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### Problem solving for “Fair traveling”



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## **Summary**

This learning unit focuses on problem solving in education contextualizing it to solve problems of families with children with behavioral disturbances when they are traveling.

The learning unit structure includes the expected achievements.

Contents are grouped and additional information are provided.

Contents are labeled in order to reduce uncertainty for learners and improve the efficacy of the learning process.

Finally, suggestions are given for the training course evaluation.

## **Expected achievements [\[Aim\]](#)**

This learning unit will taught parents of children with Autism Spectrum Disorder to tackle and solve problems occurring when they travel with their children.

Learners will learn how a problem-solving approach can help them to develop effective practical solutions.

## Problem-solving [\[Introduction\]](#)

Problem-solving consists in the definition of a problem, identifying, prioritizing, and selecting alternatives for its solution. Problem-solving includes the implementation of the problem solution.

Problem-solving should ensure parents to rehearse, master, and transfer acquired knowledge by applying them to solve problems related to behavioral disturbances of their children in traveling circumstances.

In general, problem-solving can be used to define and prioritize problems, to solve complex problems solving one problem at a time, to generate alternative solutions, to select the best alternative, and to evaluate outcomes.

## Problem solving process [\[Content\]](#)

In order to effectively find a suitable solution to a problem, a four-step problem-solving can be adopted.

Step	Actions
Problem definition	Differentiate fact from opinion Specify underlying causes Determine in which process the problem lies Avoid trying to solve the problem without data
Alternatives identification	Include all possible alternatives Identify alternatives consistent with your goals Specify short- and long-term alternatives Seek alternatives that may solve the problem
Evaluation and selection the best alternative	Evaluate alternatives Evaluate both proven and possible outcomes Selected the best alternative
Solution implementation	Plan and implement a pilot test of the chosen alternative Establish measures and monitoring procedures Evaluate the results based on final solution

## Educator's strategy in problem solving [\[Content\]](#)

An educator, who adopts a problem-solving approach in a parent training intervention, should ensure that the parents' problem-solving efforts are successful. The educator should support parents reviewing their problem-solving process step by step.

Parents have to agree with the solution, then the educator will help them to identify, separately, how to pursue the solution. The educator should encourage parents' discussion of the steps necessary to achieve the solution. The educator should avoid that parents attempt to solve the problem at rushed and chaotic time, discuss the problem in vague language, deal with several problems simultaneously, fail to determine if the solution actually works.

### **Problem-Solving Therapy** [\[Content\]](#)

The Problem Solving Therapy was formulated by D'Zurilla and Goldfried, in 1971. These authors published an article that proposed the application of problem-solving theory and research in behavior modification. Their aim was to facilitate "generalized" behavior change. On this purpose, they conceptualized problem-solving therapy as a form of self-control training, emphasizing the importance of training the client to function as their therapist.

The authors summarized the rationale underlying this approach as follows:

Ineffectiveness in coping with problematic situations, along with its personal and social consequences, is often a necessary and sufficient condition for an emotional or behavior disorder requiring psychological treatment; . . . general effectiveness may be most efficiently facilitated by training individuals in general procedures or skills which would allow them to deal independently with the critical problematic situations that confront them in day-to-day living. (D'Zurilla and Goldfried, 1971, p. 109)

According to D'Zurilla and Goldfried "problem solving" refers to an overt or cognitive process that makes available a variety of effective response alternatives for coping with a problem situation and increases the likelihood of selecting the most effective response available (Dobson, & Dozois, 2010).

D'Zurilla and Goldfried identified five overlapping stages as representative of the problem-solving process:

1. general orientation or set;
2. problem definition and formulation;
3. generation of alternatives;
4. decision making;
5. verification.

Training in problem solving involves teaching clients these basic skills and guiding their application in actual problem situations.

### **The Basadur's problem-solving process** [\[Content\]](#)

In defining the *simplex creative problem-solving* process, Basadur (1997) used the terms innovative thinking, creative problem solving, change making, creative thinking, creativity, and innovation fairly interchangeably.

Basadur (1998) defined an eight-steps circular process for problem solving creativity (Figure 1):

1. problem finding (anticipating future problems and seeking current problems);
2. fact finding;
3. problem defining;
4. generating potential solutions,
5. evaluating potential solutions;
6. action planning;
7. gaining acceptance;
8. taking action.

