Jumping Hurdles

Introduction

Key Concept:
Everyone experiences setbacks, but successful people “jump back up” and keep trying. They know that there are certain steps they can use to help them overcome their challenges and achieve success.

Positive affirmation: “I WILL jump over my hurdles and win the race with positive solutions.”

Vocabulary
- Hurdle / Identify Problem
- Problem-solving
- No pain, no gain
- Creating options
- Self-talk
- Baby steps
- Jump Back Up
- Never Quit

Personalize the Lesson:
- What are some of my strengths that I can rely on to help me overcome hurdles in my life?
- How has following these steps helped me, or someone I know, overcome a problem?
- What role has my belief level played in “jumping” my own personal hurdles?
- Of all the steps, which do I feel is the most important for me? Why?

Secondary Concepts:
- Everyone has problems or “hurdles” in life, but we can create options that will help us to overcome our hurdles.
- We can get help from positive friends, teachers, facilitators, officers, family members, therapists, and other support systems.
- To jump our hurdles, we must first replace certain negative behaviors with positive ones.
- It is important to believe that change is possible and have a resolve to jump back up each time we fail.
Welcome
At WhyTry we believe that it is critical to have positive, upbeat music playing in the classroom as students enter.

For this reason we have built in a mix of WhyTry's original music that you can find embedded on the slide.

Class Commitments
Our recommended approach is that all students, along with the instructor, recite in unison the four class commitments.

Review from last class
Draw a name from the hat containing the names of the students who were present in the previous class. Click on the icon that represents the metaphor discussed during the previous class. Have the selected student review the core concepts of the metaphor as it relates to their own experience.

If we are currently teaching “Jumping Hurdles” in an open-group setting, click on the picture icon at the bottom of the slide to take you to the previous metaphor for a student to review.

Share and Report
Each student will take 1-3 minutes, depending on the class size, to stand in front of the class and present one key component of the metaphor taught during the previous class that resonated with him or her.

Where We're Headed
Positive affirmation: “I WILL jump over my hurdles and win the race with positive solutions.”

Touch briefly on the positive affirmation by explaining that this statement is the framework of the unit. The goal is, that by the end of the unit, all of us will have the proper perspectives and tools to proclaim and apply this statement in our life.

WhyTry Staircase
If we’re working in a closed group setting, this is the third step on the WhyTry staircase.

In an open group setting, this slide simply points out the entire curriculum, with the “Motivation Formula” handrail, and all of the steps that we ultimately will be taking in the program.
Jumping Hurdles
Lesson Plan: Visual Analogy Walkthrough

TOOLKIT SLIDE
Refer to the toolkit slide to select a video, song, or activity that reinforces the initial concept that luck alone will seldom lead us to the solutions to our problems.

TOOLKIT SLIDE
Refer to the toolkit slide to select a video, song, or activity that reinforces the concept of how jumping hurdles requires strategy, skill, and practice. Our recommended video is “Edwin Moses – 1984 Olympics,” followed by the video “How Not to Jump Hurdles” in comparison.

Discussion Point 1
Questions
- What problem do I have that I really want to get over in my life?
- What signs or clues are there that this is a real problem of mine?

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

WEAK THINK/STRONG THINK
Students will be introduced to “MAGICIAN” and “HARD WORK.” It is recommended that one volunteer from the class read the Magician Weak Think concept and another volunteer read the Hard Work Strong Think concept.

Discussion
Open brief discussion and invite the students to share examples of when and where they have done either of these in their life.

Point 2
Question
- What hurdles have I already jumped over?

Discussion
Let’s identify some of the small and big problems that we have overcome in our past. Every day we deal with and overcome problems, even though they might not be big problems.
For example, we got along with someone that we normally don't, completed a GED or obtained our high school diploma, we made a mistake and fixed it, we got a job to help with financial problems, we passed a test in a difficult class, we learned how to read, ride a bike, swim, etc.

Because we have dealt with and overcome challenges and problems in the past, we can continue to jump over other hurdles placed in our path. It’s important to pay attention to our small accomplishments as well as our large accomplishments. A good way to do this is to make a list of all of our small and large accomplishments and to read the list when we feel like we as if we can’t overcome a hurdle. Have the optimistic attitude of “Yes, I can overcome the next hurdle.” Having a clear perspective on what we have already jumped over can give us the momentum to get continue.

**Point 3**

**Question**

• Why should I try to jump my hurdles?

