

Jumping Hurdles

Lesson Plan: Introducing Jumping Hurdles

Read a book, look at pictures, or watch a video clip of Edwin Moses or another world-class hurdler. You may even want to bring in an actual hurdle and give students a chance to try it

out. Discuss hurdle running.

Explain to students, "Sometimes in life we have hurdles that we feel we can't jump over. I'm going to show you

today how you can." Show the visual analogy, and tell students that the hurdle in this picture represents problems or challenges we face in life.

Jumping Hurdles

Lesson Plan: Visual Analogy Walkthrough

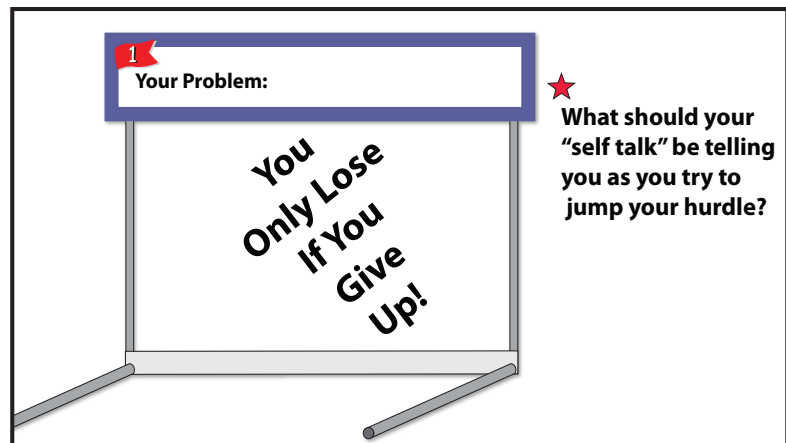
Discussion Point 1:

Question

What is a problem or challenge that you have that you would like to overcome?

Discussion

Have students write the problem that they are thinking of on the hurdle.



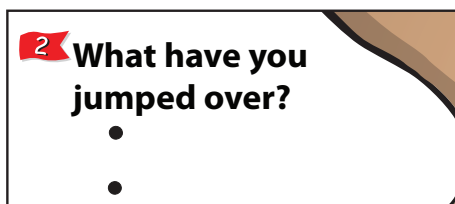
Point 2:

Question

What problems have you jumped over in the past? Why is it helpful to look to the past?

Discussion

Have students identify problems that they have overcome in the past. Remind them that every day we deal with problems and overcome them, even though they might not be big problems. Discuss small and big problems students may



have overcome. For example, they got along with someone, passed the last grade level, they made a mistake and fixed it, they got a job to help with financial problems, they passed a test in a difficult class, they learned how to read, ride a bike, or swim, etc.

Tell them you know that because they have dealt with and overcome challenges and problems in the past, they can jump over other problems. Point out that even if they feel like they have never overcome any big problems, you believe they can if they really apply these six steps. For example, because students passed the 10th grade, now they feel like they can graduate. They can stay on the track to opportunity, freedom, and self-respect (see Reality Ride) by building on past hurdles they have jumped. In other

words, each time they overcome a small hurdle, identify a hurdle or problem that's just a little bigger, encourage them to jump that one, and so on. Each time they overcome a problem, they learn skills and become stronger, so jumping the bigger hurdle becomes more possible.

Challenge

Ask students to pay more attention to their small and large accomplishments. Challenge them to make a list of all of their small and large accomplishments and to read the list when they feel like they can't

overcome a hurdle. Challenge students to have an attitude of "Yes, I can overcome the next hurdle." This attitude of believing can give them the momentum to get over the problem.

Point 3:

Question

What can you jump over? Is this problem too difficult for you right now? Is this hurdle too high? Do you need to look for something smaller to tackle first?

Discussion

Sometimes we try to tackle challenges or problems that are



beyond our ability or that are too difficult for us right now. Before you begin the process of jumping that hurdle, you may want to ask yourself if this is a problem that you can realisti-

cally overcome. If you feel that it may be beyond you, then you may want to look for something related to that problem; something a little easier that you might be able to accomplish. Then, over time, as you gain experience and ability and get help from others, you may eventually be able to solve that bigger problem.

Point 4:

Question

Why should you try to jump your hurdle?