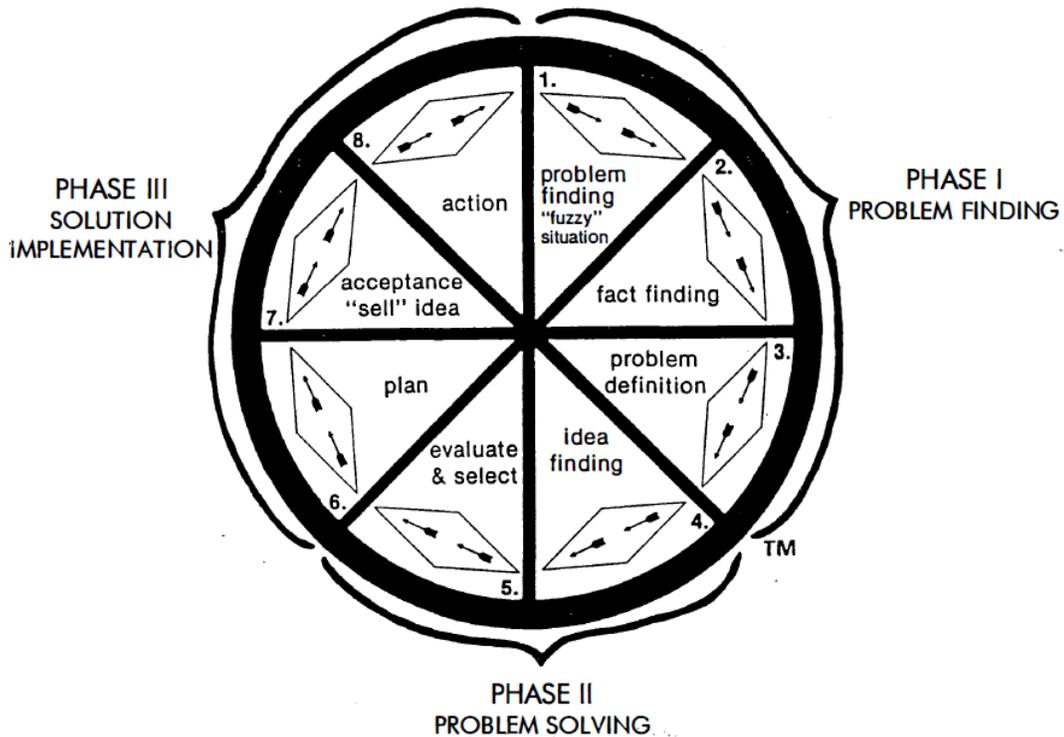


Figure 1. Basadur's eight steps creativity process (source: Basadur, 1998, p. 13)

However, two important factors influence problem solving: the nature of the problem (the problem domain) and the kind of knowledge brought to the problem by the solver.

### Critical thinking [\[Additional content\]](#)

Please, read the article by Lisa Gueldenzoph Snyder and Mark J. Snyder "Teaching Critical Thinking and Problem Solving Skills"

<http://reforma.fen.uchile.cl/Papers/Teaching%20Critical%20Thinking%20Skills%20and%20problem%20olving%20skills%20-%20Gueldenzoph,%20Snyder.pdf>

*Exercise*

Answer the following questions:

- What are the barriers to critical thinking?
- What are the basic questions to engage learners in critical thinking?

### **Participatory learning approach** [\[Additional content\]](#)

Since the 2000s, participatory learning has been seen as an increasingly appealing educational approach that can positively affect learners since it engages them as active participants in the full educational program, including homework and exercises.

Participatory learning is grounded in John Dewey's idea that learners achieve better results if the learning process "reproduces, or runs parallel to, some form of work carried on in social life" (Dewey & Boydston, 1983, 93).

From a philosophical point of view, participatory learning can be seen as the natural consequence of two Deweyan concepts: that learning is a problem-solving process, and that there isn't any dualism between the subject matter and the method (Dupuis & Gordon, 2010).

Participatory learning has often been experimented to support sustainable development, above all in regards to the agriculture of developing countries (Coldevin, 2002), and has been seen as a means to aid the democratic progress of emerging countries, since participatory learning is, by its very nature, collaborative and so directly fosters democracy.

Participatory learning methods comprise a wide range of activities, which share a student-centered view aimed at enabling learners to play an active and influential part in their learning process. This means that learners are not merely listened to, but also actively collaborate to acquire knowledge and skills: in other words, participatory learning focuses on student participation.

An element that characterizes participatory learning is the necessity of facilitators. Indeed, every participatory process needs the presence of skilled figures who help participants to interact together (Kaner, 2014).

