

# Lesson 21 – Problem Solving:

## Skill 4 – Think of Choices and Consequences

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### Summary and Rationale

This is the “brainstorm” skill of problem solving. Group members stretch their imagination to think of as many actions as they may be able to take in a problem situation. After generating a wide range of actions, group members consider the consequences of each of the possible choices. This step of the skill asks group members to use cause and effect thinking and to imagine the effect of their actions on both themselves and others. Facilitators should be prepared for group members to have different opinions on the consequences of the actions generated. It is important for them to describe reasons they think an outcome may be positive or negative. Sometimes, problem solving means choosing an action with a less negative outcome among a variety of negative outcomes. Facilitators should be prepared to help group members consider how positive or how negative a consequence may be for themselves and for others. The steps of this skill show group members how to look at problems from a broad, social point of view.

**Linking to previous lessons** – Group members have learned one or more social skills that may be relevant for them to consider.

# Concepts and Definitions

**Brainstorming** is opening your mind to think of as many ideas as possible. The ideas do not have to be realistic or positive. Brainstorming possible actions is one of the most important thinking processes involved in problem solving. It helps group members expand their thinking beyond the actions they habitually take in problem situations.

**Consequences** are the result of one's actions. Predicting consequences can be difficult and that is okay. Consequences can be either positive or negative. It is possible to imagine both positive and negative consequences for actions. The focus should be on developing the cause and effect thinking associated with this problem solving skill.

**Objectives** – As a result of this lesson the group members will:

1. Generate multiple actions possible in problem situations.
2. Identify possible consequences of the choices generated, both for themselves and other people.
3. Choose an action based on consequences and goals.
4. Identify thinking to support chosen actions.

# Major Activities

**Activity 1:** Review of First 3 Problem Solving Skills

**Activity 2:** Overview of Lesson

**Activity 3:** Discuss Step 1: Brainstorm Choices

**Activity 4:** Discuss Step 2: Think about Consequences

**Activity 5:** Discuss Step 3: Pick a Choice to Get Your Goal

**Activity 6:** Apply Steps 1 and 2 to Ongoing Problem Situation

**Activity 7:** Apply Step 3 to Ongoing Problem Situation

**Activity 8:** Wrap-up

**Activity 9:** Assign Homework

# Supplements

**Charts** – Make before facilitating lesson. (See supplement section in each lesson for full text of chart page).

Denoted in lesson plan with this symbol:



C-21-1–Choices and Consequences (Prepare 2 charts; one for Activity 3 and one for Activity 6)

Filled-in charts from lessons 18 and 19 with Shewan’s or Sherry’s first 3 problem solving skills

**Handouts** – Make copies before lesson. (See supplement section of each lesson for camera ready pages).

Denoted in lesson plan with this symbol:



H-16-1-Problem Solving Skills and Steps (Group members should bring this to class or you should keep a folder with these steps to use each lesson).

H-21-1-Pocket Skill Cards  
H-21-2-Homework

**Presentation Slides** – Make transparencies if projector is not available. (See supplement section of each lesson for camera ready pages).

Denoted in lesson plan with this symbol:



P-21-1–Title Slide  
P-21-2-Problem Solving Skills 1-3  
P-21-3-Problem Solving Skill 4: Choices and Consequences  
P-21-4-Risk Feelings and Thinking Skills Thermometers  
P-21-5-Problem Solving Skill 4: Choices and Consequences–Skill Steps  
P-21-6-Homework

## **Equipment**

- Easel (chart stand)
- Projector to show presentation slides
- Projection screen or suitable surface

## **Supplies**

- Chart paper
- Markers
- Masking tape
- Copies of participant handouts

## Activity 1: Review of First 3 Problem Solving Skills

Let's review the 3 problem solving skills we have worked through so far.

What is the first skill?

*(Answer: Stop and think.)*

What is important about it?

*(Answer: To help us begin to think rather than react emotionally.)*

What is the second skill?

*(Answer: State the problem.)*

What is the purpose of this skill?

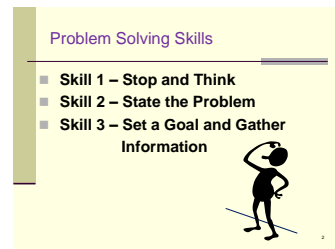
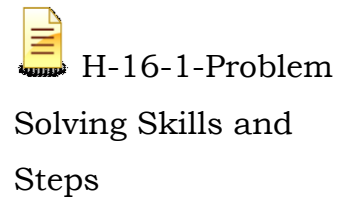
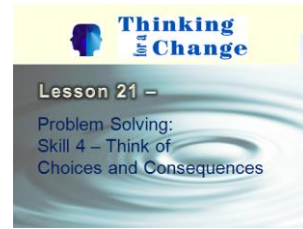
*(Answer: To describe the problem objectively and to recognize our risk reaction.)*

What is the third skill?