**Discussion**

It’s very easy to get discouraged when we try time after time to jump the hurdles in our life and trip and fall. It’s easy to give up. Because of this, it’s essential that we identify and stay focused on our personal motivation and what it might look like when we eventually get over a big hurdle that we’re currently facing. Point 3 takes us back to the question, “Why try?” This is a question all of us must answer for ourselves. What is my motivation? What is my incentive? What will be the payoffs when I have gotten over this problem?

Discuss with students how things might change for the better at home, at work/school, with their peers, and with the legal system once they overcome the problem. Help the students identify the satisfaction and personal strength 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. Explain that this feeling of pride and accomplishment can also help motivate us to jump our hurdles.

**Point 4**

**Question**

• What can I jump over?

**Discussion**

Often our motivation to overcome a problem comes from identifying the potential benefits that result from overcoming the problem. If we have identified a problem that presents itself to be too big, and we realistically know we’re not going to be able to get over it in the near future, it’s very important that we break the problem down into smaller pieces. In other words, make baby steps or create small successes that we can jump over. These will eventually help us build the strength, skills, and competence to get over the big hurdle.

Example: I might not be able to jump over a four-foot hurdle from a standing position, but I could
jump over a one-foot hurdle from a standing position. If I strengthen my ability to get over the one-foot hurdle, eventually I will be able to jump over a two-foot hurdle. A two-foot hurdle will then lead to a three-foot hurdle, and a three-foot hurdle will eventually lead to me being able to jump over the big four-foot hurdle.

Point 5
Question

• What are my strengths?

Discussion
If the class has already gone through the “Tearing Off Labels” metaphor, this point relates directly to “The Real Me.” We will never be able to overcome any hurdles in our life by focusing on what we can’t do and what our weaknesses are. The only way to overcome hurdles and new challenges in life is to recognize and focus on our personal strengths. We all have positive strengths and abilities! Identifying these traits will assist us in jumping our hurdles. Even negative behaviors can contain hidden strengths. For example, someone who uses a lot of creativity to get into trouble could use this same creativity in a positive way to jump over a hurdle. A student who fights wastes a lot of energy that could be redirected into lifting weights or working out to become physically stronger. Someone who spends money on cigarettes could use and redirect that same money for something that doesn’t hurt him or her and others.

Challenge
Go around the room and have students share one of their strengths that has helped them overcome challenges and problems in their life.

TOOLKIT SLIDE

Refer to the toolkit slide to select a video, song, or activity that reinforces the concept that all of us have strengths and abilities, even when faced with emotional or physical handicaps. Our recommendation is the video of Nick Vujicic. Following the video, we recommend completing the simple activity, “Think Outside the Box.” This activity emphasizes the point that we often have to be creative and think outside the box in order identify our own personal strengths.

Point 6: The Six Steps to Jumping Hurdles

1. Identify
2. Create
3. Get
4. Take
5. Believe
6. Jump
The Process of Overcoming Obstacles

NOTE/DAMAGE CONTROL:

Before discussing these six steps, it’s important to be aware that some problems are not overcome easily or quickly. Sometimes when we try to solve a problem we end up making it worse. It is important that we don’t raise the hurdle any higher than it already is. In other words, whatever you do, don’t create more damage for yourself or others. Problems like death, divorce, terminal illnesses, accidents, and so forth, can initially be dealt with by simply “hanging in there.” When someone we love passes away, we may always miss him or her, but we can decide to push on and not give up out of love and respect for him or her. The last thing we would want to do is go out on a drinking binge, get angry and hurt someone else, or sink into any other destructive behaviors.

The six steps in learning how to avoid stumbling in life will not only help us overcome our problems, but will help us cope better with long-term hurdles.

Learning these six steps can help us overcome what may appear to be impossible. For example, all of these historical events were at one point deemed 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, the inventors had to pick themselves up time and time again in order to overcome the many hurdles and problems.

1. Identify the Pain “No Pain - No Gain”

Identify the Pain

“"No Pain - No Gain”

• Why am I tired of falling and tripping over my hurdles?
• What pain has my falling and tripping caused myself and others?

Discussion

It is important that we avoid stumbling over the same problems again and again. In order to do this we need to identify the pain, drama, hurt, destruction, and damage that has been done to ourselves and others (our family, the community, crime victims, etc.).