In the educational context, facilitators provide learners with discussion subjects, present case studies, organize tasks that call for participants to work together in small groups, and so on. Their task is to support the active involvement of learners in the learning process, stimulating them to think through their mindset and share with others their experience and knowledge, as well as collaborate to accomplish the expected achievements.

It has to be noted that, although facilitators and coaches have many overlapping skills and functions, their role is different: a coach provides individual attention and addresses personal development with an emphasis on a specific task, whereas a facilitator provides a group with meaningful dialogue and broadens personal perspectives, encouraging the entire group to participate collectively so as to increase their ability to operate effectively on their own.

Participatory learning strategies are considered effective in adult learning since they can reduce the difficulties due to the inhomogeneity of trainees that can affect adult educational programs.

However, nowadays, because of the increasing growth of digital technology, a topical question arises about participatory learning. How do participatory practices work in an online learning environment?

This question is a part of a more general issue that concerns the portability of participatory approaches and techniques to online web-based learning contexts.

Indeed, Web 2.0 tools suggest new forms of learning at a lower cost, such as learning through blogs (Downes, 2004; Farmer & Bartlett-Bragg, 2005) or through podcasts and videocasts (Ractham & Zhang, 2006).

Regarding participatory e-learning, there are some assumptions that are generally agreed upon. One of these is that the success of participatory e-learning depends on the interaction of learners, since they are bringers of knowledge and skills (Kok, 2015).

Another important aspect is that active learning is fundamental for participatory e-learning: learners are involved in practices that require them to actively construct new knowledge and understanding.

### **Travel with autism** [\[Content\]](#)

Traveling can be challenging for families with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The changes in routine, unpredictability, crowds, new noises and sights can all make the experience difficult for children with ASD and their families.

Accordingly it is important to choose the right destination and carefully plan the travel. One can search for the ideal destination on the web and social media. One should be sure that a place is right for the children with ASD.

The first thing to check is the availability of the basic facilities for a family with children with ASD, e.g., if there is the possibility to book a hotel with a quieter area.

Once the hotel has been booked, one should start to plan the travel. Because autistic people can find change difficult, this may lead to high anxiety, meltdowns or behavior that challenges.

Children should be prepared for change. Here following to manage the change difficult:

- spend time with children looking at photographs in a brochure or on the holiday companies website;
- compile a visual support, such as a booklet with photos, to help them remember where they are going and what it will look like when they get there;
- prepare a timetable in advance, taking into consideration any obsessions, repetitive behavior or routines that children have;
- think about what situations they may need to understand (such as delays or unavoidable changes to travel plans).

However:

Depending on the severity of their condition, autistic individuals may find specific aspects of the travel experience particularly distressing. The desire for predictability and maintenance of a fixed routine may be difficult to satisfy during international travel, especially where the travel itinerary itself is uncertain.<sup>14</sup> Auditory overload may be prominent in airports and in crowded destinations with a high urban population density and traffic volume. Queuing in airports may be difficult for some travelers with ASD, and manual body searches at security stations may be poorly tolerated. A lack of familiarity with a foreign environment can provoke significant anxiety, depression, and social isolation in autistic travelers (Neo & Flaherty, 2018, p. 2).

## **Exercise** [\[Exercise\]](#)

Please read and comment the post by Autism Response Team Senior Coordinator Stephanie De Leon (September 16, 2018, <https://www.autismspeaks.org/blog/oh-places-youll-gowith-these-10-travel-tips>).

Taking a vacation is one of many milestones that every family looks forward to, but for families affected by autism the idea of traveling can be stressful because of the fear of the unknown. However, with a little planning you can make any trip go more smoothly for every member of your family.

To help, I have compiled some tips to keep in mind when preparing for a trip whether it's via airplane, train or a road trip!

### 1. Practice makes progress!

Becoming familiar with what sights and sounds to expect during a new experience can help reduce anxiety for an individual with autism. A good way to help your child with autism be prepared for and comfortable with the idea of travel is to use of teaching stories! Teaching stories are customized, very brief stories that can help explain a new social situation or behavior. Taking an airplane: A guide for people with autism is an example of a story used for Autism Speaks' Blue Horizons for Autism events, which help families affected by autism expand their travel horizons. If possible participating in a realistic "dress rehearsal" can help your child become used to the sights and sounds they can expect, providing an opportunity to walk through their upcoming travel experience.

### 2. Contact guest services in advance!

Many families are unaware that they can contact guest services at airports, train stations and hotels for additional support. There are many travel-related companies that provide a variety of accommodations like advanced boarding times, special meals, rental equipment, travel companions and pre-registering service animals.

