



# Helping Your Child Solve Problems

## Five S-T-E-P-S for Problem Solving

Some children have a hard time solving problems that arise in their lives, such as problems with friends, schoolwork, sleeping, how to manage a bad mood or taking medication. They may feel hopeless about solving these problems, or perhaps they will try one solution and then give up when it doesn't work. Because we all have to face problems from time to time, learning a step-by-step approach to solving them can be valuable. When your child has a problem, encourage him or her to try the S-T-E-P-S approach shown below. Offer support, but try to help your child come up with his or her own ideas as much as possible.



Say what the problem is.



Think of possible solutions. (Try to think of several here. Don't worry yet whether they are "good" or "bad" solutions.)



Examine each possible solution, looking at the good and bad aspects of each one.



Pick one solution to try out.



See if it worked. If it worked, great! If it did not work, then go back to your list of solutions and try another one.



## An example...



### Say what the problem is.

*My child refuses to take their medication as prescribed.*



### Think of possible solutions. (Try to think of several here. Don't worry yet whether they are "good" or "bad" solutions.)

1. *Ensure my child takes the medication even if it causes a big argument*
2. *Let my child get their own way and not take their medication*
3. *Think of a game to make taking medication fun*
4. *Use a chart with reminders and rewards to encourage my child to take the medication*
5. *Set a reminder in their mobile phone or ask the teacher to remind them*
6. *Let my child take the medication when they choose*
7. *Let my child know that they can excuse themselves (e.g. go to the bathroom) in order to take their medication privately – so they do not need to take it in front of other people*



### Examine each possible solution, looking at the good and bad aspects of each one.

#### Solution

#### GOOD

#### BAD

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | <i>Adhered to medication</i>                   | <i>Have an argument</i>                    |
| 2 | <i>Avoid an argument</i>                       | <i>Less control over seizures</i>          |
| 3 | <i>It will be fun</i>                          | <i>I'm short of time</i>                   |
| 4 | <i>More likely to adhere</i>                   | <i>A lot of effort</i>                     |
| 5 | <i>Adhered to medication</i>                   | <i>Does not encourage independence</i>     |
| 6 | <i>No arguments</i>                            | <i>Less control over seizures</i>          |
| 7 | <i>Reduce feelings of embarrassment/stigma</i> | <i>Hard to ensure that it will be done</i> |



### Pick one solution to try out.

*I will try solution 4 "use a chart with reminders and rewards to encourage my child to take the medication"*



### See if it worked. If it worked, great! If it did not work, then go back to your list of solutions and try another one.

## An example...



### Say what the problem is.

Tyrone won't go out to eat with us as he hates restaurants as deciding what to eat stresses him out so much.



### Think of possible solutions. (Try to think of several here. Don't worry yet whether they are "good" or "bad" solutions.)

1. We could look at the menus before we go and decide what to eat
2. We could order for him
3. He could come with us and eat his own food (we could pretend he has some kind of allergy)



### Examine each possible solution, looking at the good and bad aspects of each one.

#### Solution

#### GOOD

#### BAD

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | This would speed the process up at the restaurant so it would be less stressful for Tyrone. | Could be stressful and lead to an argument at home. He may still not want to go and forget what we have agreed or decide he doesn't want it. |
| 2 | We would get to go out as a family.   | He won't eat it and will say we have ordered the wrong thing. There will be a scene in the restaurant.                                       |
| 3 | Eating his own food would probably work best, there would be less chance of an argument.    | I might be a bit embarrassed.  |



### Pick one solution to try out.

We tried solution 3.



### See if it worked. If it worked, great! If it did not work, then go back to your list of solutions and try another one.

We brought Tyrone his favourite Subway to eat at the restaurant. I called ahead of time to make sure that they knew he would be bringing his Subway and they said that was fine as long as we ordered food (which we did). I didn't even lie and say he had a food allergy - I just said he finds restaurants stressful. It was the best time in a restaurant we have ever had with him. It's not ideal but it's OK for now