

# CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

Participant's Workbook



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## Participant's Workbook

Developed for:



1994

by:

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# CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING

## **Preface:**

Welcome to one in a series of individualized Optimist International Skills Development Modules. Our goal is to help you, our members, learn and apply practical skills to deal with the opportunities and issues in your life. This series of modules is not designed to deal with "theoretical" issues, but rather to provide a practical "hands on" approach.

Each of these modules is to be used, written in and applied. You can learn skills on your own, or join with others in a collaborative learning venture. Each module contains an instructor's guide in addition to a separate participant's guide which can be duplicated as often as necessary to supply the needs of your Club members.

Future modules will deal with individual as well as group-oriented skills, all of which are designed to help individual Optimists enhance their personal leadership ability in any chosen field of activity, i.e., employment, home, school, and volunteer activities. This is a significant development for our organization in its service to its own members, and we hope that participants will provide feedback about each module to the International Headquarters (c/o Leadership Development). In this way, we can maintain our focus on providing meaningful leadership training to Districts, Clubs and individuals throughout our Optimist organization.

We truly hope you enjoy the journey to self-improvement.

**Optimist International**  
**CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING**  
**Workshop Outline**

**Introductions**

**Purpose**

**A. What is creative problem solving?**

1. Thoughts about creative people, knowledge and the creative problem solving process.
2. Definition of creative problem solving.
3. Creative problem solving exercise.

**B. Why don't we think creatively more often?**

1. What are the barriers that get in our way?
2. What are mental blocks? - Ten hurdles to overcome.

**C. How can we be more creative?**

1. Ten tips for promoting creative thinking.

**D. What is the creative problem solving process?**

1. Creative thinking.
2. Define the problem.
3. Assess the problem.
4. Brainstorm ideas.
5. Evaluate ideas.
6. Implement the decision.
7. Evaluate the results.

**E. What are some other specific creative problem solving tools and techniques?**

1. Ten questions to encourage ideas.
2. Brainstorming.
3. Multivoting.
4. Mind mapping.

**F. Application of learning:**

1. What are the three greatest problems/opportunities your Club is currently facing? (i.e. how do you motivate your Club members?)

**Optimist International  
CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING**

**A. What is creative problem solving?**

**1. Notes:**

- The creative person wants to know about all kinds of things. Because he/she never knows when these ideas might come together to form new ideas.
  
- Knowledge is the stuff from which new ideas are made. Yet, knowledge alone won't make a creative person or solve a problem. The real key to creative problem solving is what you do with the knowledge.
  
- Creative problem solving requires an attitude that allows you to search for ideas and use your knowledge and experience.
  
- By changing one's perspective and playing with our knowledge, one can make the ordinary extraordinary and the unusual commonplace.

**2. Definition:**

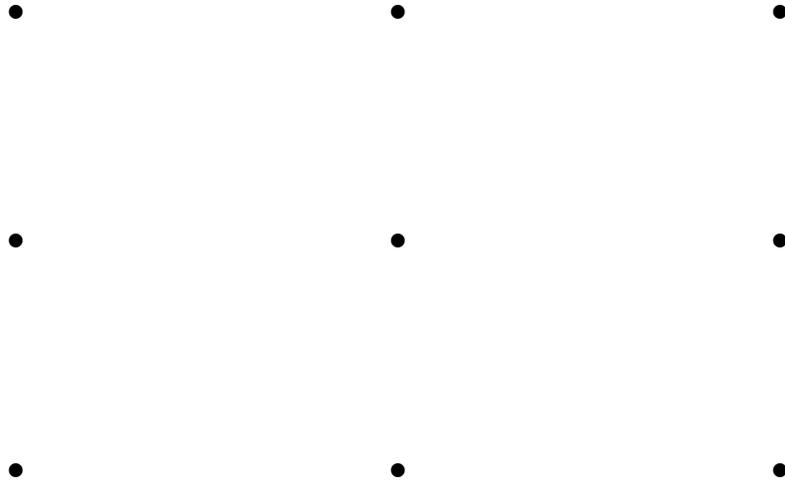
**Creative problem solving is -**

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### 3. Creative problem solving exercise:



