



Building parent-school partnerships

WORDS Michael Grose

Teach kids to solve problems

When parents solve all children's problems we not only increase their dependency on adults but we teach them to be afraid of making mistakes. That's fertile ground for anxiousness and perfectionism, which often go hand in hand.

Of course, if you keep solving them, they'll keep bringing them. "Mum, my sister is annoying me?" "Dad, can you ask my teacher to pick me for the team?" "Hey, I can't find my socks!"

It's tempting if you are in a time-poor family to simply jump in and help kids out.

Alternatively, you can take a problem-solving approach, cuing them to resolve their own problems and take responsibility for their concerns. "What can you do to make her stop annoying you?" "What's the best approach to take with your teacher?" "Socks, smocks! Where might they be?"

Here are 5 questions you can ask kids to encourage them to resolve their own problems:

1 "Can you solve this yourself?"

Get kids thinking they can do it.

2 "What do you think needs to happen?"

Start kids thinking about solving problems.

3 "What's the first step?"

Sometimes just getting kids started is enough to get them working out issues themselves.

4 "How would you like me to help?"

Get kids considering the type of assistance they need.

5 "What's the best way to do this?"

Get kids assessing and prioritising.

Problem-solving is one of the four major skills (optimism, social skills & independence being the others) that resilient kids share, yet it's the one that many of us aren't equipped to develop. Start by stepping back and asking good questions when kids bring you their problems to solve.

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