COUNSELING NEWS
January 2018

The Importance of Teaching Problem Solving and How to Do It

When we talk about problem solving, many people immediately think about math. However, problem solving skills are not only a math skill, but also a skill used in every subject and in all aspects of life. Teaching problem solving as a general skill is invaluable to children's learning, confidence and independence. While some parents and educators understand the importance of problem solving, few stop and think about its value and how to teach it. Problem solving is often a word, like "listening" that parents expect and ask their children to do, but often don't give them concrete steps for how to do it. Problem solving isn't just common sense. Children need to be taught how to identify problems, generate ideas for solution, and then learn to courageously try to solve the problem. When these skills are taught concretely, modeled, and reinforced children can begin to independently tackle problem.

Who's the problem solver?

Parents are a child's first problem solver. From the moment our baby is born, we solve problems. If our baby cries, we feed them, change them, rock them, and comfort them. This is natural and vital to the emotional development of a child. However, as children grow and develop, parents should begin to relinquish the role of the problem solving to their child. Parents that remain the family problem solver are often over-parenting and not teaching a child to learn to solve problems independently, especially problems that arise when the parent is not present. Children become dependent on their parents to resolve problems and don't learn the vital life skill. This can cause anxiety and frustration; children can sometimes even fear problems and failure.

If anyone is unsure if they over-solve their child's problems, consider asking yourself the following questions: Do you often initiate problem solving by explaining the problem? Do you generate all the possible solutions then let your child pick from them?

While these are good ways to help your child initially resolve problems, especially in their early development, they are initiated by the parents. It is important that children eventually learn to initiate solving their own problems and generate their own solutions. Children should work toward becoming the problem solver.

Why is problem solving important?

- Problems are a part of life so it's important to teach children how to solve and/or cope with them. Life brings challenges that children must learn to overcome.
- Children have to learn how to make decisions independently; to be personally responsible for their life learning.
- It produces self-confidence and builds self-esteem.

- It develops creativity, persistence, a proactive mindset and prepares children for real life in the real world.
- It creates language for children to talk about things that aren't going right, in relationships and learning. It helps them advocate for themselves.
- It teaches children how to collaborate and work together, especially with people that are different than themselves.

How do we teach problem solving?

Begin by developing language for problem solving and modeling the following steps with our own problems. Then, directly teach how to solve problems using the following steps: (Remember, to teach it, in a variety of settings such as literacy, math, science, and relationships)

1- Identify the Problem. Teach children how to recognize a simple problem. Eventually, work up to more challenging problem. Help them learn to ask questions so that they also understand the problem.
2- Obtain more than one point of view or perspective on the problem. Get others involved in the conversation.
3- Generate ideas for possible solutions.
4- Pick an idea to try and develop a plan of action steps for carrying it out.
5- Think about how your child will know when the problem is solved. What will happen?
6- Reflect.

This article came from the website; emergingconsulting.com.

Welcome to 2018!
Ms. Katie