenges I face along the way?

## Guiding Question

What are some effective ways to solve problems? How can we better handle challenges that arise?

## Objectives

- Students will identify effective and ineffective ways to solve problems
- Students will practice implementing PEACE and other effective problem-solving strategies

## Advance Preparation

- Prepare student handouts
- Prepare “Sorting through Conflict” chart (and, if desired, the “Three Conflict Strategies: Looks Like/ Sounds Like” chart) on white board, smart board, or poster paper

## Materials/Resources

- PowerPoint slideshow 2.4 (adapt as needed)
- “Sorting through Conflict” chart
- Optional: “Three Conflict Strategies: Looks Like/ Sounds Like” chart

## Student Materials

- “Sorting Through Conflict” team activity sheet
- “Margarita’s Conflict: Fight, Flee, or Face?”
- Role Play: “Three Approaches to Conflict”
- Half sheets of paper for exit ticket
- Optional: “Three Conflict Strategies: Looks Like/ Sounds Like” chart

## Vocabulary

- Avoidance
- Confrontation

## Do Now

2-3 min.

Students share with a partner their answers to the following question: “When problems arise (related to school, friends, family members, or others), what are some ways you try to solve them?”

## Introduction (Framing/Overview)

2-3 min.

1. Slide 3: Student Dedication (30-60 seconds)
2. Tell students that today they will focus on problem solving. As we know, challenges in life arise. The key is thinking about how we solve these problems.
3. Review some of the ways to solve problems that students shared with partners during the Do Now (slide 4). Invite several student volunteers to share their preferred strategies. Review with students the day’s agenda (slide 5).

## Activity 1: Introduction to Problem Solving

15-20 min.

4. Slide 6: Introduce the topic. Remind students that the PEACE acronym (slide 7) provides guidance on one problem-solving strategy.

**Whole  
Class  
Discussion**

P = identify the **P**roblem

E = **E**xamine yourself

A = seek **A**dvice

C = **C**onsider the outcome or result

E = **E**xhibit skills of a self-controlled person

Briefly revisit slides 8-12. For each topic, ask students to explain why that step is helpful or important.

5. Tell students that today they will learn about three possible responses people have when faced with a problem or conflict (slide 13). Ask a student volunteer to read the three possible options. Ask students, “Where have we heard the terms **flee or fight** before?” (Answer: the sympathetic nervous system is also called the “flee or fight” system. These are two ways that our minds and bodies instinctively respond to challenging or dangerous situations.)
6. Show slides 14-16. Briefly describe each approach and have students discuss the questions listed on the slide, as follows:

- Avoidance: What does “avoiding a problem” mean? What does it look like? Why might it be unhelpful?
- Attack: What does it mean to confront someone? Why might this be a problem if not done well?
- Address: What is the goal of addressing a problem? What is the difference between honestly *addressing* an issue you have with someone, and aggressively *confronting* the person?

## Activity 2: Strategy Identification Practice

(10-15 minutes)

7. Have students work in teams to complete the “Sorting Through Conflict” handout (slide 17) by listing each different reaction in one of three categories: **flee** (avoid), **fight** (attack) or **face** (address).

**Cooperative Learning**

When students finish, briefly review answers with the class, filling out the chart on the white board, smart board, or poster paper. Ask:

**Whole Class Discussion**

What actions did you place under Flee?

What actions did you place under Fight?

What actions did you place under Face?

[**Optional:** If you have extra time, have students fill out the “Three Conflict Strategies: Looks Like/ Sounds Like” chart, slide 18, either as a class or with their partners or teams. What does it look like to avoid a problem, confront it aggressively, or address it constructively? What might it sound like?]

8. Have students partner read the two anecdotes about Margarita and Peter, pausing to talk about what approach Margarita is using and whether or not it is working (slide 19). What can she do better? Students write their answers in the spaces provided.

**Partner Reading/ Cooperative Learning**

Lead the class in a discussion of the following questions:

What do we think about Margarita? Which approach did she use first? Did it work?

**Whole Class Discussion**

What did Margarita do in the second instance? How could she address this conflict better?

## Activity 3: Role Play

(10-15 minutes)

9. Have student teams read the six scenarios given on the “Role Play” sheet and choose one scenario to act out (slide 20). (Note: Teams do their role plays simultaneously. If time is short, you can just assign a scenario to each team.)

**Cooperative Learning**

Teams act out three different ways of handling their scenario that show the different approaches (**Flee**, **Fight**, or **Face**). Team members should take turns role-playing and observing so that each student has a chance to play a role.

After the role play, teams discuss (or you can have the whole class discuss) the solutions they explored. Which responses came most naturally to them? Which responses would have the best chance of leading to a good solution?

## Closure

Slide 21: Students complete exit tickets by responding to the following questions:

1. Think about how you often solve problems. Do you most often flee, face, or fight?
2. What are two strategies you can use when trying to solve problems better?

## Extensions

If you have extra time, have students complete the “Three Conflict Strategies: Looks Like/ Sounds Like” chart, as a class or with their partners or in teams.

For homework, have students write a journal entry about a conflict or difficult situation they recently experienced. Who was involved? What was it about? How did they respond? What are ways they could have handled it better?

