



SELF-ADVOCACY

For Students Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Second Edition

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LESSON 9

Resolving Problems

PURPOSE OF LESSON 9

This lesson provides students with some strategies to use if negotiations seem to reach an impasse. Students will learn follow-up steps to take if their negotiating partner says no.

For more information about principled problem solving, the instructor may want to read the following book:

Fisher et al. (2011): *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In* (3rd ed.).

EXPECTED LEARNER OUTCOMES

1. Learners will analyze four problem-solving strategies with respect to a closed case study.
2. Learners will develop a set of strategies for an open-ended case study.

Instructional Activities	Performance Activities	Materials
1. Warm-up activity: "Thomas at College"	Students read, reflect on case study	Worksheet 9a
2. Core material	Students take notes	Worksheet 9b
3. Learning activity: "Thomas, Part II"	Students read Part II, discuss questions	Worksheet 9c
4. Summary, homework	Homework assignment	Worksheet 9d

SUGGESTED INSTRUCTIONAL/ PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES

1. Review main points of Lesson 8: Last time, we talked about four strategies that can help you negotiate an agreement with another person. Our four negotiating strategies are (a) create options, (b) put yourself in the other person's shoes, (c) use "I-first" language, and (d) listen assertively.

2. State today's goal: We also talked about how everyone needs practice in negotiating. But even people who are experienced at negotiating encounter situations that do not resolve easily, when the answer seems to be just plain no. Today we will talk about four problem-solving strategies to use when someone does not seem willing to work with you.

3. As a warm-up activity, ask students to read the case study on Worksheet 9a and briefly write answer to the questions. Then ask students to discuss their answers, particularly to question 3, "Why would the instructor say no?" Possibilities: She never saw an FM before and is uncomfortable with new technology; she misunderstands why student uses it and thinks her voice will be broadcast somewhere else; she may just be in a bad mood, or worried about her immediate teaching problems; she is unaware of the student's legal rights; or may be an insecure teacher and suspicious of students in general. Let students know they will return to this case later with new ideas about how to solve this problem.

4. Present Lesson 9 Core Material while students complete Worksheet 9b.

5. Provide practice: Students read Part II of the case study on Worksheet 9c.

6. Discussion: Consider the questions at the end of the case.

7. Summarize, and assign homework: Today we learned about four problem-solving strategies to use when a

negotiation seems to stop because your partner says no. Your homework assignment is to take the skit idea on Worksheet 9c and develop a dialogue that shows how to use the four negotiating strategies and the four problem-solving strategies. Be prepared to present your ideas to the class next time.

8. State topic for next meeting: Next time we meet, we will begin looking at your role in your IEP meetings and how you can act as your own advocate there.

LESSON 9 CORE MATERIAL

What do you do if the person you are negotiating with just says no? The answer: "Don't give up – follow up!" Even if this person is not cooperating, there are strategies you can use to encourage her to change her minds and become willing to work with you. Today we will talk about four problem-solving strategies to use when you seem to have reached a dead end, when someone is not listening, or is not initially interested in working with you. We will call this person your "negotiating partner," to convey the idea that you will work together to resolve a problem.

Here are four problem-solving strategies:

1. Stay calm. Stay as unemotional as you can. This advice is easy to give, but hard to follow! You are interested in solving a problem, and that means staying focused on the problem, not the emotions that can interfere with the problem solving. When a situation is not going the way we want, it is natural to respond emotionally; for example, in the previous lesson when Martina asked for a captioned phone and her boss said no, we saw how she could get angry (that is, respond aggressively), or could give in (respond passively) but still feel upset and ignored. Both responses are emotional ones, and emotions make it hard to think clearly

when we are trying to solve problems. When someone rejects our request, it can seem like a personal rejection or even a personal attack. That is why remaining unemotional is one of the hardest things for people to learn. So do not be surprised to find that this strategy is hard for you, too.

You may have heard the advice to “count to 10” before responding in a heated moment; sometimes it may even be a good idea to sleep on it, giving yourself time to manage your emotions and return the focus to the problem.

2. Ask your partner in some fashion, “Tell me more.” In a reasonable way, ask your partner, “Help me understand. Tell me about your concerns.” “I don’t understand about the expense, please explain that.” Or, if necessary, “What are your reasons for saying no?” Everyone appreciates being listened to, and now you are telling your partner that you want to listen to his or her point of view. Use the same kind of assertive listening techniques we used last time, such as repeating what was said to make sure you understand: “Let me see if I follow you. You are worried that. . . . Do I have that right?” Let your partner know you are listening, with appropriate eye contact, head nods, and so on.

