



# FAMILIES TACKLING TOUGH TIMES TOGETHER



**FAMILY**  
CHILDREN

## **Our Family is Creative! Collaborative Problem Solving**

When we guide our children in learning how to solve problems, we can help them to feel more in control of what is happening around them. Children may actually be feeling nervous or restless and may have behaviors that are different than normal. Family members play a huge role in helping children learn how to solve problems. This can also foster resilience! By learning the four simple steps to take when solving a problem, we can teach our children how to use the steps when confronted with life's challenges.

### **Steps of Problem Solving**

1. Name the problem
2. Write down some solutions
3. Think about what would happen
4. Try it out

### **Supporting Problem Solving**

Part of problem solving involves trying out different solutions. It's important for children to try their ideas, even if they may not work. If a child is having a hard time or asks for help, it's useful to provide just enough support to get them to the next step. Reminding children of the steps of problem solving can help them to think about the problem in different ways.

### *Problem Solving During Activities*

Any activity can be a chance to try new problem-solving skills. When children are bored or restless, an opportunity to try something new can help them to feel good about themselves. Communicating with your child during playtime is a great way to teach problem solving. It is effective to talk about what your child is doing, step-by-step. This helps your child to better understand the process, and therefore supports their development of problem-solving strategies.

- Provide items that may or may not fit into each other (containers, small toys, etc.). Encourage your child to put things in and take them out. Include materials that make noise or feel good to touch. If something doesn't fit, talk about why and what your child might do to solve the problem.
- Encourage your child to trace the edges of puzzle pieces to figure out how they fit together. Talk about the process. Example: "That piece has a round edge. The other piece has a straight edge. Do you think they will fit together?"
- Practice problem-solving skills when playing board games. Encourage your child to name problems and come up with solutions.

To learn more about the science behind developing problem-solving skills in young children, you may wish to read the research below:

- [Development of Social Problem Solving in Early Childhood: Stability, Change, and Associations With Social Competence](#)
- [Social Problem Solving and Strategy Use in Young Children](#)
- [I Can Problem Solve \(ICPS\): An Interpersonal Cognitive Problem Solving Program for Children](#)



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College of Health and Human Sciences

## Welcome to Families Tackling Tough Times Together!

We hope you find the enclosed ideas and suggestions helpful as you care for your family during the pandemic. We know the pandemic is a very big challenge. How families cope can affect both parents and children for a long time.

We are scientists, educators, and students from Purdue University, and we are here to help! For nine weeks this fall, we will provide weekly collections of ideas for families to use to build on their strengths.

These tools are free, flexible, and informed by science. They are designed for families of all types, with tailored suggestions for children, youth, young adults and older adults, and suitable for both civilian and military families. We hope that your family will try one activity each week!

### Would you like to earn financial rewards?

We especially welcome families living in the continental US who are interested in trying out project materials and telling us about their experiences. These families can earn financial rewards by sharing about one hour of their time over the next two months. Sign up now at the link below!

[https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_3vK1BJq2EiUksAJ](https://purdue.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3vK1BJq2EiUksAJ)

For more information

- Join the Families Together Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/HHSFamiliesTogether/>
- Or visit the project website: <https://www.hhs.purdue.edu/families-together/>