



Speech-Language Pathology

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Kids are great! We just make'em better.®

Teaching Kids to Solve Problems

Even when we prepare for events, unexpected things can happen. These unexpected events are problems that we need to solve. Most adults solve everyday problems without difficulty. Problem solving is an important skill that kids need to learn too. When unexpected events happen, children may cry or run away. Children with communication impairments may become even more upset when problems occur. They may need extra help to learn how to solve problems. Here are some ways to help your child learn to solve problems:

Solving general problems:

- Choose 1-2 phrases that your child can say in stressful situations, for example :
 - I need help
 - I need a break
- Practice these phrases with your child every day in a calm situation. Try to have your child practice the phrases at the same time each day.
- Create « little problems » to give your child more practice solving problems. For example, give your child a broken pencil and encourage him/her to ask for help or solve the problem.
- Role-play (i.e. act out) problem situations so that your child can practice solving problems.
- Tell everyone involved in your child's life (e.g. school personnel) what you are teaching your child to say when there is a problem, and how you plan to respond. This will help your child to use his/her new skills in different places.
- In difficult situations, tell your child what to say (i.e. which phrase to use).
- After the situation is over, talk about what happened with your child. Help him/her to figure out what went well and what changes need to be made for next time.

- Always praise your child for handling a situation in a better way than he/she did previously, even if they still need more practice.

Solving specific problems:

- Identify situations that are difficult for your child— Does he have trouble riding the bus? Does she have difficulty getting along with her brother or sister?
- Create a plan for what the child should do in each situation. Your child may be able to help you do this.
- Role-play (i.e. act out) problem situations so that your child can practice solving problems.
- When the situation occurs, remind your child what to say or do in the situation, and help him/her to carry out the plan

Special Teaching Resources:

- If there are specific situations that are stressful for your child, you can create a « script » that tells your child exactly what to do or say in the situation. The following techniques may be helpful :
 - Cognitive Picture Rehearsal from the Groden Center www.grodencenter.org
 - Social Stories™, developed by Carol Gray ; www.thegraycenter.org
- The book Social Behavior Mapping by Michelle Garcia Winner is recommended to teach older children what to do in specific situations at home and school.