

Problem Solving in the Moment Highlight Video

Narrator: Welcome to this short module on problem solving in the moment. This video highlights the ways that teachers can support children in learning how to use problem solving to deal with the upsets and conflicts and other social problems that may occur in a preschool classroom.

For many young children, the preschool classroom is a new social experience. They will need to learn how to share space with other children, share toys with other children, and share the teacher's attention. It can be hard. Some problems are bound to occur. Let's find out how to help children learn to problem solve.

Problem solving in the moment can be an effective way to prevent challenging behaviors, and it teaches children useful social skills. Problem solving in the moment is one of a series of in-service suites about behavior guidance. These strategies and practices help teachers create classrooms that are filled with effective and engaging interactions and environments.

That's the foundation of the National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning's House Framework for Effective Practice. The other parts of the house are use of research-based curricula and teaching practices, ongoing child assessment, and highly individualized teaching and learning. There are five steps that help teachers guide children's behavior and encourage their problem solving in the moment: Anticipate. Be close. Provide support. Create multiple solutions, and celebrate success. Let's see what these look like.

The first step is to anticipate. As teachers observe their children, they will begin to notice the times and activities where problems are likely to happen. It might be when all the children need to transition to a new activity at one time or when children have to wait their turn. Teachers anticipate and get ready to problem solve.

The second step is to be close. The teacher regularly scans the room or playground. When the teacher has a hunch that something might lead to a problem, the teacher moves toward the action. Then the teacher uses a calm voice to figure out the situation.

Next, the teacher provides support. For the children, learning to solve problems in the moment can be difficult. The teacher needs to remind children how to use words. The teacher might have pictures or signs that remind children how to solve a problem. The teacher can cue the children by saying, "I see we have a problem. What should we do?" Or, "This is a new toy, and everyone wants to play with it at the same time. That's a problem. How can we solve it?"

[Video begins]

Teacher: Uh-oh. Say, "I have a problem."

Girl: I have a problem.

Teacher: Tell her, "I'm using those."

Girl: I'm using those.

Teacher: So, what can we do to solve our problem?

Girl: We'll use something...

Teacher: Claire has an idea. You can share the bin of blocks.

Girl: Here.

Teacher: That was a good idea.

[Video ends]

Narrator: The next step is to generate multiple solutions. There are all sorts of solutions to typical preschool problems. Children can pick a number or flip a coin or use a timer or make another choice. Some teachers create solution kits, solution lists, or solution books that contain ideas for children to try.

[Video begins]

Teacher: Do you want to look for an idea in the basket? Grab the book. See what you can come up with. Playing together. So, you would build it together. Do you want to build together, Jamy? Look it. Amy's talking to you.

[Video ends]

Narrator: The final step is to celebrate success. Make sure that you let the children know that you appreciate their hard work in figuring out a solution. And give yourself a pat on the back. Problem solving in the moment means that you've taught the children some really important social skills.

There are five steps, so remember to think five. Use these five steps to help children be better problem solvers. These steps will also help prevent little classroom conflicts from becoming much bigger problems. Remember that learning to solve problems takes time and practice. Practice problem solving during circle time or lesson time, so that children will be better problem solvers during the rest of the day.

Thank you for listening.

This module highlighted a behavior guidance strategy that we call problem solving in the moment. Learn more in our longer module. Refer to the Tips and Tools to use problem solving in your classroom.