

LESSON 4

ENCOURAGING CRITICAL THINKING

This lesson plan is designed to support teachers in guiding their students to think about and respond differently to difficult situations. It aims to equip students with better problem-solving skills.

LESSON PLAN DETAILS:

Length: 35 minutes

INCLUDED MATERIALS

- Teacher's presentation PowerPoint slides
- Teacher's lesson notes
- Student worksheet

TEACHER'S LESSON NOTES

PART ONE:

RESPONDING TO PROBLEMS

MATERIALS

Teacher presentation slides one:

How do you problem solve?

Students' worksheet question one:

How do you problem solve?

Minutes: 0 - 10

As routine tasks are being replaced by technology, the ability to problem solve and think critically is crucial for their future careers.

Explain that this lesson is about guiding students to think differently about how they respond to situations. These situations could include problems that arise in their lives, such as missing the bus on an exam day. It could also be positive opportunities they might find challenging, such as landing a new part-time job.

As humans we tend to act on the first solution that comes to mind, rather than thinking through all possible responses. This can lead us to making the wrong decision. The ability to think critically

about how we can approach a situation makes us more likely to act in ways that end positively.

Ask your students to imagine the last time they faced a problem they needed to solve. This could be something like a time where they needed to finish an assessment task for the next day, but also had plans to see friends after school. Or perhaps they had to choose between advice from two very different friends.

Now ask the students to think about how they came up with a solution. Did they use any strategies? Strategies could include things like listing pros and cons or asking a friend for advice. Ask them to record these strategies on the worksheet under the question: How do you problem solve?

Give the students five minutes to complete this task.

After they've completed the task, ask some of them to share what strategies they use when trying to solve a problem.

PART TWO:

CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

MATERIALS

Teacher presentation slide two

Four Steps to Critical Thinking

Students' materials: iPad or Computer

Minutes: 10 - 20

Knowing how to respond in situations can be difficult, even when the situation is positive. In challenging situations (positive or negative), it is useful to have strategies that students can implement in order to come up with an appropriate solution.

Explain that slide two shows the questions students should ask themselves when approaching a situation.

Clarify - What is the main challenge or goal and how might someone else view this situation? The first step is about clarifying what they think the main issue or goal of the situation is. In this step it may be useful to think how someone else might view the situation.

Brainstorm - What are some possible solutions? Once they have clarified the problem it's time to brainstorm solutions. A good way to do this is to write all the possible approaches down and then think of the pros and cons for each potential solution.

Make a Plan - Which solution is most appropriate? Explain that once they have brainstormed possible solutions, they need to pick one which appears to fit the situation the best. Of course it's impossible to know the outcome, but their pros and cons list should help identify the most appropriate solution.

Act - What is the first thing I need to do? Once they've decided on a response, it's time to think about what the first step is to make it a reality!

Ask your students to refer to their responses to question one, and break into small groups to discuss whether they already use any of these questions when approaching a problem. If so, what do they use?

PART THREE:

APPLYING THE CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS



MATERIALS

Teacher presentation show slide three:

Critical Thinking Scenarios

Students' worksheet part two:

Critical Thinking Scenarios

Minutes: 20 - 35

■ Using the Critical Thinking Scenarios slide, explain that students will now use the four Creative Problem Solving stages to think about each scenario, and then create solutions in small groups. You might want students to pick one that is most relevant to them, or work through all scenarios depending on time.

Scenarios:

Scenario One: You and your friend work for a large retail company. A management position has become available for one section of the store. You know that your friend really wants the position and has been preparing for the interview all week.

You did not know that your manager has put in a good word for you, and despite not applying, you are offered the position. What do you do?

Scenario Two: You are in year 12 and starting to think about what comes next. You've contacted some local builders to ask about carpentry apprenticeships, without telling your parents. One builder has just called to offer you an apprenticeship and you need to give him a response within the next two days. This is something you are really excited about, but you know your parents will be unhappy, they've always wanted you to go to university. What do you do?

Scenario Three: You just took a history test that you know you didn't do well in, because you went to the movies with friends the night before, instead of studying. Your friend tells you they got a copy of the questions off someone in your class. You don't think it's fair that they are cheating but you don't want to get your friend in trouble. What do you do?

Conclusion:

After working through these problems, let your students share their different approaches with the broader group. This should make for a lively discussion! Get them to compare the various solutions they came up with, and why they chose the solutions they did. Finish the class by guiding students to identify a time in the future where they will need to solve a challenge, and encourage them to use this process of critical thinking.

