



Middle School

National FFA Organization

Lesson MS.24

COPING WITH ADVERSITY

Unit. Stage One of Development—ME

Problem Area. What Foundational Skills Do I Need for Personal Growth?

Precepts. K1: Cope with life's trials.

National Standards. NPH-H5-8.5 — Demonstrate healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings.

☒ **Student Learning Objectives.** As a result of this lesson, the student will ...

- 1 Define adversity.
- 2 List commonly perceived adversities.
- 3 Develop a personal strategy for overcoming adversity.





Time. Instruction time for this lesson: 50 minutes.



Resources

National FFA Organization's Essential Learnings, 2003.

Stoltz, P.G. *Adversity Quotient: Turning Obstacles into Opportunities*, New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1997.



Tools, Equipment, and Supplies

- ✓ Overhead projector
- ✓ Scenario cards
- ✓ White paper
- ✓ Colored pencils, markers, or crayons
- ✓ Three bowls of cherry gelatin and three bowls of orange gelatin
- ✓ Six garbage bags and blindfolds
- ✓ Six plastic spoons
- ✓ MS.24.TM.A
- ✓ MS.24.TM.B
- ✓ MS.24.TM.C
- ✓ MS.24.TM.D
- ✓ MS.24.TM.E
- ✓ MS.24.Assess—one per student



Key Terms. The following terms are presented in this lesson and appear in bold italics:

- ▶ Adversity
- ▶ Hope
- ▶ Helpless
- ▶ Social
- ▶ Occupational
- ▶ Physical
- ▶ Personal



Interest Approach



We have a very important task to complete. To accomplish this task, you must use your very best listening skills to get all the instructions straight. Your task is simple: to eat six bowls of Jell-O! To do this, we need six people to eat the Jell-O. Each Jell-O eater will need one partner to act as his or her coach. So far, this sounds pretty simple, huh? Let's have the six Jell-O eaters come to the front of the room and sit in our circle of chairs. Coaches, come forward to help your partners.



You could include more Jell-O eaters and coaches for a larger class. Give garbage bags and blindfolds to each coach.

-  Make holes for your partner's head and arms and place the garbage bag over your partner's clothing. Next, place the blindfold carefully and tightly over your partner's eyes. Now ask your partner what type of Jell-O he or she would like to eat.

Pass out the flavors of Jell-O each person prefers, but give them to the person on each eater's left.

Once everyone has a bowl of Jell-O, have the coaches pass out the spoons.

-  When I say "Jell-O," begin to quickly and carefully feed the bowl of Jell-O to the person on the right. Be sure to be careful, as we want to use up as much Jell-O as possible. Coaches, help instruct your partners with the task. Jell-O!

Once everyone is finished, ask the questions below to demonstrate the word "adversity."

-  Great job! You can remove your bags, discard your empty bowls, and return to your normal seats.
-  How did you do?
-  Was it difficult?
-  Do you eat on a regular basis?
-  Why did it take you so long to eat these small bowls of Jell-O?
-  Did you have any problems?
-  What caused you to struggle with such an everyday task?
-  Did your coach help you at all?
-  Would it have been harder without his or her help?

SUMMARY OF CONTENT AND TEACHING STRATEGIES

Objective 1. Define adversity.

-  Everyone has problems or struggles at some point in life. Some struggles may seem very small, while others may appear to be large or even overwhelming. Have you faced any struggles in the past week that make your job as a student harder? How many of you have heard of the word



“adversity”? Open your notebooks so we can learn a common definition for that word and determine how it relates to our everyday struggles.

Display MS.24.TM.A or provide the following information on a clean writing surface. Use a Graphic Artist Moment to illustrate the words “hope” and “helpless” when they are given in the notes. Example: Make “hope” look bold, strong, and upright; make “helpless” appear weaker, smaller, and even wavy in appearance.

I. Adversity

- A. Definition. **Adversity** is an experience of hardship, misfortune, disadvantage, or difficulty; a struggle that acts as a roadblock by getting in the way of tasks and the completion of goals
- B. Two opposing views for facing adversity
 - 1. **Hope**: belief that you have control to produce a favorable outcome to your adverse situation
 - 2. **Helpless**: belief that you have no control over your adverse situation

► Activity:



Let’s think of some famous people who have faced adversity. Let’s determine whether they chose to keep a hopeful or a helpless view through their struggles. On your own, carefully choose one or two people who have dealt with adversity in their life. Tell what the adversity is, or was, and how the person handled, or is handling, it. You have one minute. Begin!



Good responses! I would never have thought of all those! Let’s look at some other well-known people and some of the adversities they had to face.

