

Social Problem-Solving Activities for Families of Young Children

ACT AGAINST VIOLENCE TRAINING PROGRAM

<http://www.ActAgainstViolence.org>

SOCIAL PROBLEM SOLVING- HANDOUT 4

Activities for children ages 3-4:

1. DRAW YOURSELF.

When a child has a problem, take a piece of paper and a crayon. Draw two circles to represent two faces. Ask the child to add the eyes, nose, and mouth to one face to show how he or she is feeling about the problem. Ask the child what he or she thinks could be done about the problem. Decide on a good solution. Ask the child to add the facial features to the second circle to show how he or she is feeling after the problem has been solved. Explain that good solutions make people feel happier.



Ask the child to make the best choice. Give the child a turn to repeat the pretend problem solving using the dolls. Choose scenarios that help children think about choices and feelings and feel proud about making fair choices.

2. LET'S PRETEND, WHAT IF?

Practice role-playing how to solve simple social problems using puppets or dolls. Involve the child in choosing what problem the puppets or dolls are having. Talk about what the child might do to solve their problem. Use the dolls or puppets to role-play, showing the problem being acted out and the different choices being acted out.

Examples:

- **One doll pushing down another doll.**
- **One doll saying "you can't play."**
- **One doll not sharing a toy.**
- **One doll saying NO to bedtime.**



Activities for children ages 5-6

3. SPACE SHIP to a FAR STAR

Have the child draw and cut out a spaceship, like one an astronaut could use to fly to outer space. Place it on the refrigerator or on the wall in the child's room. Have the child draw and cut out six large stars. Keep the stars. Explain that every time the child works with your help to solve a simple social problem that has a good outcome, the child will get one star to place on the wall with the star ship. Write the problem the child solved on each star. Praise the child for solving the problem, tell him or her how proud and happy you are. Ask the child to tell you how he or she feels after solving a problem.

Activities for children ages 7-8

4. THINK-ACT-PREVENT Game

Use real-life problem scenarios, and when you are on the bus or in the car, play the THINK, ACT, PREVENT game.

- Give the problem scenario to the child (any age-appropriate pretend or real-life problem that involves the child as an aggressor, victim, or a bystander of aggression).
- Ask the child to tell you what the problem is.
- Ask the child to tell you how they THINK they would ACT to try and solve the problem in a way that is kind and fair.

- Ask the child to think of another way to solve the problem if their first idea did not work.
- Ask the child what could have been done to PREVENT the problem in the first place.

Ideas for the game:

Aggressor scenario: You have no TV privileges because you didn't do your homework, and you get so angry that you want to destroy something.

Victim scenario: School bully threatens to beat you up on the way home from school because he doesn't like the way you talk.

Bystander scenario: You watch three kids gang up, push a girl down, and take her bike.

Other things families can do:

- Think about how the adults in your family solve problems. Set a goal to model effective problem-solving skills for your children.
- Talk to your child about adults who can help them solve problems that are too big to handle alone.
- Make sure that your children know that it is okay to make mistakes trying to solve problems and that we should learn from our mistakes.
- Find out from your child's teacher what problems he or she may be having in school, what problem-solving methods are being used, and how you can reinforce them at home.
- Identify a source of support to help you when you have a problem.