Discussion

Often the motivation to overcome a problem comes from identifying possible resulting benefits. Discuss with students how things might change for the better at home, at school, and with peers once they overcome the problem. You might ask, "Imagine that tonight,



while you are sleeping, a miracle happens and you wake up and your problem is gone. What would have changed in your life?" The answer to this question should provide some

motivation and the answer to why they should try to jump their hurdle.

Discuss with students the satisfaction and self-respect that comes from overcoming a problem. Ask students if they can remember a time when they felt proud of themselves or when others were proud of them. This feeling of pride can also help motivate them to jump their hurdle. Finally, discuss the impact that jumping their hurdle will have on their future.

Point 5:

Question

What are your strengths?

Discussion

Discuss with students the abilities and strengths that have helped them overcome challenges in the past. Tell students that they all have many positive strengths and abilities, and that identifying these traits will assist them in jumping their hurdles. Explain that even negative behaviors contain hidden strengths. Discuss with students how they can turn negative actions into strengths. For example, a stu-



dent who uses a lot of creativity to get into trouble could use this same creativity in positive ways to jump their hurdles. Help students identify one negative thing they may be doing. Then brainstorm creatively about how that negative action can be turned into a strength. For example, a student who fights wastes a lot of

energy that could be redirected into lifting weights or working out to be stronger. A student who smokes could use the money for something that doesn't hurt him or herself and others.

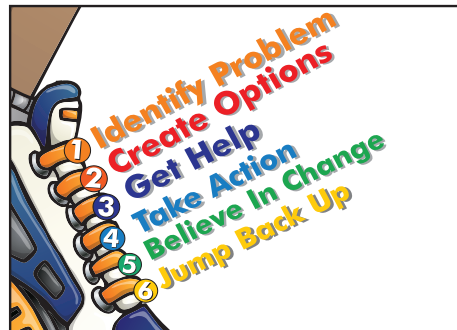
Challenge

Challenge students to use their current strengths and to identify at least one additional strength that they want to develop and use to jump their hurdle. Then discuss ways they could develop this strength.

Point 6: The 6 Steps to Jumping Hurdles

(The Process of Overcoming Obstacles)

Let students know that you understand that problems can seem like impossible hurdles or obstacles, and that it's easy to get overwhelmed and give up. But learning some basic skills can help us overcome what seems impossible. To il-



lustrate this principle, discuss events in world history that at one point seemed impossible: going to the moon, discovering

electricity, TV, the telephone, the Internet, flying in an airplane, the creation of a man-made heart, etc. Before these great inventions occurred, many people had to overcome hundreds of problems. Give students the following six steps for overcoming any problem, particularly the problem they just identified, and go through the six steps with them:

NOTE:

Before discussing these six steps, point out that some problems may not be overcome quickly. The best way to handle some problems is to just deal with them in ways that don't make the problem worse or the hurdle higher. For example, problems like death, divorce, terminal illnesses, accidents, and so forth can be dealt with by making the best out of a difficult situation and learning from it. When someone we love passes away, we may always miss them, but we can decide to live the best life possible to show respect to them. This is making the best out of a tough situation. The six steps in this process not only help students overcome problems that can be overcome, but they will also help them cope better with long-term hurdles.

Step 1: Identify the Problem

Question

What problem do you really want to overcome?

Explain that although it might sound simple, we must identify any problem holding us back. For example, to put a man on the moon, NASA had to overcome the problem of gravity.

Discussion

The word “really” is crucial here. Unless they truly desire to jump their hurdle, overcoming it will be even more difficult. Allow for a wide variety of problems, because different people view problems differently. They need to choose a problem over which they have some control and in which their own actions can make a difference. They can't overcome someone else's problem for them. For example, they might identify the problem that they feel bad because a friend is failing or using drugs. Although they can help the friend, they can't jump that friend's hurdle for them. Parents divorcing is another problem over which students have no control.

1. Identify the Problem

What problem do you really want to overcome?

Help students understand the types of problems that they can control. These are usually problems that they are responsible for, not anyone else. Some examples are putting effort into passing a class, doing what their parents and teachers ask, and no longer doing things that hurt themselves or others. They are responsible for problems that result from not trying or giving up. Always stress that if they try 100% and do all they can to jump their hurdle, they never fail. You only lose if you give up! Point this out with each step. Finally, stress the importance of identifying a problem that they need to overcome to keep them from crashing.

