

The Problem-Solving Process

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A common problem that many children and teens encounter when they are spending a lot of time with friends is struggling to problem-solve together, ultimately leading to conflict. Parents can help walk them through the problem-solving process, which helps them develop this skill (to eventually use on their own) instead of trying to solve the problem for them over and over again. Here are some easy steps to follow when solving problems (whether as a family, with friends, or by yourself).

1. **Relax.** Problem solving works better when everyone is calm, so if anyone is upset, it's better to use some relaxation strategies first, or wait until a time when everyone is calm. Our brains are not good at solving problems when we are upset!
2. **Identify the problem,** and make sure that if we are solving problems with multiple people, that everyone has the same understanding about what the problem actually is!
3. **Brainstorm possible solutions to the problem.** Make a list of every possible solution and stay in brainstorming mode without trying to decide as you go whether each possible solution you identify is a good idea or not. When we stay in brainstorming mode and write down every possible solution we can think of, our brains are better at identifying alternative solutions that we might not typically think of.
4. **Evaluate the solutions.** Identify pros and cons of each possible solution. Cross out possible solutions that either a) don't really solve the problem, or b) might make the situation worse.
5. **Rank** the possible solutions you have left from most likely to least likely to work.
6. **Enact the solution** that you think is most likely to work- go out and try it! If it doesn't work, try the next-most-likely solution from the list.

If you believe you, your child/teen, or someone else you may know would benefit from further problem-solving and conflict resolution coaching, please contact us at McCaskill Family Services! We can be reached by telephone at **734-416-9098** or by email at **office@mccaskillfamilyservices.com**.