**B. Why don't we think creatively more often?**

**1. What are the barriers that get in our way?**

**Notes:**

- Thinking of different, creative ways to do things takes too much time. We just have to get the job done.
- The way we have always done things seems to work just fine, why change?
- We don't need to be creative for most of what we do.
  - For instance, we don't need to be creative when we are waiting in line at the Post Office, or driving our car, or riding up the elevator or doing routine chores.
- When it comes to dealing with the day-to-day busy aspects of our lives, we are creatures of habit. We get dressed, read the paper, take out the trash, wash the dishes, clean the house the same way.
- Having a routine helps us do many of the things we need to do without having to really think about them.
- We have not been taught to be creative. Many of us have been taught to think the best ideas are in someone else's head.
- **What are some other barriers that get in our way?**

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**2. What are mental blocks?**

**Definition:**

*Mental blocks are reasons (attitudes) why we don't "think something different."* Most of us have certain attitudes that keep us thinking the same way (blocks our thinking). There are 10 main mental blocks.

**MENTAL BLOCKS**

1. **The \_\_\_\_\_ answer.**
2. **That's Not \_\_\_\_\_.**
3. **\_\_\_\_\_ the Rules.**
4. **Be \_\_\_\_\_.**
5. **\_\_\_\_\_ is Frivolous.**
6. **That's Not My \_\_\_\_\_.**
7. **\_\_\_\_\_ Ambiguity.**
8. **Don't Be \_\_\_\_\_.**
9. **\_\_\_\_\_ Is Wrong.**
10. **I'm Not \_\_\_\_\_.**

Adapted from: von Oech, R. (1983). *A Whack on The Side of The Head*.

**C. How can we be more creative?**

- How can we be more creative? *Please jot down at least 3 ideas that come to your mind.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_



• **The Golden Rules of Creative Thinking**

1. Start small trying to discover new ways to be creative,  
\_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ to abandon the old, obsolete ways of doing things and to explore new ways.
3. It is not possible to change the way we think about everything.  
\_\_\_\_\_ in which to try creative thinking techniques.
4. Understand that creative thinking requires \_\_\_\_\_, but it is worth it!
5. Remember that creative thinking is both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_!!!
6. \_\_\_\_\_ on what you can reasonably do. Trying to do too many things at once compromises the effort and may take away from the results.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ creative thinking for today as well as tomorrow.
8. Include other people in the creative thinking process with you.  
\_\_\_\_\_ fosters creative thinking.
9. Include \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in your creative thinking process as well as \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Keep \_\_\_\_\_

**D. What is the creative problem solving process?**

**Step 1: State what appears to be the problem.**

**Notes:**

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**Step 2: Gather facts, feelings and opinions.**

**Notes:**

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**Step 3: Restate the problem.**

**Notes:**

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**Step 4: Identify alternative solutions.**

**Notes:**

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**Step 5: Evaluate alternatives.**

**Notes:**

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**Step 6: Implement the decision.**  
**Notes:**

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**Step 7: Evaluate the results.**  
**Notes:**

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**E. What are some other specific creative problem solving tools and techniques?**

**1. 10 QUESTIONS TO ENCOURAGE IDEAS.**

**Notes:**

1. What if...?
2. How can we improve...?
3. How will the Optimist Member and/or the community benefit?
4. Are we forgetting anything?
5. What's the next step?
6. What can we do better?
7. What do you think about...?
8. What should we add?

9. What should we eliminate?
10. What other ideas do you have...?

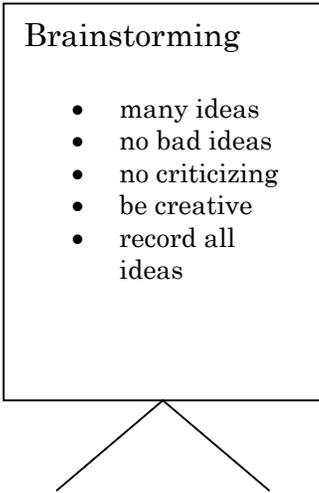
**2. BRAINSTORMING**

**Purpose of Brainstorming**

*To generate a large number of ideas in a short period of time.*

**Rules for Brainstorming**

1. The more ideas the better! Everyone thinks freely and adds as many ideas as possible, regardless of how crazy they may seem.
2. No discussion during brainstorming - keep the thoughts coming!
3. No idea is a bad idea - no criticizing, groaning or making fun of other people's ideas.
4. Hitchhike or piggyback on one another's ideas.
5. Display all ideas for everyone to see (recording ideas on a flipchart works best).