### 3. Provide choices!

The idea of a new environment can be intimidating for everyone, especially for an individual with autism. Allowing your child to feel they're in control is one way to relieve that anxiety. One

suggestion is having them pack their own backpack to carry with them. They can pack a few of their favorite things such as calming toys, books, iPads (or other devices) and snacks for the trip. This step provides your child with something to feel responsible for and allows them to choose which comfort items they bring along for this new experience. These familiar items will come in handy to reduce stress and boredom during “wait” times.

#### 4. Prepare for sensory concerns!

Unfamiliar noises during travel may be problematic, but packing ear plugs, noise cancellation head phones or music players may help. If your child has difficulty handling crowds or standing in line, ask the gate attendant if you can board early to get settled in a seat quickly or plan to board last, so you spend less time waiting before departing. Also, for plane and bus trips, you might want to try to obtain seats toward the front, where your child might not feel as cramped and crowded as they would in the back.

#### 5. Safety first!

Changing routines and new environments during travel make having a safety plan even more important. If your child tends to wander from safety, make sure to have copies of your family wandering emergency plan. Consider additional safety products such as wearable ID tags to make sure your child has a form of ID on him at all times. For more safety and wandering prevention tips and resources click [here](#). The Wallet Card Project is a free ID tool for teenagers and adults who have Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

#### 6. Prep your environment!

When staying in a hotel, it is a good idea to call ahead and ask for a quiet room (think corners!) and request a room with a refrigerator if your child follows a specific diet. You also might want to explain your child’s particular needs in advance of arrival to see if there are any additional accommodations the hotel can provide. This will also give you an opportunity to discuss safety precautions such as door alarms and access to pools and bodies of water. If your child tends to wander from safety, provide copies of your family wandering emergency plan to hotel staff. The same goes if you’re staying with a friend or a relative.

#### 7. Family watch system!

Another way to plan for a safe trip is to set a family watch system which may reduce stress and anxiety on the parent’s behalf, as well as other members of the family. Having one person at a time provide one-to-one supervision for your child and rotating that responsibility throughout the trip will help keep your child safe and give you peace of mind. This type of teamwork will allow everyone to navigate smoothly throughout the entire trip and help diminish stress.

#### 8. Reinforce good behavior!

This can be done with the simple reward of praise, a sticker, a small toy or anything else that is reinforcing for your child. You could even consider having your child earn a special reward at the end of a successful drive, flight, or cruise! Remember to try and notice the times when your child is doing a great job and reinforce them with a reward. These positive behaviors might include sitting with their seat belt, reading quietly or sharing.

## 9. Keep your routine!

Deviating from a routine can be challenging and stressful for an individual with autism. Try keeping to as normal of a routine as possible when your child is going to be traveling. If your child likes to do certain activities in the morning and then have quiet time in the afternoon, you should try to follow that routine, even if you are en route. Think of your child's daily routine and the items they like or need for it, and bring them along to make it feel more like home.

## 10. Create a schedule.

Since strictly keeping your everyday routine during a trip can be tough, creating a schedule will allow your child to develop a sense of a new routine for your trip. Your child can predict what is going to happen next and will relieve some of the anxiety of being in a completely new place. This can be something simple such as 8am-9am breakfast, 9-9:30 bus ride, 9:30-12:30 sightseeing, 12:30 lunch, 1:30 break, etc. You can learn more about using visual supports by downloading the ATN/AIR-P Visual Supports and Autism Spectrum Disorder Tool Kit.

While the thought of travelling can sound stressful, a little preparation can go a long way. By planning ahead, you can make the adventure of travelling much smoother and set your child up for success!

## Evaluation criteria [\[Suggestion\]](#)

The training course is based on a blended learning approach.

This learning units includes e-learning and self-learning activities.

Self-learning is one of the fastest-growing and most-researched areas of education.

Self-learning refers to a learning process where the learner takes the initiative in identifying learning needs, preparing goals, determining resources and evaluating learning outcomes. Self-learning views learning as an individual question. On the cognitive side, self-learning allows individuals to focus effort on useful information they do not yet possess.

Accordingly, the evaluation criteria for the training course should meet the specific nature of this course.

The main evaluation criteria to assess the training course are:

- Perceived usefulness by participants in *fair traveling*;
- Perceived benefits by participants for their children;
- Content appropriateness;
- Effective teaching strategy.

Learners should be asked about:

- Interest in the training course topics;
- Personal growth;
- Motivation to deepen their practice in *fair traveling*.

Finally, learners should be asked if they will suggest the training course to other parents of children with ASD.

## **References**

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