Challenge

Denial often prevents people from identifying the problem or hurdle that needs to be jumped. Challenge students to first jump the hurdle of denial. The following are possible

ways to recognize and overcome the hurdle of denial:

- Ask yourself, “WHEN do I feel most frustrated and angry and the least self-respect?”
- Ask yourself, “What hurdles are keeping me in the loop?” (See Reality Ride.)
- Ask yourself, “What am I doing that is hurting others or myself?”
- Recognize that if more than two people from your different environments of home, school, peers point out a problem, it may be true!
- Accept positive and negative feedback from people you respect, who aren't crashing themselves.
- Ask yourself, “What are the situations (problems) I lie about or make up excuses for?”

Tactfully and respectfully challenge them not to lie to themselves, but to bravely identify problems that they want and need to overcome, and not let denial trip them!

Step 2: Create Options

Question

What are some options you can create?

Discussion

Help students understand that if a problem seems impossible

2. Create Options

What are some options you can create?

to overcome, they probably don't know all of the possible options. Warn students that discouragement is one of the

biggest obstacles in overcoming problems. One of the best ways to deal with discouragement is to identify as many options as we can. The word “create” is important because options don't always fall in our laps. Often we must work and use our creativity. Discuss with

students ways they can create options, such as the following:

- **Learn from Others:** Others have jumped the hurdle that you are now struggling with, so talk to them and learn about their strategies.
- **Research:** Become an expert on your problem. Go to the library, ask questions, go to an expert, figure out the causes of the problem.
- **Be Flexible:** Things often don't work out like we want them to, but don't give up. Learn from what

doesn't work and move on. If you're not flexible and creative, you take options away.

- **Try the Opposite:** Try doing the opposite of what is not working. Remember, to get different results, you need to do something different.
- **Take Care of Yourself Emotionally and Physically:** Try to keep things in perspective, remain positive, and focus on your strengths. If needed, talk to someone you trust. Get help from a parent, counselor, etc.

Make sure you exercise, eat right, and get enough sleep. If you don't take care of yourself, you take options away!

Challenge

Encourage students to try to create at least three options to jump their hurdle. Tell them it is normal for some options not to work. The secret is staying positive, refusing to give up, and trying the next option. Challenge them to laugh and learn from failed options and move on.

Step 3: Get Help

Question

Who can help me get over my hurdle?

Discussion

Getting help from others is a great way to create more options and to see solutions that we are blinded to because we are too close to the problem. Many people have already overcome the hurdles that we are trying to get over. Remind students to be willing to seek out and accept help.

Explain the "no man/woman is an island" principle. What we do and the decisions we make have an impact on those around us. We influence others and others influence us. Although students must take primary re-

3. Get Help

**Who can help you get over your hurdle?
Who can you help?**

sponsibility, the secret to overcoming problems is getting and accepting help from positive influences. (If needed, review Chapter 4, Climbing Out.)

Ask students to think about their best friend. Why is that person their best friend? Usually a best friend meets some of our needs. We can talk to them when frustrated, they look out for us, and we feel accepted by them. In most positive relationships, both people help each other.

The benefits of getting help from others to overcome problems include the following: It

can be more fun, it's easier and sometimes faster, the relationship will get stronger, and believe it or not, it usually helps the person who is doing the helping! Others may have experience and insight that we don't have; this expands options.

Discuss the importance of not taking advantage of others and of expressing gratitude for those who help us. One of the best ways to show this gratitude is to keep trying.

Challenge

Encourage students to express gratitude to someone who has helped them or is helping them to jump a hurdle.

Step 4: Take Action

Question

What specific, observable behaviors do you need to stop or start in order to jump your hurdle?

Discussion

If we don't take the first step toward solving our problems, we won't solve them. Ask students to identify several behaviors that they need to stop

b. Take Action	
What specific behaviors (actions) do you need to stop or add to jump your hurdle?	
Stopped Behaviors	Added Behaviors
.	.

in order to jump their hurdles. Then put greater emphasis on the behaviors they need to start. We each have limited energy during the day, and it is much more beneficial to put our energy and thoughts into what we are doing right than

doing wrong. Encourage them to pay close attention to what they are doing when the problem starts to get better or goes away. Then encourage them to continue these behaviors.

Challenge

Encourage students to make at least one major change in behavior that will help them get over their hurdle. Challenge them to add two positive behaviors for every negative behavior that they stop.