**Practice Exercise:**

**How do we motivate our local Optimist Club Members?**

**Ideas:** Freely record your ideas as they come to your mind.

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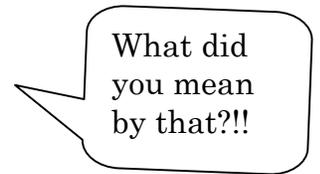
**Note:** *Try to unlock your mental blocks and let your thoughts flow. Let's see how imaginative you can be!*

## Guidelines to assist in the brainstorming process.

1. **Practice question - How do we motivate our local Optimist Club Members?**



2. **Clarify understanding.** Once all the ideas have been generated (it may take approximately 5 to 6 minutes), review ideas offered.



3. **Combine items that are similar and/or eliminate duplicates.**



4. **Completion.** The brainstorming process is completed once the ideas have been offered, discussed and consolidated.

### 3. MULTIVOTING

**Purpose:**

*To help a group of people make a decision with which they are all comfortable.*

**Definition:**

*A way to vote to select the most important or popular items (alternatives) from a list.*

**Steps:**

Multivoting List
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

1. Generate a list of items and number each item.

2. If two or more items seem similar, they may be combined. (Be sure the group agrees!)

3. If necessary, renumber the items.



4. Write down on a sheet of paper (or in your workbook) the numbers of items they feel are the major cause of the problem.

5. Share your votes by a show of hands.



6. Eliminate those items with the fewest votes.
  
7. Repeat steps 3 through 6 on the list of remaining items. Continue this process until only a few items remain. If a clear favorite does not emerge, the group may discuss the items listed and make a choice.

#### 4. MIND MAPPING

**Definition:**

*A visual picture of a group of ideas, concepts or issues.*

**Purpose:**

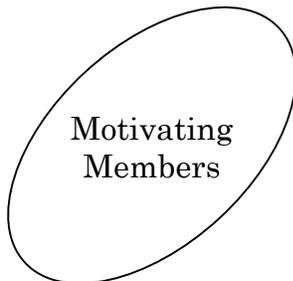
- *Helps us unblock our thinking.*
- *Enables us to see an entire idea or several ideas on one sheet of paper.*
- *Helps us to see how ideas relate to one another.*
- *Allows us to look at things in a new and different way.*
- *Enables us to look at an idea in depth.*

**Practice Exercise:**

**Guidelines:**

**1. Initial Tumble of Ideas:**

- Start with an over-sized blank sheet of paper (a flipchart is ideal).
- Select a single word, phrase or problem statement (focal point) that will serve as a focus for the discussion.
- Print it in the middle of the paper. Enclose it in a box or oval.



- Let a word pop out of your mind. Print it anywhere on the paper.
- Underline it and connect the line with the problem statement (or phrase or word) you are working. *see example below*
- Record the next idea and connect it to either the original focus point or the prior thought.
- Continue printing and connecting words as they come into your mind. Don't be afraid to think freely!!



### Helpful Hints

*Keep your printing large and easy to read.*



*Feel free to use symbols and or pictures.*



*Have some fun using different colors.*



### **Completed Map**

- Using a highlighter pen draw over clusters of similar thoughts associated with the main focus point. Have fun using a different color highlighter with each cluster of words.
- How do the variety of ideas relate to one another?
- Do you notice any common causes of the problem? What are the most important causes?
- You are now ready to brainstorm solutions.

### **Have Fun Drawing Your Own Mind Map!**

Mind Mapping adapted from: McWhinney, W. et'al (1992). Creating Paths of Change.

#### **F. Application of learning:**

What are the three greatest problems/opportunities your Club is currently facing?

i.e. **“How do you motivate your Club members?”**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_