*(Answer: Set a goal and gather information.)*

What happens in this skill?

*(Answer: This is where you set a positive and realistic goal and think about the facts and the other person involved.)*



## Activity 2: Overview of Lesson

A key skill to becoming a good problem solver is to be able to think of many different ways to respond to a problem. After you get information and know what your goal is, it is time to decide what to do. In any situation, there are many different choices a person can make. What limits us is that we often don't let ourselves think about actions that don't immediately come to mind.

What do you think the risk feeling and new thinking skills thermometers should look like for this skill?

*(Answer: Risk feelings have cooled down and new thinking skills are heated up.)*

Problem solving skill 4: **think of choices and consequences** focuses on some important thinking skills such as brainstorming and imagining the consequences of your actions.

There are three steps in problem solving skill 4: **think of choices and consequences**.

Step 1: Brainstorm choices

Step 2: Think about the consequences

Step 3: Pick a choice to get to your goal



Problem Solving – Skill 4: Choices and Consequences

- Uses important thinking skills such as brainstorming and imagining the consequences of your actions



Problem Solving – Skill 4: Choices and Consequences

- Feelings are cooling down
- Thinking heats up

(Reveal after getting response to question.)



Problem Solving – Skill 4: Choices and Consequences

- Step 1: Brainstorm choices
- Step 2: Think about the consequences
- Step 3: Pick a choice to get to your goal

Ask a volunteer to read the steps.

Here is a skill card with the **think of choices and consequences** steps. You can use this card while you practice the skill here in class, as well as when doing your homework.

### Activity 3: Discuss Step 1: Brainstorm Choices

Step 1: Brainstorm choices – means just that. We think of lots and lots of things we can do to respond to the situation. People who do research on problem solving say that this is the most important step because it helps us open our minds to new options for taking action.

Let's try an example of brainstorming. A man takes a woman out for dinner. The check comes and he realizes that he has forgotten his wallet. What are some of his choices for what he could do? Let's come up with at least 10 things he could do in this situation.

*(Example answers: Call a friend, ask the date for money, skip out on the bill, or ask the date to wait while he goes to get some money.)*

Great, see how easy it is to come up with a lot of ideas. As you do step 1, it can be helpful to talk to others as a way to get ideas that you may not



H-21-1-Think  
of Choices and  
Consequences  
Pocket Skill  
Cards

You may offer an example that is more relevant to your group.



C-21-1-  
Choices and  
Consequences

Lead a brainstorming session. Ideas do not have to be realistic or positive. After the brainstorming is over, write down at

think of.

least 3 – 4 ideas that seem to have a range of positive and negative consequences in the “Choices” column (do not discuss “Consequences” until the next activity.)

**Activity 4: Discuss Step 2: Think About Consequences**

Consequence is another word for outcome. A consequence can be good or a consequence can be bad. In step 2 of this skill we imagine what could happen as a result of each choice we are considering.

We want to consider what might happen for ourselves and what might happen for the others involved. As we have already discussed, thinking about the effect of our actions on others is important in problem solving. Making things bad for others often makes problems worse.

In this situation there are at least two others. One is the man’s date and the other is the person running the restaurant or the food server.



## Content

Considering each of the choices we wrote on the chart in the previous activity – What might be the consequence for:

- The problem solver?
- His date?
- The person running the restaurant and the food server?

### Activity 5: Discuss Step 3: Pick a Choice to

## Notes

Encourage group members to share their ideas.

The goal is to have group members do cause and effect thinking as well as consider the impact of actions on others. Disagreement about consequences is okay.

After group members describe possible consequences, code consequences as:

+ (positive)

- (negative)

+/- (could be positive or negative)

It is okay to have either one or two columns under the “Others” column.

## Get to Your Goal

Once we have brainstormed choices and thought about the consequences, it is time to connect this to our goal. That is why having positive and realistic goals are important. Our goals should help guide our actions. We want to pick a choice that will get us to our goal.

For example, if the man on the date had set as his goal that he wants to impress the woman he is with, which of these choices has the best chance of getting him to his goal?

## Activity 6: Apply Steps 1 and 2 to the Ongoing Problem Situation

Discuss the question. It is okay if the group does not agree. The purpose of the discussion is for them to provide a reason for the choice they think is best. Only write a final choice on the chart if the group agrees on one.

Continue using the ongoing problem situation introduced in lesson 18 (either Shewan and Ms. Shells or Sherry and Ms. Porter). Post the charts where you have identified the

Now let's do step 1 of problem solving skill 4: **think of choices and consequences** for Shewan/Sherry. We are going to brainstorm possible actions she could take.

**Step 1: Brainstorm Choices**

As a group, let's brainstorm actions the problem solver, (Shewan or Sherry), can take.

