

What to do When Your Child is Having a Difficult Time?

As parents, we often want to help our children when they are having a difficult time solving a problem. We may want to jump in to fix the problem. However, this can take the learning opportunity away from our children to work through a problem on their own.

What can you do then when you see your child having a difficult time with a problem?

WAIT

Give your child time to explore without interrupting, such as commenting or asking questions. Even if they are frustrated, let them reach out to you first for help

VALIDATE

When your child is upset, validate their feelings. When your child has calmed down, help them to identify and label their emotions.

"You were feeling mad going to the potty. You were not ready to stop playing yet."

PROBLEM-SOLVE

When your child is ready to talk, you can work with them to think about strategies about what to do next time they face a problem or become frustrated.

Start by asking the child what they can do.

Work together to formulate a plan & practice it together routinely.

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Activities to Support Children's Emotion Regulation

- Read together and ask your child questions while reading.
- Practice mindfulness meditation together
- Use the Emotion Cards to label their feelings together
- Practice self-care

Need More Resources?

Visit the Healthy Development Clinic
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Supporting Children's Autonomy Development

A Guide for Promoting Problem-Solving

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What is Autonomy?

Autonomy is the ability to think and behave independently. Children begin to demonstrate a need for autonomy during early childhood.

This can look like a child:

1. Deciding the clothes they want to wear
2. Choosing the activities they want to play
3. Finding solutions to obstacles they encounter

Autonomy development promotes problem-solving skills and is beneficial in several ways:

1. Children develop a sense of responsibility toward their own behavior
2. Children show increased control of their behavior in the classroom
3. Children do well academically in school

Autonomy development strengthens children's emotion regulation, which is the ability to understand and control one's emotions.

This can look like the child:

1. Finding their favorite toy to self-soothe when they are upset
2. Accepting that things didn't go as planned
3. Taking deep breaths to calm their body

How Can Parents Support Their Children's Autonomy?

A critical aspect of autonomy development is independent decision-making. Parents can provide opportunities for children to take the lead on activities or provide children with options to choose from. These situations may be challenging for children because they may want parents to tell them what to do or have parents fix a problem right away. With practice and patience, children will learn strategies to help them think independently, solve problems, and regulate their emotions.

Parents can support their children's autonomy by guiding their children's decision-making process. Instead of telling children what to do or immediately providing answers to their children's questions, consider the following strategies:

ASK QUESTIONS

Rephrase statements into questions:

"Put on your shoes! We are going outside"

can be rephrased to:

"We are going outside in 5 minutes. What do you need to do before we go outside?"

If your child is having difficulty developing their response, follow-up with more specific questions to guide their thought processes. For example, *"Look at your feet, what is missing?"*

Asking questions is beneficial in guiding children's thinking and promoting their critical thinking skills.

PROVIDE EXPLANATIONS

Provide explanations for behaviors & actions:

"When we go outside, the ground might be hot or there might be things on the ground that can hurt our feet. We wear shoes to protect our feet from getting hurt."

Providing explanations helps children understand reasons underlying our behaviors & actions

RE-PHRASE CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS

Repeat their questions & follow-up with a response:

"Why do we need to put on shoes? Can you feel how hot the ground is? This can burn and hurt our feet. We are wearing shoes to protect our feet from getting injuries."

This strategy develops children's problem-solving skills.

ENGAGE CHILDREN IN PROBLEM-SOLVING DISCUSSIONS

Guide your children through the problem-solving process:

"Why do you think we need to put on shoes? That's a good question! Let's think about this together. Let's go outside and investigate what happens when we don't wear our shoes."

You can redirect their questions by asking them about their opinion, how they think they can find the answer, and working together to find the solution.