

I CAN PROBLEM SOLVE FOR SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES [9509]

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Workshop Summary

This workshop will demonstrate a unique cognitive approach to social competence, conflict resolution, and violence and drug-abuse prevention from the perspectives of both research and practice.

I Can Problem Solve (ICPS), for schools, and its companion program Raising a Thinking Child, for families, teaches children how to think, not what to think in ways that help them resolve age-appropriate interpersonal problems, and to cope with frustration when a problem cannot be solved.. Over twenty years of carefully documented research has shown that as early as age four, children can, or can learn to think of their own and other's feelings, alternative solutions to typical, everyday interpersonal problems, and consequences to acts. By age 8, children can plan sequenced steps toward a goal, recognize potential obstacles that may interfere with that goal, and appreciate that it takes time to solve a problem. ICPS training of teachers, counselors and other school personnel (including after-school staff) has been shown to reduce or prevent high-risk behaviors from preschool through age 12, such as physical, verbal, and relational aggression, inability to wait and cope with social withdrawal and poor peer relations. These behaviors, and lack of empathy are high-risk because they predict later problems as violence, substance abuse, unsafe sex, and some forms of psychological dysfunction, including depression. Inner-city and suburban parents can also become effective training-agents, as shown by behavior gains associated with ICPS skills learned at home generalizing to a different setting, the school.

Participants will understand the rationale and research related to improving social, emotional, and cognitive development of children ages 4 through 12 using the I Can Problem Solve (ICPS) and the Raising a Thinking Child programs. They will become familiar with longitudinal studies supporting ICPS as a violence prevention program. They will also conceptualize the relationship between the ICPS approach and the development of resilience, empathy, and self-regulation as well as improvement in school and family bonding.

Participants will be trained to implement the ICPS approach in their schools, or to staff in their agencies, including parent educators. They will also be prepared to model and teach dialoguing techniques (use of the learned problem solving concepts when real problems arise) to parents, teachers and other trainers.

Participants will divide into groups, and given an interpersonal problem situation between peers or between a child and an adult (teacher, parent, etc.) they will create dialogue using non-problem and problem-solving techniques. As time permits, each group will read their dialogues, and the remaining participants will evaluate how the problem solving (ICPS) dialoguing was understood. Attention will also be given to how participating administrators can successfully introduce ICPS into their schools or agencies, and practical methods of evaluation of the program's impact on children's cognitive skills and behavior.

Workshop Goals

1. To provide participants with an understanding of how to implement in school or at home violence and drug-prevention techniques that teach preschool through 6th-graders how to think, not what to think in ways that will help them solve problems with peers and figures of authority
2. To show participants how to apply a problem solving approach to discipline that will guide children to think for themselves and make good decisions with positive, not negative consequences
3. To help participants understand the relationship between social-emotional competence and academic achievement

4. To help participants become familiar with research supporting ICPS as a violence- and drug-prevention program, and to conceptualize the relationship between the ICPS approach and the development of resilience, empathy, and self regulation

Workshop Objectives

- Lecture, including research supporting ICPS as a behavioral mediator, and how those behaviors can predict later violence, substance-abuse, unsafe sex, and depression. Explained will be each ICPS skill. How to apply the ICPS dialoguing approach, involving the child in thinking of solutions and consequences to acts will be explained.
- Interactive activities will involve participants in learning how to teach the lessons introducing pre-problem solving and problem solving skills to children, and how to apply the problem solving dialoguing approach when problems arise in real life.

Workshop Activities

First Hour: Lecture and Demonstrate

- Importance of ICPS
- ICPS skills taught (feeling concepts, alternative solutions, consequential thinking and sequenced planning)
- Behaviors impacted by ICPS (aggression, inability to wait and cope with frustration, social withdrawal, poor peer relations)
- ICPS talk with children when problems arise as follows:
yelling, demanding, etc.; suggestions; explanations; problem solving skills

Second Hour: Interactive Activities

- Participants will practice using pre-problem solving vocabulary "ICPS Dialoguing" to guide children to think of solutions in light of how people feel, and potential consequences to acts.

Assessment

Participants will write a brief dialogue of how they handle real life problem situations at the start of the workshop, problems they choose as relevant to them, e.g., hitting, grabbing toys, teasing, bullying, etc. At the end of the workshop they will write a new dialogue using the same problem situation and compare that with the first dialogue written. The goal is to determine if participants learned the problem solving approach to discipline and handling other types of problems that come up with peers and figures of authority.

Resources

- Observations of children when I was a nursery school teacher, and how they handled (or did not handle) conflicts with peers and figures of authority
- George Spivack, chairman of research and evaluation at the Hahnemann Community Mental Health Center in Philadelphia, was studying how adolescents navigate their interpersonal worlds, and our common interests led to our working together, beginning in 1968.

References

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WORKSHOP OUTLINE

I. Introduction

- A. Need for interpersonal thinking skills as early as preschool as part of school day in. light of current rise in violence, drug-abuse, unsafe sex, and depression.
- B. Identified ICPS skills associated with early high-risk behaviors from preschool through grade 6
 1. sensitivity to one's own and other's feelings
 2. alternative solution thinking
 3. consequential thinking
 - 4 sequenced planning (beginning at age 8)
- C. Identified early high-risk behaviors impacted by ICPS
 1. impatience
 2. inability to wait and cope with frustration
 3. physical, verbal, and relational aggression
 4. social withdrawal
 5. poor peer relations
 6. lack of empathy
- D. Levels of Communication
 1. *Overpowering*: Commands, Demands, etc.
 2. *Suggestions*: "Ask for what you want;" "share your toys," etc.
 3. *Explanations*: "You'll hurt him if you hit him," "You won't have any friends if you take people's things," etc.

4. *Problem Solving*: Asking, not telling. "What's the problem?" "How does your friend feel when ...?" "What happened next?" "Can you think of a different way to solve this problem?" Child is involved in the dialogue and thinking of how to solve the problem.

II. The ICPS intervention

A. Intervention format

1. formal didactic lessons
 - a. a problem solving vocabulary
 - b. listening skills
 - c. avoiding false assumptions
 - d. sequencing and timing of events
 - e. ICPS skills: feelings, solutions, consequences, sequenced planning
2. ICPS dialoguing - applications of ICPS skills to real life
3. Integration of ICPS concepts into academic curriculum

B. Role of Teachers, counselors, social workers, other school or agency personnel

C. Parent Training

III. Interactive Activities

A. Practice ICPS pre-problem solving vocabulary

1. Interactive activities for non-problem situation and
2. Problem-solving situation

B. Practice feeling, problem solving lessons

Sample lessons with feeling words, alternative solutions, consequences, and sequenced planning

C. Practice real.-life dialoguing techniques

1. Activity to create dialogues that are non problem solving approach and problem solving approach, with group commenting on whether a created dialogue is:
 - Level 1: Overpowering (commands, demands, etc.)
 - Level 2: Suggesting (telling child what to do)
 - Level 3: Explanations (explaining why to do what adult suggests)
 - Level 4: Problem solving (involving the child in the process of thinking what and what not to do, and why)

IV. Discussion and Conclusions

A. Evidence-based research

B. Discussion for how to introduce ICPS successfully into schools or agencies

C. Discussion of practical evaluation of impact of ICPS, on children's cognitive and behavioral impact

V. Questions and Answers