Image sources:

<http://clipart-library.com/clipart/1720384.htm>

<http://clipart-library.com/clip-art/smiley-face-transparent-1.htm>

Boxing Glove by Alina Oleynik from the Noun Project <https://thenounproject.com/term/boxing-glove/663889/>

[http://clipart-library.com/clip-art/1147354\\_angry-girl-png.htm](http://clipart-library.com/clip-art/1147354_angry-girl-png.htm)

Sorting Through Conflict

Some ways of responding to problems are more effective than others. For example, if you flee or avoid the issue, it may not get resolved. Taking an aggressive approach may not help either, as it could make the problem worse. A better approach is to face the issue calmly and thoughtfully. Below are some different ways people handle problems. Decide whether each one is an example of **fleeing**, **fighting**, or **facing** a problem, and write it in the appropriate space.

- Apologizing when wrong

Blaming someone else

Bullying

Compromising or collaborating

Cooling down to think straight

Denying that there’s a problem

Fighting

Asking for help
- Gossiping or back-stabbing

Insulting others




Keeping score to attack later

Pretending to be okay

Running away

Talking to the person

Trying to improve the relationship

Strategy	Examples
<div>Flee</div> <div>(Avoid)</div> <div></div>	
<div>Fight</div> <div>(Attack)</div> <div></div>	
<div>Face</div> <div>(Address)</div> <div></div>	



## Margarita's Conflict: Fight, Flee or Face?

People sometimes use avoidance (fleeing) to deal with problems because they are afraid to confront the other person, hate conflict, or have an unhealthy need to please others. Other people fight or attack by criticizing, insulting, blaming, bullying, spreading rumors, gossiping, or using violence. They would rather attack than admit they might be wrong. But some people learn to face conflict head on and try to solve their problems.

Let's see if we can recognize when people use the unsuccessful approaches and discover the third way—a way to address conflict positively. Read these scenarios and answer the questions.

1. Margarita has been working with Peter on a science project all semester. It is an important part of their grade. She is frustrated because several times Peter agreed to meet her after school to work on the project, but stood her up and went out with friends instead. He once joked that he wished the teacher had made him work with Tayisha instead because she is so good looking. Margarita has never talked to him about these things, or told him that she is frustrated and hurt by his actions. She acts as if everything is okay between them.

What approach is Margarita using? \_\_\_\_\_

Is this approach working? Why do you think so? \_\_\_\_\_

2. When Margarita invited Peter over to her house last week to work on the project, he was forty-five minutes late and offered no apology. He had not done the research he had agreed to do. Instead, he told Margarita, "You should probably do all the research, because you have more time." She lost her temper. "You are such a jerk! You haven't done anything to help with this project. If we fail, it will be your fault!"

How did Margarita deal with this conflict? What approach did she use? \_\_\_\_\_

Will this approach work? Why do you think so? \_\_\_\_\_

How can Margarita address this conflict in a healthier way? \_\_\_\_\_

**Role Play: Three Approaches to Conflict**

	<b>The Scenarios</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>#1</b>	Joshua, Tami, Ramon, and Hamid have formed a band. They have been asked to play at a friend's 16 <sup>th</sup> birthday party. Hamid wants to replace Tami, who sings and plays guitar, with another singer. What should Tami do?	What would avoidance look like?  What would attacking look like?  What would it look like for Tami to address the problem?
<b>#2</b>	Miguel (14) thinks his mother asks him to do too many chores, especially since his brother Juan, who is 12, hardly has to do any. What should Miguel do?	What would avoidance look like?  What would attacking look like?  What would it look like for Miguel to address the problem?
<b>#3</b>	Christina is hanging out with a guy Holly used to like. Holly sent a mean and insulting text message to Christina because she is jealous. What should Christina do?	What would avoidance look like?  What would attacking look like?  What would it look like for Christina to address the problem?
<b>#4</b>	Devon bought a new pair of expensive sneakers. It took him a month to save up the money to buy them. At lunch, Roger is not looking where he is going and spills his drink on Devon's new shoes. What should Devon do?	What would avoidance look like?  What would attacking look like?  What would it look like for Devon to address the problem?
<b>#5</b>	Julia is playing basketball after school when one of the other girls on the team, Stacy, gets very aggressive. Stacy starts trash talking and making fun of Julia's skills in front of the other girls. What should Julia do?	What would avoidance look like?  What would attacking look like?  What would it look like for Julia to address the problem?
<b>#6</b>	Felicia approaches Andres in the lunchroom and tells him that she heard from David that Andres' family was evicted because his mom was using drugs. This is not true, and Andres is very upset. What should he do?	What would avoidance look like?  What would attacking look like?  What would it look like for Andres to address the problem?

**Three Conflict Strategies: Looks Like/ Sounds Like**

When we think about three conflict strategies—flee, fight or face—what does that look like? What does it sound like? Brainstorm with your peers to fill out the t-chart below.

Strategy	Looks Like	Sounds Like
<b>Flee (Avoid)</b>		
<b>Fight (Attack)</b>		
<b>Face (Address)</b>		