3. Ask, “What if?” When you ask a question that begins “What if,” you are offering a suggestion in a way that is not threatening to your partner. What if we try this? What if we call so-and-so? What if we look at it this way? Once again, you are creating options in a way that invites your partner to work with you more actively.

Continue to ask “What if?” if the person has a reasonable objection. If every “What if?” is rejected, it is fair to ask, “What would you suggest?” After showing your willingness to develop a solution, it is reasonable to expect the other person to show the same willingness.

If the responses do not meet your

needs, you must be clear as to why: “You suggest using an amplified telephone, since you already have one in the storage room. However, this device will not work for me. I’ve already tried it and I still can’t understand telephone conversations. The next option is a captioned phone. I’m sure we can work out a solution that meets my needs and your concerns.”

4. Say “*thank you.*” By focusing on a mutually satisfying agreement, you and your partner should eventually develop a solution. When you have resolved your problem, be sure to thank your partner for working with you. By showing your appreciation, you establish a positive relationship that will work for you the next time you need to resolve a problem.

Note: What if the answer is still no? If you use all these strategies and still do not reach an agreeable solution, you still have options! You will want to seek help from your personal network of supporters. Again, “Don’t give up, follow up.”

Conclusion

Today we looked at four problem-solving strategies: (a) Stay calm and unemotional; (b) ask “why,” (c) ask “what if,” and (d) say “thank you” for working with me. These four strategies will help you if you should get “stuck” in a negotiation. There are many reasons a negotiation might not go smoothly and would therefore require extra effort. However, there is an old saying, “Keep your eyes on the prize,” which means to focus on your goal, remember why it is important to you, and do not give up. It means the same thing as we said in the beginning: “Don’t give up, follow up.” Experienced self-advocates know these efforts are worthwhile and will help you meet your goals.

WORKSHEET 9a

Here is a review of our four negotiation strategies:

1. Create options.
2. Put yourself in the other person's shoes.
3. Use "I-first" language.
4. Use assertive listening.

Think about how Thomas could use these strategies in the following case study:

“Thomas at College”

When Thomas moved on campus for his first semester at college, he felt he had thought of everything. He had not forgotten any clothes or shoes, he had a new computer and printer, and he had just bought his books at the campus bookstore. He had met with his advisor and had a schedule of difficult but interesting classes. He had also met with Ms. Zula, the school's director of services for persons with disabilities. Ms. Zula asked about his schedule and suggested he look at each classroom while they were still empty. If he felt he would have trouble hearing (because the class was too big or too noisy), he could check out an FM system from the audiology department. She also suggested that he visit each instructor and introduce himself before classes started.

When he saw the classrooms, he saw her point: The class for biology lecture was as big as a concert hall. He knew that even if he sat in the front row, he would miss a lot of the lecture. So he went back and checked out an FM and began to drop by his professors' offices to introduce himself.

When he went to his biology teacher's office, he took the FM along to demonstrate its use, just in case she did not know. He found her at her desk, said "Hi," and asked if it was a good time to drop by. She said she had a few minutes, so he introduced himself and told her where he was from. Then he said, "I wanted to let you know that I have a hearing loss. I wear my hearing aids all the time, but sometimes they don't work well enough, so I will be using this FM system for your class. I will need my teachers to wear this microphone clipped to their lapel. It's very lightweight, and most teachers say they forget about it right away. Have you ever used one before?"

Up to this point, the biology teacher seemed nice enough, but suddenly she was very abrupt. "No," she said, "I won't agree to using it."

Briefly answer the following:

1. In this case, can Thomas be creative with other options?
2. Did Thomas use "I-first" language? If yes, give an example.
3. Put yourself in the teacher's shoes. Why would she say no?

WORKSHEET 9b

Resolving Problems

What do you do if your negotiating partner says no?

Don't give up – follow up!

Four problem-solving strategies:

1. _____ Why do this?
2. _____ Why do this?
3. _____ Why do this?
4. _____ Why do this?

What if the answer is still no? If your requests are reasonable and protected by law, you still have options. The next step is to consult your personal support network (family, teachers, coaches, community leaders). Who can help you?

WORKSHEET 9c

“Thomas at College, Part II”

Thomas was surprised by her reaction. He did not expect her to say no. Although it felt upsetting, he took a breath and reminded himself that he needed to stay focused on the problem (needing to hear in a big lecture hall). So he counted to three and then said, "Maybe I surprised you, dropping in without an appointment like this. But this is something that I need to follow up on. Can you tell me why do you say no?"

