

## Resources for Resolving Conflicts and Promoting Social Problem Solving

You should be prepared to help staff plan to teach problem solving. This resource sheet can help you. It provides tips for teaching problem solving and a list of Internet resources.

### Teaching Problem Solving: Tips for Program Staff

1. Teach problem solving throughout the program day
  - a. Read books about problem solving. For example: "I Have a Little Problem said the Bear" by Heinz Janisch. Discuss the problems in traditional children's literature and use it as an opportunity to talk about problem solving. Nearly all children's books for young children and preteens have a problem that should be solved.
  - b. Create different "problems" and have children brainstorm solutions. Write down all the solutions. Remind children that not all solutions will work. Then, have children brainstorm the consequences, "What might happen?" Write down all the consequences under each solution.
  - c. For young children, use puppets or stuffed animals to role play different problems. Have children help the puppet solve problems.
  - d. Have children draw pictures of different solutions. Help them label the solutions with words. Then have them decorate and make their own solution boxes.
  - e. Make a problem-solving board with examples of problems. Make cards of all the possible solutions. Have children take turns making solutions to the problems.
  - f. Write different problems on cards. Put all the cards in a box or bag. Have children pick a problem and think of a solution. Have the child pick a friend and act out the problem and the solution.
2. Create opportunities for problem-solving situations. One of the best ways to teach problem solving is to give children opportunities to practice throughout the day. Teachers can create "problems" when teachers know they will have time to support the child. For example:
  - a. If there are normally four or five bikes, only put one or two bikes out on the playground and help children problem solve how to take turns.
  - b. If there are two or three computers, turn one off, and help children take turns.

- c. “Accidentally” give two children the same “role” or “job” and help the figure out how to take turns or cooperate.
  - d. Put the paints out without enough paintbrushes and help the child figure out how to share or get help.
3. Recognize opportunities to practice problem solving when they arise. Minor problems and conflicts between children are going to occur. Teach problem-solving skills when children are calm and attentive to prepare them for when natural problems arise. When there are problems, have a plan in place for helping children solve the problem. Although we might want to just solve the problem for them, it is important help children learn to work through problems by themselves. Natural opportunities to talk about the problem-solving steps occur throughout the day. For example, talk about problem-solving steps during snack when you run out of their favorite snack. If it’s raining and they cannot play outside, talk about being disappointed and what they might do instead.

**Additional Resources:**

Resource	Description	Website
Center for Social Emotional Foundations in Early Learning	Practical strategies for teaching problems solving; materials for making visual and “solution kits”	<a href="http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html#teachingskills">http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html#teachingskills</a>
Center for Social Emotional Foundations in Early Learning	Helping young children control anger and handle disappointment	<a href="http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/module2/handout7.pdf">http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/modules/module2/handout7.pdf</a>
Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation	Creating teaching tools for young children with challenging behaviors	<a href="http://www.ecmhc.org/TTYC/index.html">http://www.ecmhc.org/TTYC/index.html</a>
National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations	Teaching tools for young children with challenging behavior	<a href="http://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Pyramid/pbs/TTYC/tools.html">http://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Pyramid/pbs/TTYC/tools.html</a>
National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations	Backpack Connection Series: How to help your child recognize & understand disappointment	<a href="http://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/backpack/BackpackConnection_emotions_disappointment.pdf">http://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/backpack/BackpackConnection_emotions_disappointment.pdf</a>

Head Start Center for Inclusion	Teacher Tools	<a href="http://headstartinclusion.org/teacher-tools">http://headstartinclusion.org/teacher-tools</a>
Beach Center on Families and Disability	10 Steps to Independence: Promoting Self-Determination in the Home	<a href="https://beachcenter.lsi.ku.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/Ten%20Steps%20to%20Independence%20-%20Promoting%20Self-Determination%20at%20Home.pdf">https://beachcenter.lsi.ku.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/Ten%20Steps%20to%20Independence%20-%20Promoting%20Self-Determination%20at%20Home.pdf</a>