Once your minute is completed or everyone is finished, have learners share their answers with the class. If learners are more hesitant about sharing information, then use the Me-You-Us Moment. Then share other examples such as the ones found on MS.24.TM.B.

- C. Famous people who have faced adversity
 - 1. Helen Keller: became deaf and blind due to a childhood illness, but remained focused on helping others with disabilities
 - 2. Michael J. Fox: was diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease, but keeps a positive outlook on life; works tirelessly to raise public awareness of the disease and funds to fight it
 - 3. Christopher Reeves: paralyzed from the neck down from a horseback riding accident, but still has hope that he will one day walk again
 - 4. Steven Hawking: paralyzed from the neck down and practically unable to speak, yet is an amazing science genius
 - 5. Jackie Robinson: overcame color barriers in baseball to become the first black baseball player in the major leagues



Objective 2. List commonly perceived adversities.

-  Think deeply for a moment of some adversities you have faced. What problems have you experienced that have made your life tougher? Jot down your adversities in your notebooks.

Use a Me-You-Us Moment to share the adversities or call on willing volunteers.

-  As you can see, there are common adversities we all share. Depending on the situation, we all view and handle adversities differently. Some of us are more hopeful than others in overcoming our adversities. Take the next few minutes to capture several common adversities in your notebooks. These adversities are arranged in four basic categories.

Display MS.24.TM.C or transfer information onto a clean writing surface.

II. Common adversities

- A. **Social:** affect the culture and society as a whole. Include crime, racism, terrorism, economic recession, faith or religious scandals, divorce rates, status of the educational systems
- B. **Occupational:** affect the work environment. Include job security, status of pension or retirement plans, work hours, injustice, and violence
- C. **Physical:** affect the physical abilities of the individual. Include physical disabilities, disease, and disfigurement
- D. **Personal:** adversity that may fit into one of the above categories, but affects the individual personally; i.e., the individual is a direct victim of the adversity

-  When I read the common adversities, you all shout what category they fall into. We should be able to hear everyone. We will review all categories with everyone's participation.

Use the Choral Response Moment to generate the correct categories for the common adversities. Read examples from each category to elicit student responses.

► Activity:

-  Each of you will receive two scenario cards. Read your scenarios carefully so you may answer the following questions. You have several minutes to assess your situations. Begin!

1. What is the common adversity taking place within the scenario?
2. In what category does this adversity fall?
3. How would you deal with this adversity?

Pass out two scenario cards to each student. Alternate so that every other person has the same two cards.

-  Now, turn to your partner. Share your scenarios with your partner and include the answers to your responses. Ask if your partner agrees or has anything to add to your answers. Be ready to share your answers with the class.



Allow at least four students to share their scenarios with the class.

-  Scenario 1: You come home from school to find your house has been burglarized. The burglars are gone, but your house is a mess, with many of your family's personal belongings missing.
-  Scenario 2: Your father's company has to make many cutbacks, and your father is laid off from his job. It is hard to find new work, as other businesses are also letting go of many employees. The new school year is fast approaching, and you and your brothers and sisters will need new school clothes and supplies.
-  Scenario 3: You really wish to be a part of your school's basketball team, but you are only 5'3" and have not had much experience playing basketball. The coaches cut you from the team but tell you to try again next year.
-  Scenario 4: You wish to join a select organization in your community to which many of your friends belong. You go to a meeting with one of your friends, hoping to be invited to join. The present members, however, are all of the same ethnicity, and they don't extend an invitation to you because they say you simply wouldn't fit in.

Objective 3. Develop a personal strategy for overcoming adversity.

-  How will you handle the adversities you will face? Will you have hope, or will you feel helpless? What are some behaviors that will help you to overcome adversities? Quickly copy down in your notebooks the following five useful behaviors for handling adversity as we discuss each of them.

Use MS.24.TM.D and MS.24.TM.E to display the following information for your students or copy it onto a clean writing surface.

III. Dealing with adversity

- A. How severe is it?
 - 1. Does it affect just one aspect of your life?
 - 2. Does it hinder your everyday life?
- B. Five useful behaviors for dealing with adversity
 - 1. Be aggressive. Continue to be outgoing and optimistically take risks to cope with your problem rather than being overwhelmed by it.
 - 2. Be constructive. Work constructively rather than destructively to maintain focus when facing adversity.
 - 3. Be creative. Seek alternative solutions to your struggles rather than follow the ordinary.
 - 4. Be motivated. Maintain energy and vigor in your pursuit to conquer your adversity.
 - 5. Be persistent. Don't give up without a fight and simply accept what comes your way.



