This KidsMatter resource was written and produced by the Australian Psychological Society on behalf of KidsMatter.

Acknowledgement
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Video 4: Problem solving

This document aims to provide Session Leaders with information to assist in the presentation of Video 4: Problem solving to parents and carers as part of the KidsMatter Starting School information sessions.

Starting School: Tips for facilitating sessions contains more detailed tips and hints for planning and facilitating information sessions. Session Leaders may find it helpful to read this document before delivering the sessions as it offers valuable information that may assist in efficient facilitation. It contains four warm-up activities designed to provide parents and carers with the opportunity to meet without placing too much pressure on them to introduce themselves to a larger group. The four warm-up activities (Meet and greet, Your child’s highlights, Carousel introductions and Discovering what we have in common) can be found at the end of Starting School: Tips for facilitating sessions and can be used at the start of any Starting School session.

For more background information and ideas for how your setting can support children to make a positive transition, see Transition matters: A resource about starting school for early childhood educators and school staff.

Video 4: Learning objectives

- To help parents and carers understand that problem solving is an important skill for children to learn to help them cope with unexpected and challenging situations.
- To help parents and carers teach their child problem solving skills.
Outline

The following table provides an outline of Leaders Guide for Video 4: Problem solving. Starting School: Tips for facilitating sessions contains warm-up activities that Session Leaders can use at the beginning of any session to provide parents and carers with the opportunity to meet each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>TOPIC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>Review Video 3: Understanding behaviour</td>
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</table>
| 10 minutes | Introduce Video 4  
|          | Show Video 4: Problem solving  
|          | Summarise Video 4                              |
| 15 minutes | Activity: Problem solving in action           |
| 5 minutes | Questions, comments and discussion              |
| 5 minutes | Summary                                         |

Checklist

- Problem solving in action activity sheet
- Starting School Problem solving information sheet
- Blank paper, pens, whiteboard markers
- Additional KidsMatter information sheets

Further resources

You might like to have additional KidsMatter information sheets available for families. See the Starting School Problem solving information sheet that lists other KidsMatter resources you might find helpful.
Review Video 3

Provide a brief overview of what was covered in Video 3 to provide parents and carers with the opportunity to ask questions before presenting Video 4. For example:

_Previewly we identified some of the feelings children may experience when starting school and we discussed some of the behaviours a child may show when they are feeling anxious, excited and angry. We also had a look at how we can assist children to develop language to describe their feelings. Does anyone have any questions or comments before we move on to Video 4?_

Introduce Video 4

Start with a brief introduction before presenting the video. For example:

_Practising problem solving can help your child learn how to approach new challenges and further develop their independence skills. We are now going to show a video that looks at the three key steps for problem solving with your child._

Show Video 4

Summarise Video 4

After watching the video you may choose to have a whole-group discussion about the content. Example prompts include:

_Why do you think it’s important to teach children problem solving skills? Can you think of some everyday problems you could use as an opportunity to practise problem solving? Who are the support people your child might go to? Can you think of situations at home where you could model problem solving?_

Activity: Problem solving in action

Go to page 6 for instructions to facilitate this activity.

Questions, comments and discussion

Invite parents and carers to comment on the activity. This can give parents and carers an opportunity to relate the content of the activity to their situation and clarify and elaborate on points made in the video. Prompts might include:

_What was it like coming up with ideas and solutions together? How do you feel about using the steps with your child? Teaching problem solving is best when children are relaxed – why do you think this is?_

Summary

Conclude the discussion. For example:

_Problem solving is a set of skills that can be applied to many different situations. Together we have identified some of the ways that you can practise and model problem solving with your child. Each child will learn these skills at a different pace. As we saw in the video, children learn problem solving skills over time with help from their parents and carers. There are many everyday situations where you can model and practise problem solving with your child that will help to develop their confidence._

If you plan to show Video 5 after Video 4, link to the next video and accompanying activities. For example:

_Now that we have looked at modelling and practising problem solving skills with children, we will now have a closer look at some of the steps involved in helping your child learn coping skills._
Problem solving

How do problem solving skills help children adjust to school?

