



## Help Your Child Become a Problem Solver

**Decide who owns the problem** by asking

1. Are my rights being disrespected?
2. Will there be harm to a person or property?
3. Is my child too young to handle this problem?

If the answer to **any** of these questions is **yes**, then

**you** own the problem.

If the answer to **every** question is **no**, then

**your child** owns the problem.

Sometimes the problem is shared, especially with teens. Always lean toward the child solving the problem as much as possible.

### **If your child owns the problem, you have choices.**

- Ignore the problem. Trust your child to solve the problem.
- Use reflective listening. Example: "Sounds like you're feeling angry at your teacher for giving so much homework."
- Teach your child to solve problems, but do not solve the problem for the child. Help your child see possible solutions and their consequences.
  1. **Understand the problem.** Make sure the problem is clear to both you and your child. Use reflective listening. Ask questions that help you understand the problem from the child's point of view.
  2. **Brainstorm ideas to solve the problem.** Ask your child for ways to solve the problem. Don't comment on or judge the ideas, even if some seem silly. A silly idea might inspire better ones. Offer your ideas only if your child doesn't find any reasonable possibilities. Offer your own ideas cautiously: "What might happen if you tried..." The ideas that you and your child come up with are *alternatives*.
  3. **Discuss the alternatives.** If you don't agree with an idea, respectfully say so. Remember that this problem belongs to the child. In the end, the child will carry out the solution and live with the outcomes.
  4. **Choose an idea.** After reviewing possible outcomes for each alternative, support your child in choosing one idea.
  5. **Use the idea.** Suggest that your child test the idea. Together, decide how long to use it. Plan enough time to give the idea a fair test. Set a time to discuss whether the idea is working. If it isn't, then repeat the steps above to try another approach.

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