Let's come up with at least 8 different choices.

information from problem solving skills 1, 2, and 3 for the ongoing problem situation and review the information on the charts. Replay (or re-model) the scene if you think it would be helpful.



Post on the wall Shewan's/Sherry's charts from lessons 18 and 19 .



C-21-1-Choices and Consequences (clean sheet)

Be alert to the group getting "stuck" in a narrow track of choices. (For instance, they might only consider destructive choices

**Review Social Skills for Possible Choices**

Think about the social skills you have learned. Are there some that we could include in our list of choices?

*(Example answers: Active listening, asking questions, responding to anger)*

or choices that express anger.) If this kind of narrowing happens, remind the group that the point of the step is to consider as wide a range of options as possible. If necessary, make a suggestion or two of your own to get them on another track. On the other hand, remember that this is brainstorming, so not all choices need to be realistic or pro-social.

Once brainstorming is completed review the social skills that group members have learned in the program and let the group decide if they want to include any of the social skills as

**Step 2: Think About Consequences**

Now that you have thought of lots of choices, we can consider the possible consequences of these choices. Remember consequences can be positive or negative. Consider two kinds of consequences: consequences for self and consequences for others.

possible choices.

Follow the procedure used in Activity 5 to consider the consequences for each choice.

Group members first imagine a consequence and then identify it as +, -, or +/- . Do this for both the problem solver and for other involved parties (Shewan/Sherry and Ms. Shells/Ms. Porter).

If your group has generated many choices, consider the first 4 to 5 with the total group and then assign pairs to

### Activity 7: Apply Step 3 to the Ongoing Problem Situation

In step 3 we want to pick a choice to get to our goal and to use the information we identified when we did problem solving skill 3: **set a goal and gather information.**

Let's look at the information on the chart that shows Shewan's/Sherry's goal and the information she may want to consider when she decides what action to take.

#### Choices That Will Not Lead to the Goal

consider consequences for specific actions that are left. After a few minutes of pair discussion time, ask pairs to report out their ideas about possible consequences. Encourage discussion, but also keep a lively pace.



Display the chart that was developed in lesson 19 with Shewan's or Sherry's goal and the information identified for skill 3.

## Content

We will go through a process of elimination. This means we will start by identifying any choice that will not lead to her goal.

We now are left with choices that we think can lead Shewan/Sherry to her goal. Think about what we know about Shewan/Sherry as well as Ms. Shells/Ms. Porter. Let's look at the choices that are left.

### **Examine Remaining Choices**

Let's get some recommendations from group members. Who wants to suggest a choice from our remaining list that you think Shewan/Sherry should take?

### **Step 3: Pick a Choice to Get to Your Goal**

It is now time for the group to decide on what the best choice might be to help Shewan/Sherry to her goal.

First, I am going to read through our list so you

## Notes

Using the information on the chart from activity 7, lead the group in identifying actions that will not lead to the goal and cross them off. If there is disagreement, do not cross off the choice.

Encourage group members to share ideas and give reasons for the choice they have identified.

Read through the

have one more chance to consider these options.

Now I will read them a second time and ask you to vote by raising your hand for one (and only one) of these choices.

Okay, most group members think (insert the choice with the most votes) will get Shewan/Sherry closer to her goal. We will work with this choice in our next session.

**Activity 8: Wrap-up**

Problem solving skill 4: **Think of choices and consequences**, has three steps. Which of these steps do you think will be easiest to remember?

Why do you think brainstorming is important?

*(Example answers: We are learning to consider new ways of thinking and acting in problem situations.)*

What do you like about considering consequences for others as well as yourself?

list as a final review of the options.

Read through the list a second time and ask group members to raise their hands for the choice they think is best. Write down the number of votes next to each choice.

Write the choice with the most votes in the appropriate place at the bottom of the chart.

Aim to get a meaningful and thoughtful discussion of these questions. Be sure you think the questions through yourself and guide the group to help them understand the full significance



*(Example answers: If you do something that has significant negative consequences for others it can lead to more problems.)*

### Activity 9: Assign Homework

For homework, I am handing back the homework you role played in the previous lesson. I want you to apply skill 4: **Think of choices and consequences** to that problem.

Be sure you list at least eight different things you can do.

If you can, find someone you trust to help you with this assignment. Brainstorming and considering consequences is easier when we have the benefit of another person’s perspective, even if we disagree with it. Why? Because it can help us think of things we would not think of on our own. Be sure to brainstorm choices first and then consider consequences. Consider consequences for both you and others.

of this problem solving step.

Hand back the homework you collected at the end of the lesson 20.



**Homework**

- Practice skill 4 with the problem you worked on in lesson 20
- Be sure you list at least 8 different things you can do
- Find someone you trust to help you brainstorm your choices and consider consequences



Homework Handout

