

The “No Lose” Method for Problem Solving

So how did you go? Did you manage to navigate through a situation using the previous article on the shifting gears technique? You will not want to miss the next article which will tackle the difficult area of values conflict - when what's important to you is not important to them or vice versa (i.e. they think it's OK to swear and you do not). It's the trickiest part of parenting!

“There's no doubt that it's a long-term loss for a child to grow up without principle-based values and a relationship of respect with parents”. Steven R Covey

So far all of the articles have brought together many of the skills you can master to become a pro-active parent (active listening, l-msgs, understanding who owns the problem and what causes behaviour). This week we will talk about what you can do when you've uncovered the need behind the behaviour or your child has a problem and they need help problem solving. For most of us we think this is relatively easy - just think of a solution and do it. However, it is not always smooth sailing when there are two people brainstorming who have different ideas about what the solution should be and problem solving done incorrectly can cause a lot of damage to a relationship. Plus, we also want to empower the child to find their own solutions to their problems. So let's first look at how not to do it and why.

Traditionally there has been three ways of solving a problem - 1. “Do as I say” power over child/win-lose approach, 2. “You can't make me” power over parent/lose-win approach and 3. “It needs to be acceptable to both of us” mutual/no-lose approach (for when both have a problem).

Method 1 and 2 result in someone losing the struggle, it's dis-empowering, leaves the other feeling resentful and damages the relationship. These power over methods also encourage lying and hiding of feelings and discourage children from talking to their parents about the “big” issues in their lives because mum or dad get upset or take over control.

Method 3 brings about a higher degree of motivation



(for one or both parties) to carry out the solution. Helping a child to use this method empowers and validates the child's ability to solve their own problems. There is less need for parental power, less hostility, more love and respect, requires less enforcement, works on real problems and helps the child to grow into a capable adult. Method 3 is the preferred approach, however win-win has had some bad press as people sometimes think that they have to compromise.

Win-win is called the "No Lose" approach because it relies on the other skills that have lead up to this point to have established the need clearly, that both parties have felt understood (listened to) and that the emotional temperature has gone down so that both are prepared to find a mutual solution. Put simply, if either party has felt like they have not agreed to the solution, then it is not win-win (no lose method 3) and it is unlikely to solve the problem (resistance kicks in). So do not attempt to go through the process without completing the step number 1 which will require all of the previous skills you have been learning.

So your Homeplay this week is to identify a problem that needs to be solved, formulate an I-Message (if you own it) and be prepared to either assist your child solve it using the following formula or make it work for both parties (you and them). Remember, it takes practice and perseverance to change our own habits..

Problem Solving

Step 1 - Defining the Problem in Terms of Needs. Define accurately the child's (or both persons) needs and get acceptance of what the problem is.



Step 2 - Generate Possible Solutions. Get creative! Ask for the child's possible solutions first and don't evaluate or be critical - use your listening skills. Get a number of possible solutions before evaluating or discussing any.



Step 3 - Evaluating Solutions. Be honest and explore each one for flaws, reasons why it may not work and try each one on as a solution.



Step 4 - Deciding on an Acceptable Solution. If it's just the child's problem, let them select the solution. For 2 party solutions, both must agree on the solution chosen - no pushing or persuading.



Step 5 - Implement the Solution. Talk about the implementation, agree on the way it will be done & trust that the other/child will do it.



Step 6 - Evaluate the Results. Evaluate and change what isn't working (for you or them) and mutually accept the revision