NOTE:

How many times have we heard our clients say, “I hate being on probation;” “Being in jail/prison sucks;” “I hate having to be home by curfew.” When we hear things like this, we can respond positively by saying, “Excellent. You’ve just taken your first step in solving a big problem in your life. The consequences you are experiencing are supposed to hurt! In fact, I hope that the pain of being on probation or in prison or having to follow all of these additional rules in your life hurts so bad that you don’t ever want to experience it again.”
We have to be careful to not get caught up in the guilt and shame of past mistakes, but we must be able to identify and remember the pain.

All of us have a natural tendency to forget painful experiences. Our brains tend to want to push these emotions into the back of our consciousness. If we’re not careful, a time will come when we will think back on the painful events of today feel and feel nothing at all. If we neglect to process these experiences, we run the risk of repeating the same mistakes or tripping over the same hurdles. The pain of tripping over the same hurdles again and again, causing harm to others and ourselves, is a big deal and needs to constantly remain in our conscious minds.

**TOOLKIT SLIDE**

Refer to the toolkit slide to select a video, song, or activity that reinforces the concept of teamwork and problem solving. Our recommended activity is “Pyramid of Cups.”

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**2. CREATE Options**

- What have I not tried in the past that might work now?
- What have I tried before that I can put more effort into now?

**2. Create Options Questions**

- What have I not tried in the past that might work now?
- What have I tried before that I can put more effort towards now?

**Discussion**

If a problem seems impossible to overcome, we probably don’t know all of the possible options. Discouragement is one of the biggest obstacles in overcoming problems. One of the best ways to deal with discouragement is to create as many possible solutions to our problems as we can. The word “CREATE” is important because options seldom fall into our laps. We must work and use our creativity to help solve our problems. We have all probably heard the popular Albert Einstein quote, “Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” There comes a time where we just have to try something new, something we’ve never tried before, in order to get a new outcome and finally jump over our hurdles.

Discuss with the class ways a person can create options, such as:

- Learn from Others: There are probably other people who have jumped the hurdle that I may now be struggling with. I can talk to them and learn about their strategies.
- Research: Become an expert on my problem. Get online, ask questions, go to an expert; figure out the causes of the problem.
- Be Flexible: Things often don’t work out like I want them to, but I won’t give up. I’ll learn from what doesn’t work and move on. If I’m not flexible and creative, I will always have limited options.
- Try the Opposite: I’ll try doing the opposite of what is not working. Remember, to get different results, I need to do something different.
• Take Care of Myself Emotionally and Physically: I’ll try to keep things in perspective, remain positive, and focus on my strengths. If needed, I’ll talk to someone I trust. I’ll get help from a family member, sponsor, probation officer, counselor, etc.

Also, you may have experienced some success in the past by trying certain things. If something has worked before, even if just for a short time, you can try the same thing again, only this time, double your efforts to get an even greater result. Most of us, when we stop and really think about it, know what we need to do to improve our position in life and may have taken steps to accomplish this before. There is a foundational level of truth in the old saying, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” In other words, if it has worked for me in the past, it’s likely to work for me again in the present.

### WEAK THINK/STRONG THINK

Students will be introduced to ASSUMING and DO YOUR OWN HOMEWORK. It is recommended that a volunteer from the class read the Assuming Weak Think concept and another volunteer read the Do Your Own Homework Strong Think concept.

**Discussion**

Open brief discussion with the students about examples of when and where they have done either of these in their life.

#### 3. GET Help

**Question**

- Who can I plug into when I need help?

**Discussion**

FACT: Asking for help is not a weakness; it is a strength!

Notice the bolded word “when.” The question is not, “Who can I plug into if I need help?” but rather when. All of us will need help sooner or later. Getting help from other people is an extremely helpful way to gain new perspective and open our eyes to resources, options, and solutions that we would not be able to see by ourselves. We may be blinded because we are too close to the problem.

No man or woman is an island. No one can do it completely alone. Every person has an important role to play, they can be influenced and influence others.

What we do and the decisions we make have an impact on those around us. We influence others and others influence us. We must take primary responsibility for our problems, and a critical step in overcoming problems is getting and accepting help from positive influences.

The benefits of getting help from others to overcome problems include the following: It can be more fun, it is easier and sometimes faster, it strengthens relationships, and believe it or not, it
4. **Take Action**

**Question**
- What specific, observable behaviors do I need to STOP and START in order to jump my hurdle?

**Discussion**
FACT: If we do not take the first step to STOP an observable negative behavior, we will never make progress towards jumping over the hurdle that the negative behavior has created.

