

Interpersonal Problem Solving

One of the latest programs in interpersonal cognitive problem solving is “I can problem solve” (ICPS) (Shure, 1992a, 1992b, 1992c). This manual is for preschool, kindergarten and primary grades, and intermediate elementary grades. The program is a result of more than 30 years of research by Spirak and Shure and their colleagues at Hahnemann University (Shure, 1999). This program is designed to enhance interpersonal thinking skills that reduce or prevent high-risk behaviors. The underlying goal of the program is to help children learn *how* to think, not *what* to think.

As a school based program, the ICPS intervention includes all the children in a class including good problem solvers. Teachers work with small groups of six or ten students 20 minutes per day. This formal classroom curricula should be implemented on a daily basis for four months. However, informal use of the approach should be continued through out their school years. The ICPS manual includes formal lessons as well as specific suggestions for incorporating problem-solving approaches into ongoing classroom curricula interactions.

Problem solving skills are taught through lessons on alternative solutions, consequences, and solution consequence pairs. The intermediate grade school program has a section on means-ends thinking. Lessons are designed to help children recognize problems and generate possible solutions. The objective of the consequences session is to help children to learn sequentially and to engage in consequential thinking. The lessons for solution - consequence pairs are designed to give children practice in linking solutions with consequences. For example, in trying to get a friend to leave the room, a child might say “Push him if he won’t go” (solution), “but he might hit me back” (consequence) or “If I ask him” (solution), “he might go” (goal). Children are encouraged to recognize and devise ways around potential obstacles. They are helped to develop a realistic time frame in constructing a means to a goal.

The ICPS helps instill academic survival skills and has the potential to prevent serious behavioral problems later on.