Step 5: Believe in Change

If students don't believe change can happen, they're not likely to put the effort into solving the problem. If needed, point out the following examples of someone making an effort because they believe they can change:

- The football team that wins the Superbowl likely believed all year that they could do it, so they put the effort into winning.
- Students may have come to school today because they believe that they can graduate.
- NASA had to believe they could put a man on the moon or they wouldn't have put the resources, time, and effort into building the rocket.

Question

On a scale of one to ten, with 1 being the lowest belief level, rate your belief that you can change.

Believe In Change									
On a scale from one to ten, circle where you are in believing change will happen.									
"I can't change"				"Maybe"				"I know I have the strength"	
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
★				★					★

Discussion

Remind students that even negative situations can become comfortable. Let them know that you understand that change can be difficult. Ask them if they can remember being scared on the first day of school, the first time they rode a bike, the first time they dove off the high dive, etc. Point out that each time we go through a change, we build confidence. If they feel frustrated because of their hurdle, the following can help them believe that things can change.

- Have desire: You have to want to see what's on the other side of the hurdle. Ask yourself, how will my life be different when I jump the hurdle?
- Take a risk: Remember, you miss EVERY opportunity

you don't go after.

- Believe in you: Remember positive changes you made in the past and believe in your abilities.
- Be optimistic about change: Life will always have changes. Look at change as an opportunity to create the life you want. If you sit still and try to keep things the same, "life will happen to you" instead of you directing your life. You will never have total control over change, but you can lead it in directions that you want. You must believe that the positive efforts you put forth today will affect your future in positive ways. For example, a music group that has a #1 hit had to believe that the practice and effort they put forth in the past would lead to positive results in the future.

Teach students what self-talk is and how they can use it to stay motivated. Self-talk is the conversation you have with yourself all day. For example,

you tell yourself what you are going to wear that day, what you will eat, whether you are going to try in school, and so forth. All day you can either beat yourself down with your self-talk or you can lift yourself up. Successful people all use positive self-talk. Ask students what they think their hero or favorite celebrity tells him or herself before an event. When athletes see a last-minute game-winning shot in basketball, what do they say to themselves?

Students who believe in change and whose self-talk tells them to keep trying can accomplish their goals and dreams. Encourage students to

keep their self-talk as high as possible. For example, if I tell myself, "I want to be president of the United States," and I fall short, I might be a member of Congress. If I don't reach that goal, I may end up as a governor. If I don't reach that goal, I may be a mayor; and if I don't reach that goal, I may be a community organizer or leader.

Ask students what their self-talk will be as they try to jump their hurdle. For example, "I will keep trying so I can get more opportunity, freedom, and self-respect," "I can do it," "Nothing will stop me." When they feel down or depressed, tell them to ask themselves, "What is my self-talk telling

me?" and make the needed changes.

Challenge

Challenge students to use their positive self-talk to keep their hope alive if they stop believing that they can change. To get over their hurdles, they must do this daily and even hourly, if needed. Brainstorm with students for creative ideas to remind them to use self-talk positively.

Sometimes we don't overcome our hurdles the first time we try. Or we may overcome our problems and then make a mistake again. Lasting success comes only if we jump back up and try again.

Step 6: Jump Back Up

Question

If you trip, how will jumping back up make you stronger?

Discussion

The last step to jumping their hurdle may be the most important. A reality of life is that we are not perfect. We all make mistakes, and the difference between jumping the hurdle and not jumping it is often very small. Use as much enthusiasm as you can to stress that if they make a mistake and trip, they haven't totally failed as

Jump Back Up

If you trip, how will jumping back up make you stronger?

long as they jump back up and repeat steps 1-6!

When we jump up and learn from what tripped us, we become stronger. In fact, jumping the hurdle is often sweeter when we have worked hard to get over it. Ask students if they can think of someone they know who failed or tripped on their hurdle and jumped back up. Ask them to memorize this

quote: "You only lose if you give up, and you will always win if you jump back up." There is no limit to how many times they can apply these six steps.

Challenge

Ask students to identify their most recent hurdle. Then challenge them not to make excuses, blame others, or give up, but to jump back up and repeat steps 1-6. Or, challenge them to ask themselves, "What motivated me to jump back up and what will motivate me to do the same tomorrow?"

NOTE:

Remember to tie this visual metaphor back into the Reality Ride. Applying the six steps to jump their hurdle will help them stop crashing and stay on the track to opportunity, freedom, and self-respect. This can be applied to any challenge they face on the ride of life.