



Preparing. Protecting. Empowering.

# Problem Solving

One way that children gain a sense of control over their own lives is by making their own choices, and having those choices respected by others. Knowing how to problem solve effectively lets children make choices, take responsibility for their choices, and celebrate their successes.

Problem solving takes time to master, so it is helpful to integrate problem solving into daily conversations with your children. The process is responsive in nature; it is important to listen to your children's ideas and follow their logic. As their problem-solving guide, keep them on the road but let their ideas lead the way. With practice, children who can generate solutions and think through consequences, while considering the feelings of others involved, are less likely to be withdrawn and impulsive, and more likely to be confident and successful (Shure, 1994).

## Problem-Solving Steps

1. **Identify the Problem.**
2. **Brainstorm.** Let your child think of all the possible solutions. Try not to judge the quality of the solutions or add your own ideas.
3. **Consider Consequences.** Let your child evaluate the possible solutions by thinking through the consequences of each one. The guiding question is, "What might happen if...?"
4. **Choose a Solution.** Choosing a solution is about weighing the consequences of each option. Thinking through the consequences of each solution helps your child see which solutions have better results.
5. **Evaluate the Results.** After trying the solution, determine whether the problem was solved. Did your child achieve what they set out to do? Point out that occasionally, unforeseen consequences occur. Try a different solution if the first one does not go well.

## When to Problem Solve

- **When you have time.** Problem solving takes time and it should not be rushed. There is usually more time to practice after school and on weekends. Practice problem solving when your child is in a good mood. Eventually your child will be able to draw on the skills when conflict arises.
- **When it is safe.** It is not a good idea to practice problem solving when your child is in danger. For example, if your child has grabbed a knife to cut an apple, intervene to keep your child safe.
- **Often.** Practice whenever you have an opportunity. The more your child practices finding solutions and thinking through consequences, the better prepared they will be to solve the problems that come up throughout life.

Cline, F., & Fay, J. (2006). *Parenting with love and logic: Teaching children responsibility*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress Publishing.

Shure, M., & Digeronimo, T. F. (1994). *Raising a thinking child: Help your young child to resolve everyday conflicts and get along with others*. New York, NY: Henry Holt & Co.