



Help Your Child Learn Problem-Solving Skills

Problem Solving is the ability to think of how to solve a difficult situation and act on one or more of your thoughts. While we often think problem solving happens in math or science class, it is just as important in relationships, such as how to resolve a conflict between friends.

Use the following tips to help your child develop great problem-solving skills:

- **Help your child to understand his feelings.** Talk to your child about feelings (anger, sadness, frustration, or nervousness) that might come up when he is in a difficult situation. For example, "You seem to be frustrated that you can't get the toy to work. Let's talk about it and see if we figure out how to solve the problem."
- **Talk about problems with your child.** Your child might not be able to describe the situation on her own. Explain the problem, using words that your child can understand. For example, "Did you want to play with the ball that your brother is using?" Wait for your child to respond and have her restate the problem.
- **Talk about possible ways to solve the problem.** Help your child think of lots of different solutions to the problem. It is not important that he thinks of the best solution. If your child is having trouble getting started, give him some suggestions on ways to solve the problem.
- **Have your child try out a solution.** Role-play (pretend) difficult situations with your child. Have your child to pretend that she is at school and a friend takes a toy away from her; ask her what she would do if this really happened. Or, use puppets and dolls to show your child how to solve problems. For example, if the puppet is upset that someone took her toy, the puppet can say, "That make's me so mad. Can I please have my toy back?" Your child can say, "You can have it when I am done."
- **Review the consequences of the solution.** Allow your child time to solve his problems. Afterwards, ask: "Did it work?" or "How did it go?" If your child says that it did not go well, help him think of different ways to respond so the next time this problem happens he will know what to do.

Book Suggestion

Chester Raccoon and the Big Bad Bully. Audrey Penn. Tanglewood Press, 2008.