



Shoalhaven Managing Children Program (SMCP)

18. Problem Solving

As children get older, problems are solved more by parent and child reasoning the matter out, and less by parents telling children what to do. So, as your children grow, it's important for them to learn how to solve problems cooperatively.

Some behaviours are a problem for you. Some are a problem for your child. So we all need to learn how to solve problems. Children who can't solve problems are more likely to have problems themselves and to do things that create problems for their parents.

Before you can solve the problem, you need to work out whose problem it is, and who needs to do something about it, e.g.:

If your child has a tantrum because he or she has just broken a toy, that's the child's problem. Your child needs to learn how to look after things more carefully.

- You can help your child solve the problem by working out ways to be more careful but, in the end, it's the child who has to do it.
- People can only solve problems when they are calm, so don't ask your child to do it while he or she is upset or angry.

The steps to teach your child to help him or her learn to solve a problem are:

1. "What were you upset about?" (Find out what's wrong)
2. "What can you do about it?" (Think about options)
3. "What will happen if you do that? Is that what you want?" (Explore options)
4. "What is the best thing to do?" (Decide on a plan of action)
5. "That was good problem solving." (Praise and encourage problem solving)
6. "How is it going?" (Evaluate – and repeat process if necessary)

Other things are your problem. You have to make the first move to change things, e.g.:

Your children want to play noisy games. You are trying to watch TV and can't hear above the noise. You need to get the children to be quiet. You have to choose a strategy to fix the problem. In this case, you could do that by getting your children to **Choose alternatives (See Tip 9 - Preventing arguments)** e.g.:

"Go outside, or else play quietly inside."

If you want to talk to your child about something that's your problem, start by stating the problem and how you feel about it, then go through steps 2 – 6, checking on your child's view to get agreement about the problem and what to do about it.