The teacher shrugged. "Really, I don't have to tell your anything. As an instructor, I can decide how I will teach my class, and I decide I don't want to use your equipment."

It was harder now to stay calm. The teacher sounded just plain mean. But Thomas kept his cool. "Let me see if I follow you. You say that you decide how to teach your class." She nodded. Thomas continued, "Of course I agree with you. But tell me how using this microphone would be a problem."

The teacher seemed to warm up to the subject. "I have dozens of details to worry about before every class: bringing in materials, returning exams, making sure someone will deliver the media I order. I have to say no to any new request, or I will be overwhelmed."

Now Thomas saw a way to resolve this problem. It seemed she felt stressed, and needed to gain some control over her situation. He needed to show her that he was not going to add to her worries. "What if I take complete responsibility for this microphone?" (He was going to, anyway!) "What if I bring it in every day, pick it up every day, charge it up every day? I will guarantee that there is absolutely no extra work for you." He smiled and continued, "This is important to work out, because I do have a legal right to reasonable accommodations for my hearing loss, and I also want to do well in your class. Is this an acceptable solution, or are there other details we need to work out?"

The teacher was taken aback. She was not used to students calmly asserting themselves and assuming responsibility, but she appreciated this student's determination and confidence. She wondered if he was correct about his right to "reasonable accommodations," but he sounded like he knew what he was talking about. And his suggestions were certainly reasonable. She could not think of any reason to object further. She nodded. "It's a deal. As long as you accept all responsibility for this equipment, I can't complain. You better show me how it works."

Thomas showed her the basics of the microphone and let her listen to the receiver so she could tell what he would be hearing. Before he left, he made a point of thanking her for working with him.

Questions for discussion:

1. How well did Thomas do in staying calm? Did he stay focused on the problem? Would this be hard to do? What would have happened if he had become angry, or embarrassed, or upset?
2. How did he get the teacher to talk about her concerns? Did it work? Does it often require more than one attempt to find out what people are really thinking?
3. Because he figured out the teacher's real concerns, his "what if" questions were not exactly creative, since he had always intended to take full responsibility for the equipment. But by phrasing his statements that way, what kind of reaction could he expect from the teacher?

WORKSHEET 9d

Summary

1. Sometimes when we want to negotiate, a person will just say no. That does not mean the end of the negotiation; it means we need to problem-solve.
2. Four problem-solving strategies are (a) stay calm, (b) ask "tell me more," (c) ask "what if," and (d) say "thank you" for working with me.
3. Most people will work with us on a problem if we remain positive.

Homework

Think about a situation that someone your age might face where the negotiation partner says no. (Avoid situations with parents.) For example:

- You sign up for the glee club but the director says no.
- The English teacher gives quizzes based on video clips of Shakespeare plays, but the actors have British accents, often have beards, and speak very fast. You request a day's notice so that you can read the scene first, but the teacher says no.
- The soccer coach yells out directions from the sidelines. You ask for some visual signals but the coach says no.

Work out a skit with a classmate to demonstrate the four negotiating strategies, and four problem-solving strategies. Present it to classmates. Explain your strategies, and ask your classmates for their ideas.

UNIT EVALUATION: QUIZ 3

Personal and Interpersonal Skills for the Self-Advocate

Complete the following sentences using these vocabulary words:

passive	assertive	communication repair
aggressive	needs analysis	negotiation

1. _____ This communication style insists on one's rights but disregards another's rights.
2. _____ These problem-solving strategies are used to clear up misunderstandings due to hearing loss.
3. _____ This process helps a person set a goal and identify what is needed to meet that goal.
4. _____ This communication style allows others to infringe on one's rights, often because of being too concerned about being liked by others.
5. _____ This communication allows one to express his or her preferences or needs, while respecting others' rights.
6. _____ This is a back-and-forth communication used to reach an agreement.

True or False?

7. _____ When one is working with another to solve a problem, it helps to get emotional and upset.
8. _____ Assertive listening techniques let your listener know you are trying to understand his or her point of view.
9. _____ One negotiation technique is to present options by asking, "What if?"
10. _____ The goal of negotiations is to "win" at all costs.
11. _____ "I-first" language is stating what I need or want, rather than insisting another person do what I need or want.
12. _____ An objective standard is based on personal considerations.