However, we cannot stop at simply ending our negative behaviors. Whenever a person simply stops a behavior that they have been engaged in over a period of time (for example, a bad habit), a void remains unfilled and tension will build. That is why it is essential to START new positive behaviors that will replace the stopped negative behaviors. For example, if I am trying to lose weight, and I'm constantly thinking about not eating a big greasy cheeseburger for supper, what am I actually thinking about? Obviously, I'm thinking about a big, greasy cheeseburger. Rather than thinking about not eating a cheeseburger, I need to think about enjoying a nice, healthy salad. In order to lose weight, I need to not eat cheeseburgers and begin to eat healthy foods. Stopping and starting both have to be in place.

Each and every one of us has a limited amount of energy during any given day. It is much more beneficial to focus our thoughts and energy on what we are doing right than what we are doing wrong. If we pay close attention to the positive things we do to help change our circumstances and resolve our problems, and take special notice of our positive behaviors, things are more likely to continue in that direction.

**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.
5. **BELIEVE In Change**

- On a scale from one to ten, how much do I believe I will change?

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“I believe  I don’t know  “I believe
1       2       3       4       5       6       7
8       9       10
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I believe I won’t change  I don’t know  I believe I will change

**NOTICE:**

The question is not, “How much do I believe I can change?” Every human being has the capacity to change. It’s not a matter of whether or not we can; it is a matter of how much effort we will put into changing. If we don’t believe that we will change, we’re not likely to put the effort into solving the problem.

• What would it take for this number to go up?

Any obstacle that has been overcome throughout history began with the belief that the hurdle could be overcome. For example:

• The football team that wins the Super bowl likely believed all year that they could do it, and so put effort into each practice and game.

• NASA had to believe they could put a man on the moon, or they wouldn't have invested the resources, time, and effort into building the rocket.

• Thomas Edison believed, through failed experiment after failed experiment, that he would create an incandescent light bulb.

• 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.

**Discussion**

We all know that change is difficult. Most of us can remember being scared on the first day of school, falling the first time we tried to ride a bike without training wheels, and being nervous the first time we dove off the high dive, etc.

What does it take for a person’s belief and confidence to increase? We build confidence each time we successfully accomplish something new. If we get stuck and feel frustrated because of our hurdle, focusing on the following can help us increase our belief and confidence that success will come.

• *How much do I really want to get over this hurdle?* I have to want to see what’s on the other side of the hurdle. Ask, how will my life be different when I jump the hurdle?

• *Am I willing to take a risk?* Remember, I miss EVERY opportunity I don’t go after.

• *Do I believe in my strengths and abilities?* Remember the positive changes I made in the past
and how I used my strengths and abilities.

- **Am I optimistic?** Life will always have changes. Look at change as an opportunity to create the life I want. If I sit still and try to keep things the same, “life will happen to me” instead of me directing my life. I will never have total control over change, but I can lead it in the direction that I want. I must believe that the positive efforts I put forth today will affect my future in positive ways.

### 6. **JUMP** Back Up

- What will I and others LOSE if I don’t learn how to jump over this hurdle?
- What will I and others GAIN if I truly learn how to jump over this hurdle?

**Discussion**

The last step in this formula of learning how to jump our hurdles may be the most important. A reality of life is that we are not perfect. We all make mistakes, and the difference between success and failure is making the decision to either stay down and defeated, or to get back up! A critical determining factor in the decision that we make can be boiled down to this: “What will I lose if I stay down? What will I gain if I get back up and try again?” It’s not just about what I will lose and gain, but what others will also lose and gain from my decision.

Another thing we can do to help us make the decision is to make a list of “pros” (gains) if we jump back up and try again, and “cons” (losses) if we stay down.

### TOOLKIT SLIDE

Refer to the toolkit slide to select a video, song, or activity that reinforces the necessity of not giving up. Our recommended video is “Never Give Up: Zebra and Lioness.”

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**I only lose if I give up and quit.**

When we jump up and learn from what tripped us, we become stronger. In fact, finally jumping the hurdle is often sweeter when we have worked hard to get over it. We can all probably think of someone we know who failed or tripped on their hurdle and jumped back up.

Remember: “I only lose if I give up and quit.” There is no limit to how many times we can apply these six steps.
What is my self-talk as I continue to run this race?

FACT: Successful people all use positive self-talk.

What do we think our heroes or favorite celebrities tell themselves before an event? When athletes see a last-minute game-winning shot in basketball, what do they say to themselves?

Our self-talk influences us, either for the better or for the worse. It is our self-talk that compels us to keep trying to accomplish our goals and dreams. It is also our self-talk that keeps us down on the ground after tripping over a hurdle. We need to keep our self-talk as positive as possible. For example, if I tell myself I will have a great day at work, I will be more optimistic and friendly no matter what challenges might come my way.