► Activity:



Assess your adversities. You have already identified the problems that act as roadblocks in your life. Now place those problems in categories ranging from mild to moderate to severe. Then create a strategy of how you will work to overcome them. What behaviors will you use to jump over your hurdles? Take the next few moments to jot down your plan.



Review/Summary



Using the plan created in class, generate a flow chart for each adversity, beginning with the type of adversity, the strength of the adversity's hold on your life, and what steps you plan to take to conquer your adversity. Utilize colors, arrows, and pictures to illustrate your personal strategy for overcoming adversity. Use one page for each adversity and allow room for your creativity to show.



Application

► Extended Classroom Activity:

Have students construct a list of ten adversities many teenagers face while in high school. Then have them generate a list with at least two ways to handle these problems.

► FFA Activity:

Have students plan a service activity helping families within their community facing major adversities.

Or, have them raise money and/or collect supplies for victims of crime and/or natural disaster.

► SAE Activity:

Using their plan of practice for their SAE program, have students develop a list of possible struggles they may face in their SAE. Then have them create a contingency plan illustrating what they will do to reach their SAE goals if these problems arise.



Evaluation

MS.24.Assess.

Answers to Assessment:

1. Experience of hardship, misfortune, disadvantage, or difficulty; or a struggle that acts as a roadblock by getting in the way of tasks and the completion of one's goals
2. d



3. b
4. Crime, racism, terrorism, economic recession, faith or religious scandals, divorce rates, status of the educational systems
5. Aggressive, constructive, creative, motivated, persistent



COPING WITH ADVERSITY

Answer the following questions.

1. What is an adversity?

2. Most adversities fall into all of the following categories except:
 - a. Personal
 - b. Physical
 - c. Social
 - d. Internal

3. Which of the following best describes the use of **hope** when dealing with adversity?
 - a. You wish the problem would simply go away.
 - b. You feel that through use of positive actions, you may control your problem.
 - c. You develop a plan to live with your problem.
 - d. You feel that your problem is out of your control.

4. List three areas that would be included under social adversities.

5. List four of the five behaviors that can be useful in dealing with adversity.



ADVERSITY

- ◆ *Adversity* is an experience of hardship, misfortune, disadvantage, or difficulty; a struggle that acts as a roadblock by getting in the way of tasks and the completion of one's goals
- ◆ Two Opposing Views for Facing Adversity
 - ➔ *Hope*—The belief that you have control to produce a favorable outcome to your adverse situation
 - ➔ *Helpless*—The belief that you have no control over your adverse situation



FAMOUS PEOPLE WHO HAVE FACED ADVERSITY

- ◆ **Helen Keller:** became deaf and blind as a result of a childhood illness, but remained focused on helping others with disabilities
- ◆ **Michael J. Fox:** was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, but keeps a positive outlook on life; works tirelessly to raise public awareness of the disease and funds to fight it
- ◆ **Christopher Reeves:** was paralyzed from the neck down from a horseback riding accident, but still has hope that he will one day walk again
- ◆ **Steven Hawking:** is paralyzed from the neck down and practically unable to speak, yet is an amazing science genius
- ◆ **Jackie Robinson:** overcame color barriers in baseball to become the first black baseball player in the major leagues



COMMON ADVERSITIES

- ◆ ***Social:*** affect the culture and society as a whole. Include crime, racism, terrorism, economic recession, faith or religious scandals, divorce rates, status of the educational systems
- ◆ ***Occupational:*** affect the work environment. Include job security, status of pension or retirement plans, work hours, injustice, and violence
- ◆ ***Physical:*** affect the physical abilities of the individual. Include physical disabilities, disease, and disfigurement
- ◆ ***Personal:*** adversity that may fit into one of the above categories, but affects the individual personally; i.e., the individual is a direct victim of the adversity



HOW SEVERE IS YOUR ADVERSITY?

- ◆ Does it affect just one aspect of your life?
- ◆ Does it hinder your everyday life?



FIVE USEFUL BEHAVIORS FOR DEALING WITH ADVERSITY

- ◆ **Be aggressive.** Continue to be outgoing and optimistically take risks to cope with your problem rather than being overwhelmed by it.
- ◆ **Be constructive.** Work constructively rather than destructively to maintain focus when facing adversity.
- ◆ **Be creative.** Seek alternative solutions to your struggles rather than follow the ordinary.
- ◆ **Be motivated.** Maintain energy and vigor in your pursuit to conquer your adversity.
- ◆ **Be persistent.** Don't give up without a fight and simply accept what comes your way.

