

PATHS[®] Parent/Caregiver Handout

Problem Solving

Recently, we began to learn about a new way to solve our problems. During the PATHS problem-solving lessons, your child will learn to identify problems and to stop and think about different possible solutions before taking action. We want to encourage children to think first, rather than doing the first thing that comes to mind. Examples of problems that we will work on include

having to share one ball at recess, having to make a choice between doing two different things, learning how to plan ahead for an activity, and so forth.



I hope your child will discuss this information with you and will be able to use this model to solve real problems that arise at home. In order to help you feel more prepared to solve problems with your child, I am enclosing some general information about problem solving and ideas for things that you can do at home. The problem-solving model your child will learn includes eleven basic steps. They are listed below:

PATHS Problem-Solving Model

1. STOP and CALM DOWN.
2. Identify the PROBLEM (collect lots of information).
3. Identify the FEELINGS (your own and other people's).
4. Decide on a GOAL.
5. Think of lots of SOLUTIONS.
6. Think about the CONSEQUENCES (what might happen).
7. Choose the BEST solution (evaluate all of the alternatives).
8. Make a good PLAN (think about the possible obstacles).
9. TRY your plan.
10. EVALUATE—how did you do?
11. If you need to, TRY AGAIN.

What You Can Do at Home:

1. When your child has a problem, encourage him or her to calm down. (Sometimes you may also want to stop and calm down before you continue!) When everyone is feeling calmer, talk with your child about the problem:

What is the problem?

How does he or she feel?

How do the other people feel?

What kinds of things could he or she do to solve the problem?

How does he or she plan to carry out the solution?

Encourage your child to try the best solution.

Ask him or her later how the solution worked.
2. Help your child anticipate potential problem situations before they occur. This will help your child get better at planning ahead. For example, if you are going on a long car trip, you could remind your child about feeling bored. How could he or she plan ahead for this possibility?
3. When possible, give your child several choices to pick from to solve a problem. This will increase your child's sense of competence and improve his or her decision-making skills.
4. Help your child consider the possible consequences of different solutions to a problem. This is especially important when possible solutions might result in even greater problems. ("If you hit your sister, what do you think might happen?")
5. Apply these ideas not only to problems between people, but also to school-related problems. For example, if your child is feeling frustrated with homework, have him or her stop and think. What could he or she do?
6. When you are having a problem, share your thinking by talking out loud. For example, you might say something like, "I'm having a problem because _____. I'm feeling _____. What could I do? I could _____ or I could _____ or I could _____. I think that _____ is the best idea, so I'll try that first."
7. Try to look for situations every day that lend themselves to problem solving. When you help your child solve problems, remember to offer your enthusiasm and support.