

PARENT HANDOUT: PROBLEM SOLVING FOR ADHD



ADHD Skill 4

WHAT IS PROBLEM SOLVING FOR ADHD?

- ▶ If your child is having a hard time paying attention, staying organized, or controlling their energy, they may experience problems because of these difficulties. A positive problem solving strategy can help them more effectively deal with their daily challenges and concerns.
- ▶ Your child may be frustrated if they are having a hard time dealing with problems, big or small. This can make them feel bad about themselves or cause them to get in trouble with parents, friends or teachers. Problem solving strategies can help them change that!
- ▶ These worksheets teach your child a simple plan for solving problems. They will learn to:
 1. Name the problem
 2. Identify 3 possible solutions
 3. Name one good thing and one bad thing about each solution
 4. Pick one to try
 5. Evaluate how things went after you implement the solution.

HERE'S HOW TO MAKE A PROBLEM SOLVING PLAN AT HOME

You can introduce the plan by saying, "Everyone can use help solving problems. When our problems make us feel bad about ourselves or get us into trouble, we sometimes need strategies that make it easier to deal with challenges. Here's the Problem Solving Plan we are going to start using." Introduce the 5 parts of the plan to your child by going through them together and reading the explanations below.

- 1 What's the problem?** You may be feeling overwhelmed and not know exactly how to describe the issue you need to handle. Clearly stating the problem as a first step helps you really focus on what it is so you can then figure out exactly what you need to do to solve it. Try to be as specific as possible (e.g., "My friend is being mean at recess and that's making me mad" is better than "My friend makes me mad" or "I'm mad").
- 2 What are 3 possible solutions?** Think of 3 possible solutions to your problem so you have some good options to pick from, but not so many that you are overwhelmed with choices. Don't worry about how good or bad they are yet. You will evaluate them in the next part.
- 3 What's one good thing and one bad thing about each solution?** This step requires you to name one positive outcome and one negative outcome that could occur if you choose each solution. This step will help you consider the benefits and challenges of each choice. This is an essential step because you are gathering important information for your plan!
- 4 Pick one!** This is your chance to take charge as you pick which solution you want to try out first.
- 5 How did it go?** After you follow through with applying a solution, it's time to evaluate it. This will help you learn what the best options for different problems are, and you can refer back to these tested solutions as needed. If your first solution isn't successful in solving the problem, you can try a different one or start a completely new solution brainstorming session. Don't give up!

The next worksheet puts the **Problem Solving Plan** into a chart and shows you some examples. Go over the example together and then have your child try to solve the practice problems. Come up with solutions for our example problems and then try it for one of their own.



CHILD WORKSHEET: PROBLEM SOLVING

ADHD Skill 4



Example 1: I didn't pay attention in math class today because I was bored. Now I don't understand today's homework.

What's the Problem?	I don't understand my math homework assignment.		
		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1	Don't do the homework.	I can play videogames earlier because I'll have less to do	I'll get a zero.
Solution 2	Text my friend for help.	She is good at math and can help me	She might not respond.
Solution 3	Talk to my teacher tomorrow and ask for help.	My teacher will explain what I missed.	She might still give me a zero for today's homework.
My Choice	Text my friend for help.		
How'd it go?	My friend texted me back. She called and helped me. I understood and did the homework.		

Example 2: My parents wanted me to clean my room before watching a movie. They reminded me about this two times, but I forgot and now they are upset with me again. This keeps happening to me.

What's the Problem?			
		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1			
Solution 2			
Solution 3			
My Choice			
How'd it go?			

CHILD WORKSHEET: PROBLEM SOLVING



Example 3: I've known that we had a history project due for a while, but I just couldn't get much done on it because I was so overwhelmed with all of the steps. Now it's due in three days and I don't know what to do.

What's the Problem?			
		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1			
Solution 2			
Solution 3			
My Choice			
How'd it go?			

Example 4: My friends stopped inviting me places because I was always grounded for bad grades. I've been working hard using my skills and my grades are improving. I have permission to hang out with them again, but I don't think they like me anymore.

What's the Problem?			
		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1			
Soution 2			
Solution 3			
My Choice			
How'd it go?			

CHILD WORKSHEET: PROBLEM SOLVING



Example 5: I get so excited when we line up for gym that sometimes I jump to the front of the line or accidentally bump into my classmates. My friends are getting mad and sometimes my teacher says I might lose my gym privileges!"

What's the Problem?

		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1			
Solution 2			
Solution 3			
My Choice			
How'd it go?			

Blank Problem Solving Plans

What's the Problem?			
		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1			
Solution 2			
Solution 3			
My Choice			
How'd it go?			

What's the Problem?			
		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1			
Solution 2			
Solution 3			
My Choice			
How'd it go?			

What's the Problem?			
		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1			
Solution 2			
Solution 3			
My Choice			
How'd it go?			

PARENT HANDOUT: PROBLEM SOLVING TIPS



ADHD Skill 4

HOW CAN PROBLEM SOLVING FOR ADHD HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ Your child's struggles with skills like attention, organization, memory, and/or energy level may get in the way of them dealing with challenges and solving everyday problems. Many children feel like this sometimes.
- ▶ Problems may feel too big to solve, they may not feel motivated to address them, or they may think that they aren't good at solving problems so they shouldn't even try. You may also notice that they try to solve a problem, but give up easily if they aren't successful right away. The good news is that having a strategy to solve problems can really help!
- ▶ The problem solving technique described here can provide a clear way to help your child think through challenges, brainstorm options, notice what works and what doesn't, and keep trying if their first attempt doesn't work. Using this method can help them solve problems, have more positive outcomes, and feel better about themselves.
- ▶ Making and following a problem solving plan can also reduce frustration for you and your child's teachers by helping them to be more independent. This plan ensures that the adults in their life are not just telling them what to do, but instead supporting and guiding them to overcome challenges on their own. Everyone can benefit from solving problems in their lives; these skills can help the rest of your family as well!

COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

My child doesn't think they have problems that need solving.

It can be hard to notice which challenges or frustrations can benefit from problem solving skills. Go over past situations with your child that caused them to feel sad, frustrated, stressed, or another negative emotion. These are great opportunities to practice their problem solving. If you notice a situation where your child can use these skills in daily life, gently point it out to them (e.g., "You told me you were frustrated at lunch because you forgot to bring your lunch with you even though you packed it the night before. Do you think we can use the Problem Solving Plan to help plan for tomorrow?").

When we try this, my child can't think of any solutions.

Think about what might be getting in the way. They might be feeling overwhelmed and stuck. Suggest one example solution to get them started. Often, once they hear one idea, they can get creative and come up with solutions of their own. Remind them that they don't need to think of the "perfect" solution because there is no such thing. They can make mistakes and ask you and their teachers for help as needed. Review our practice examples to remind them of some good options for common concerns as well as the fact that they came up with great solutions for the examples!

When my child tries to use their problem solving plan, they get really frustrated and upset.

Sometimes problem solving can feel really overwhelming! Feeling upset is okay. Your child's emotions are giving you both a message that they are having a tough time and need support. Tell them to take a break to do something relaxing or fun, then try again. Remind them that they can ask a you or a teacher for support using the problem solving plan if they need it. If they are still having a hard time using problem solving skills, check in with your child's primary care provider. They can connect you to a behavioral health specialist who can help.

