

# Help Your Child Develop Problem-Solving Skills



Problem-solving is a skill—and it's one that children can learn.

When your child comes to you with a problem:

- Match your child's posture. If your child is sitting, sit down alongside. If your child is standing, you stand, too.
- Encourage your child to describe the problem and possible solutions. You may be surprised at how little you have to say.
- Restate what you hear, using at least some of your child's words. But don't repeat word for word.
- Stay calm. You can't help if you're overwhelmed with emotion. Take a deep breath, or let your child know you need some time to think. Wait until you can talk with a neutral, open attitude.
- Be patient through the silences. Problem-solving takes time. Children need more time than adults to sort through their thoughts.
- Help your child discover the solution, rather than just supplying it. You might have to do some gentle prompting, but the decision should come from your child. "Could you change your schedule so you can work on math when you are less tired?" is better than "You should study right after school."
- When children come up with a solution themselves, they are more willing to act on it. And they are more confident in their ability to solve the next problem they face.

These tips are part of the Family and School Partnerships, Fairfax County Public Schools in conjunction with The Parent Institute Company.