There are a range of factors, including personal and environmental factors, that determine how well a child adjusts to school, and as a result there is variation between children and across schools and communities. A common factor identified across transition experiences is that children benefit from support from parents and carers, and this has a direct positive impact on adjustment to school. Specifically, the literature suggests that problem solving strategies help children cope with the unexpected and have a positive impact on children’s adjustment to school.

Why teach and practise problem solving skills?

The literature shows that established evidence-based programs such as the Exploring Together Preschool Program and the Tuning in to Kids program that incorporate children’s problem solving are effective as a preventative measure for children who have been identified as at risk of developing ongoing mental health problems. The literature suggests that practising problem solving in the lead up to starting school helps children and their families feel confident about the changes that lie ahead and provides a sense of self-assurance.
References


Activity: Problem solving in action

Aims

• For families to understand that problem solving is an important skill for children to learn to help them cope with challenging situations.
• To assist families to learn the problem solving steps so they can guide their child through the steps when a problem arises.

Preparation

• Photocopy the required number of activity sheets and information sheets.

Materials

• Activity sheet: Problem solving in action
• Information sheet: Problem solving
• Pens

Instructions

Estimated time: 15 minutes

1 Introduce the activity. For example:
   As discussed in the video, assisting your child to problem solve helps them to make decisions and cope with everyday challenges. This activity will give you the opportunity to practise the problem solving steps so that you can help your child to gradually learn to do it for themselves. This will be helpful in the lead up to starting school and assist your child as challenges arise in their new environment.

2 Explain to parents and carers that in a moment you will ask them to work in small groups on a problem solving scenario. Review the problem solving steps on the accompanying information sheet and ask parents and carers to use this as a guide for the activity. Read the practice scenarios aloud and briefly highlight the main steps shown on the activity sheet. Ask the groups of parents and carers to brainstorm the first two problem solving steps then predict the third step. If there is a large group you may like to provide both scenarios.

3 Allocate parents and carers into groups of three or four (see Starting School: Tips for facilitating sessions p.8 for ideas on how to form groups) and give everyone an activity sheet. Each group will need to complete one activity sheet; however, parents and carers are welcome to complete an activity sheet each. Let parents and carers know that an important part of the activity is sharing and brainstorming ideas together. Session Leaders may like to walk around to each group to provide prompts that may help generate ideas for each step.

4 Here are some possible solutions for Session Leaders to suggest to groups experiencing difficulty:

   Scenario 1
   • Lucy talks to her friend about why she is excluding her.
   • Lucy talks to her teacher or parent about what is happening.
   • Lucy plays with some other friends.

   Scenario 2
   • James thinks positively about making new friends.
   • James puts together a friendship book with help from his mum.
   • James and his friend exchange phone numbers or email addresses.
   • James and his mum set up some play dates for when school has started.

5 After 10 minutes, invite each group to read aloud some of their suggested solutions and ideas about the next problem solving step.

Conclusion

Conclude the activity. For example:

In this activity we have thought about problem solving, which helps children to make decisions and cope with life’s challenges. Young children will require lots of guidance from their family as they slowly learn to problem solve for themselves. You can use small challenges to gradually build up your child’s confidence to tackle larger problems. It’s a good idea to encourage your child to take part in each step of the problem solving process.
Activity
Problem solving in action

Read the two scenarios and work through the problem solving steps to come up with possible solutions for the problems.

Practice scenario 1: Lucy’s school friend started being mean to her. Lucy’s school friend is excluding Lucy from games and refusing to play with her.

Practice scenario 2: James is upset because his friend from preschool is not going to the same primary school next year.

1  What is the problem?

2  What solutions can you think of to help address the problem?

   a) 

   b) 

   c) 

   d) 

3  What are the next steps to help solve the problem? What will you do if the solution doesn’t work?