NOTE:

Ask the class if they remember where self-talk is within the context of the “Motivation Formula” (the very first dam). According to the “Motivation Formula,” what are the two essential components of positive self-talk? (It cannot hurt others, or myself, and it must center on only those things I have control over.)

Challenge

How does my positive self-talk help keep my hope alive? If I stop believing that I will change, how will my self-talk feed this negative belief?

It’s important to remember that using the “Jumping Hurdles” formula may be something that I need to do daily and even hourly. My self-talk may even need to be monitored minute to minute.

Review Jumping Hurdles

Draw a name from a hat of class participants. The person chosen will review the concepts of “Jumping Hurdles.”

Discussion

Note that the PowerPoint image is a basic representation of the “Jumping Hurdles” visual analogy. Encourage the student to recall, to the best of their ability, the basic concepts of this metaphor.

Remind students that by the beginning of the next class, everyone should have reviewed for themselves the core concepts of “Jumping Hurdles” and be prepared to share what they learned, as their name may be drawn out of the hat at the beginning of the class.
Looking Ahead

Discussion

Point out to the participants that in their “Game Plan” journal there is space provided for them to document their thoughts, experiences, and perspectives related to the entire “Jumping Hurdles” metaphor. Emphasize that this will need to be completed before the next class.

Next, direct the participants to the narrative surrounding the “Weak/Strong Think” exercise pertaining to the “Magician/Assuming” Weak Think and “Hard Work/Do the Homework” Strong Think. Emphasize that this also will need to be completed by next week.

Participants will also need to document responses to the weekly Motivation Question and Action Step outlined in their “Game Plan” journal.

Last slide

Show the cover slide once again, playing music to send students off until next week.
TOOLKIT - Jumping Hurdles

Learning Activity: Think Outside the Box

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Group
Group Size: 1 or more
Time: 5-10 minutes

Introduction: Jumping life’s hurdles requires thinking outside the box. This simple but challenging activity will help participants do just that.

Materials:
• 1 piece of paper per student
• 1 pen or pencil per student

Activity:
Say the following to students:
1. Everybody come on up and get a piece of paper and a pencil.
2. Write down the following math equation: $5 + 5 + 5 = 550$
3. Is this equation true or false?
4. Write one single straight line to make the equation true. Note: making the not equal sign ($\neq$) is not the answer.
5. ANSWER: $545 + 5 = 550$ (You draw a diagonal line on the first “plus” sign to make it a four.)

Processing the Experience:
• What was difficult about this activity? Did it seem impossible?
• Did the solution surprise you? Why or why not?
• Why is thinking outside the box important when trying to solve problems (jump hurdles)?
• How can simply changing perspective from negative to positive make it easier to solve a problem?
Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Group
Group Size: 12 or more
Time: 10-15 minutes

Introduction: In life, we encounter problems – or hurdles – on a daily basis. The major key to success in solving these problems is to utilize the resources and support around us, and to consistently engage in positive self-talk. This activity helps reinforce this principle.

Materials:
• 10 plastic or foam cups per team of 6
• 6 pieces of 4-foot-long string per team of 6
• 1 rubber band per team of 6

Activity:
Give each team their materials, placing some of the cups upside down, on their side, and right side up. Use the same combination for each team. The first team to stack all 10 cups into a pyramid (4-3-2-1) wins.

1. Divide up into 3 groups of equal number (no more than one person difference).
2. As a team, the object is to stack 10 cups into a pyramid (4 on the bottom, then 3, then 2, then 1 on top). The guidelines and rules of this activity are stated in the WhyTry Corrections PowerPoint presentation.
3. A referee must watch for penalties and track penalty times at all times.
4. Hands cannot at any time touch a cup. (15 second penalty)
5. String cannot at any time be tied around a cup. String may be used to tip a cup if needed as long as it is not wrapped or tied around cup.
6. Cups must be lifted only by rubber band around cup and string tied to rubber band with a minimum of three people and three strings being used. One person can hold or control only one string at a time with one hand. Strings must be tied to rubber band.
7. Team players must be rotated after each cup is successfully placed.

Processing the Experience:
• What strategies did your team use to pick up the cups? What did you try that didn’t work?
• Did you feel at anytime like quitting and giving up? How did you deal with it?
• How did teamwork and working together come into play?
• If all the rules were the same, do you think you could have done this activity alone?