

# Problem Solving – A Resiliency Skill

Every day we make decisions - some big, some small. Those who have the ability to control the outcomes of their decisions are good problem solvers.

To be resilient and succeed in life, your teen needs the skills to assess situations and solve problems. Usually, a problem does not just go away. A tough problem can paralyze a person, and he takes no action. Or, he may take action without thought and will make his situation worse.

In a few short years, your teen will live an independent life. She most likely will not ask your advice. Can your teen handle conflicts and take positive steps to solve problems?

Since we are not born with problem solving skills, parents must teach them. Take an active role in this skill-building process. Teach and practice problem-solving steps to help your teen learn to make good decisions. Let him make the decision even if you know failure will be the outcome. With each decision, your teen will gain confidence and wisdom.

## Problem-solving steps to help your teen learn to make good decisions.

- 1. Identify the problem.**  
Use “I” words. *“Tomorrow I have a test, but I want to go out and party with the girls tonight.”*
- 2. Focus on the real issue – not the emotion.** The issue is passing or failing a test.
- 3. Brainstorm your options.** Try to find more than 2 or 3 solutions to your problem. Write them down.
  - a. Go out and not study.
  - b. Study and not go out.
  - c. Study, go out for an hour, and come back home to study.
  - d. Go out for 40 minutes, and come home and study.
- 4. Evaluate your solutions.** List pros and cons. If the solution has more cons than pros, cross it off your list.
- 5. Make an honest decision.** As you evaluate your decision, you must use empathy – consider other’s feelings. If your plan will hurt you or others, do not choose that plan.
- 6. Take Action.** Carry out your decision.
- 7. Evaluate the outcome.** This is a crucial step. Did it work? If yes, you feel successful. If it failed, and sometimes it will, did you learn a lesson from the failure?  
If needed, repeat steps 3 to 6 to



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