



Developing for Your Future

Finding Creative Solutions

The skill: Finding creative solutions means coming up with fresh ideas and doing more with less. When money and resources are tight, creativity is what turns “we can’t” into “here’s how.”

FACILITATOR NOTES

Time. about 60–90 minutes, run in one sitting. Works in a classroom, youth group, or club. Option A needs no materials or setup; Options B, C, and D use a real service activity arranged ahead of time.

Service today. Pick one option in Serve below and set it up before you begin.

Warm-up (5–10 minutes)

FACILITATOR NOTES

Keep this quick, short answers are great. Read the questions together.

- Think of a time you solved a problem with almost nothing, or made something out of what was lying around. What did you do?
- When has your first idea turned out worse than an idea you had later?
- Who's the most creative or resourceful person you know? What do they do that you could copy?

Learn (15–20 minutes)

Finding creative solutions means not settling for the first or most obvious idea. It's looking at a challenge from new angles, coming up with lots of possibilities, and using whatever you already have to make something happen. You don't have to be “an artist” to be creative. Creativity is just refusing to get stuck.

Creative problem-solvers do a few things:

- **Don't stop at the first idea.** The first idea is just a warm-up for better ones.
- **Go for quantity, judge later.** Get lots of ideas out before deciding; don't shoot any down too early.
- **Use what's already around.** They look at what they have, not only what they wish they had.
- **Build on each other.** “Yes, and...” beats “No, but...” A half-formed idea can spark a great one.
- **Borrow and remix.** Good ideas often come from copying something that worked somewhere completely different.

See the difference. Your group wants to cheer up a clinic waiting room, but there's no budget:

Stuck on the first idea: “We'd need money to buy decorations, so there's nothing we can do.”

Thinking creatively: “What do we already have? Paper, markers, and time. Let's list ten free ideas: hand-drawn cards, a kids' coloring corner, a ‘you've got this’ poster...”

The first idea was a dead end. The tenth idea is often the one that works.

Why this matters in service and in life. In service, money and supplies are almost always tight, so the people who can do the most with the least get the most done. Creativity turns an empty budget into a plan. Beyond service, it's the skill behind a standout school project, a clever fix at a job, and finding a way forward when the usual path is blocked. It's also one of the abilities the working world increasingly values.

Two tools to use today:

- **List Ten.** Don't stop at the first idea. Quickly list ten possibilities before judging any of them. The best one is usually not the first.
- **What Do We Already Have?** Instead of focusing on what you're missing, look at what's already around you. Creativity is often doing more with less.

Try it now (2–3 minutes). As a group, list ten free ways you could brighten someone's day this week. Go fast, write them all down, and don't judge any of them. Then circle the one you'd actually try.

Serve (25–40 minutes)

Today you'll put this into practice in a real service activity. Here are ways to do it:

Option A — Make something from nothing *(no cost, no prep, works in any setting)*

Using only what you already have (paper, markers, scraps, time), create something that brightens or helps real people: encouraging cards for a care home or hospital, a decorated donation box, a “you matter” poster, or a simple craft for younger kids. The creativity is the service, and it costs nothing.

Option B — Reuse and rescue *(low cost, a bit more effort)*

Find something headed for the trash or going to waste (scrap fabric, old t-shirts, leftover supplies, empty jars) and creatively turn it into something useful for a cause: no-sew blankets or tote bags, care-kit containers, or craft kits for kids. Doing good while wasting nothing is creativity at its best.

Prepare ahead. As the facilitator, you'll gather ahead of time the materials headed for waste and settle who the finished items go to, a shelter, a classroom, a care home, so the creativity meets a real need.

Option C — Do more with less *(more effort; runs a creative project)*

Pick a real need, then design the most creative low-cost way your group can actually meet it: a themed donation drive, a swap event, a “pay it forward” chain, or an inventive way to gather supplies. Use List Ten, choose the most creative idea you can really pull off, and make it happen. Creativity lets a group with no money still make a real difference.

Prepare ahead. As the facilitator, you'll pick ahead of time the real need the group will meet and, if an organization is involved, connect with it in advance. JustServe.org can help find a need and a partner.

Option D — Build something a nonprofit needs *(formal volunteer role, set up ahead)*

Turn creativity into something lasting for an organization: build a little free pantry or library, a garden bed, a bench, or a set of activity kits a nonprofit can hand out. Ask a local group what they actually need, then design the most useful version you can make with the materials on hand. Search JustServe for a build or “make” project, or offer a local school, shelter, or community garden your group's help.

Prepare ahead. As the facilitator, you'll confirm a real need with an organization ahead of time, and line up the materials, tools, space, and adult help the build requires.

Before you go (all options): Work with a partner and stay in public, supervised spaces. Before making anything for an organization, check what they can actually use and accept, so your effort goes to good use. Have your mentor help set up any drop-off or visit.

Reflect (10 minutes)

FACILITATOR NOTES

After serving, talk through a few of these together, then give everyone quiet time to write.

Was it hard to push past your first idea? What helped you keep going?

What did you make or do using only what you already had?

Whose idea surprised you, or how did one idea build on another?

Where else in your life could “list ten ideas first” help you get unstuck?

Then finish one or both sentences:

A problem I want to get creative about is...

Something I could make or do with what I already have is...
