

# Project GOAL Group Session #11

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## Instructional Focus:

Students will learn problem-solving step #3: State the problem clearly.  
Students will learn the two ways to discover the root of a problem.

## Activities:

1. Share journal entry from the last session (5 min.)
2. Recap: “the invisible step” (5 min.)
3. Introduce Problem-solving step #3: State the problem clearly. (5 min.)
4. Teach the first way to discover the root of the problem and practice. (15-17 min.)
5. Teach the second way to discover the root of the problem and practice. (15-17 min.)
6. Homework journal (2 min.)

## Materials:

1. Student journals
2. PowerPoint for session #11
3. A/B cards to increase student engagement (and pre-determined partners)

### Activity 1: Share journals (5 min.)

- Have slide 1 up as students enter the room.
- Start by sharing the agenda for today’s session (slide 2)

*SAY: We will start today by sharing our journal entries from our last session.*

- Display slide 3.

*SAY: Remember, you were asked to keep track of problems that occur that get in the way of your goals. Are you ready to share a problem and how you worked through it? How did it work out for you?*

- Start by sharing one of your own experiences, if you can, to break the ice. Then go around the room, having students share. TIP: For reluctant speakers, you may choose to have student share in pairs instead.

*SAY: Thank you for sharing. We all have problems every day. Some are very small and we can ignore them, but remember that when problems get in the way of our goals, we need to do something about it. We’ll talk more about that later.*

### Activity 2: Recap: The “invisible step” (5 min.)

- Display slide 4

SAY: *We learned last week about the “invisible step.” Using the “invisible step” means to ignore the problem; to try walking away, try to forget it, and don’t pay attention to it. Just use your self-talk command to help you maintain control and move on.*

- Display slide 5

SAY: *Let’s take a moment to recall what we learned. In partners, I want you to share some examples of hassles or irritations that happen in school or at home that you should just ignore.*

- Walk around the room to listen for some good examples. Give appropriate feed-back or re-direct as needed.

SAY: *I heard some great examples of problems that should just be ignored. (Share some specific examples.) Would anyone else like to share an example? (Accept student responses and discuss as needed).*

### Activity 3: Introduce Problem-solving step #3: State the problem clearly (5 min.)

- Display slide 6

SAY: *Ignoring a problem can seem difficult in some situations, especially when you are really upset or annoyed and want to react! Remember that your self-talk command can help you to maintain control and calm down.*

*Of course, sometimes you will decide not to ignore a problem, or maybe you do ignore it at first but it keeps happening. Your next step will be to take action. You still should not resort to following your impulses!! In order to make a thoughtful decision on what to do, you will need to follow the rest of the problem-solving steps.*

- Display slide 7. Quickly read through them

SAY: *As you can see, there are many steps to go through, so don’t waste your time on problems that are better off ignored. Save your time and energy on those problems that really do impact your future or well-being.*

- Display slide 8.

SAY: *Problem-solving step 3 is State the problem clearly. A common mistake in problem-solving is thinking that our problem is one thing when it is really something else. A lot of times we let our feelings and judgments confuse exactly what problem we are facing.*

### Activity 4: Teach the first way to discover the root of the problem and practice. (15 min.)

- Display slide 9.

*SAY: The first way to state a problem clearly is to state exactly what happened. State exactly what the other person did and what you did.*

*Do not add judgment or opinions; just stick to the facts.*

*Don't say how you feel; don't state what you think; just state what happened.*

- Display and read slide 10.
- Display slide 11.

*SAY: This first one is an example.*

*A. My neighbor is a jerk.*

*B. My neighbor parked his car so I couldn't get into my parking space. This is the third time he has done this.*

*So, which one is stating the problem clearly?*

- Display slide 12

*SAY: Well, if you think about it, A. is an opinion or judgment of the neighbor. It doesn't say exactly what happened. Do you see how it would be really difficult to come up with a solution to A.*

- Display Slide 13

*SAY: However, B. gives us a clear picture of what happened so it is possible to think of a solution. So B. is the correct example of stating the problem clearly.*

- Display slide 14

*SAY: Now it is your turn to tell me which of the two is a good example of stating the problem clearly. For each item, hold up the A or B card to show me the answer. Here's the first one (read and give think time). Now, hold up A or B.*

- Display slides 15-19. Give praise and/or correct as needed. Have students explain their answers. (That the good example leaves out opinions and judgments and just states the facts, getting to the root of the problem)
- Display slide 20
- Distribute one post-it or small slip of paper to each student.

**SAY:** *On your slip of paper, state one problem you are having at school, in class, or at home. State the problem clearly, leaving out opinions and judgments.*

- Walk around the room and give feedback as needed.
- Collect the papers when done, and share with the class. Go through the problems and ask students if each one is a good example of stating the problem clearly. If a problem includes feelings or judgments, model how to revise the problem in order to state the problem clearly.
- TIP: if time permits, you can use this time to read aloud the problems and have students share advice on what could be done to solve the problem.
- TIP: If working with a particularly large group, you may want to have students share in partners instead, and have each partner share one example with the class.

### **Activity 5: Teach the second way to discover the root of the problem and practice. (15 min.)**

- Display slide 21

**SAY:** *There is a second way to state the problem clearly. This is usually for bigger problems, when you are thinking about breaking a law or a rule. Start by asking yourself, "What am I trying to get by breaking this law or rule? What is it that I want?"*

- Display slide 22

**SAY:** *In other words, when you are thinking about breaking a law or rule, your problem is what you want to get by breaking the law or rule.*

*Ask, "What is your objective or motivation for the action?"*

- Display slide 23

**SAY:** *Here's an example. Let's say I'm thinking about copying my friend's history report. To determine the problem I am facing, I will start by asking myself, what do I want? What am I hoping to gain by breaking this rule?*

- Display slide 24

**SAY:** *What I want is to pass history, but I didn't do my report.*

*What is my solution to this problem?*

- Display slide 25

**SAY:** *My solution is cheating on the report. Remember, breaking a rule is not your problem. Breaking a rule is your solution to the problem!*

- Display and read slide 26. Explain that you will alternate between A's telling B's and B's telling A's, but the partner who is not sharing still has to listen and give feedback to their partner and share if they have another idea to add.
- Display slides 27-34. Give think time for each action. Alternate between A's telling B's and B's telling A's. Be sure to listen for good answers and review each one.

List of possible responses:

1. Helping friends beat up another person.  
*(to be popular, to look "cool" or powerful, to stop feeling afraid)*
2. Flipping the teacher off behind her back.  
*(to get attention from friends, to look "cool", to stop feeling dumb)*
3. Scaring a person into giving you what you want.  
*(to feel powerful, to get something you don't have)*
4. Getting loaded on drugs or alcohol.  
*(to look "cool", to stop feeling bored, to avoid feeling bad, to be popular or have friends)*
5. Teasing another student even though he or she is getting upset.  
*(to feel powerful, to stop feeling dumb or inferior, to make excitement, to get attention)*
6. Stealing something for your friend.  
*(to be popular, to look brave)*
7. Cheating on a test or assignment.  
*(to get a passing grade, to impress someone)*
8. Gossiping behind someone's back.  
*(to feel better about yourself, to get rid of jealousy, to impress others)*

- Display slide 35. Have students copy down the journal assignment, due next session.

**SAY:** *Now for this week's journal topic: Think of a time when you thought about breaking a law or a rule (whether you actually did it or not) Discuss the root cause or motivation behind breaking this law or rule. What was it you hoped to gain from this action? Was there a better way to get what you wanted? (As an alternative, discuss a similar situation about someone you know, leaving out their name)*