

Problem Solving: Some Tips for Parents

Parents are their children's best teachers. Most of what children already know they have learned from their parents. To begin to teach your child how to solve problems, you need to set the stage for learning. These tips are for child-sized problems, that they can solve on their own, or with your help.



Help Children Relax

A child with a problem may be upset, perhaps angry, perhaps hurt and crying. This is not the time to try to solve the problem. A child needs to be calm to think clearly. Help your child relax by using a relaxation strategy such as deep breathing or giving him or her a hug. If your child is unable to calm down, leave problem solving for a better time. Remember that, because problem solving is creative and stimulates thinking, it is best not to do it right before bedtime.

Give Uninterrupted Time

Find a time when you will not be interrupted. Problem-solving may take 15 minutes or more. You do not want to feel hurried.

Be a Coach

Your job is to help your child articulate the problem and come up with some solutions that might work. The best thing you can do is to ask questions, and let your child do the thinking. Listen to your child's ideas and give encouragement. If your child is unable to think of solutions, suggest some of your own.



- Do not solve the problem for your child.
- Ask questions to help your child think through the problem and the solutions.
- Allow your child to come up with possible solutions. Some might seem reasonable, others silly.
- Encourage your child to as many solutions as possible.
- Do not criticize your child's solutions.
- Listen very carefully to what your child says and observe how your child feels.
- Offer suggestions if your child is stuck and can't think of any solutions.
- Let your child choose a solution to try.
- Help your child to think ahead to see if the chosen solution might work.

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