

# Teaching Kids Problem-Solving Skills:



## Helping Children Navigate Conflicts

*There is more certainty in life than death and taxes; all people will encounter problems and be involved in conflicts! HOW we learn to respond will greatly impact our lives. As teachers and parents we can teach children to solve problems before they happen by thinking about what might cause a problem in advance. When problems and conflicts take place, we have the opportunity to help them learn how to cool down and work them out. Teach children how to STOP before they act in impulses that will not solve problems, THINK of solutions that are safe, and TRY them out to see if they are effective.*

### Here are some problem-solving steps!

#### 1. Identify the problem:

Before you can solve a problem, you must know what it is! It can be very difficult to slow down and identify what a problem is when emotions are strong. Make sure the parties involved in a conflict get a few minutes to cool down; then ask, what is the problem? Everyone who is involved in a conflict needs to be able to say what they think the problem is. Use active listening skills and repeat back the problem to be sure that you understand, and make sure that everyone agrees about what the problem is before you begin thinking of solutions.

#### 2. Brainstorm solutions:

Let the child(ren) think of ways to solve the problem. If they are having a hard time, it's okay to make some suggestions to add to the possible solution list! Once some possible solutions are on the table, invite them to think them through.

#### 3. Think solutions through together:

***Help children think through solutions; ask them:***

- Is the solution safe?
- How will it make other people feel?
  - Is it fair?
- Will it be effective?

*Let children rule out solutions that are unsafe, hurtful, unfair, or ineffective on their own!*

#### 4. Choose one to try:

When a child has found a solution that they think is safe, kind, fair, and effective, let them try it out! Let them know that there will be an opportunity to reflect on how the solution worked and that you will help them find another solution if this one doesn't work!

#### 5. Reflect on how the solution worked:

When conflicts work out, it can be tempting to just let out a sigh of relief; but reflecting about how a solution worked helps the child(ren) connect problem solving work to a positive outcome. It is also a great opportunity to praise problem-solving skills! If a solution does not work, make sure you take the time to find more solutions; it is important for children to learn that they can trust you to make sure a good solution is found.