



## Parenting the Preschooler

### Social Competence & Emotional Well-Being Fact Sheets

# How does your child solve problems?

#### Ages & Stages

**PRESCCHOOLER** A child who is 3 to 5 years of age.

**YOUNG CHILD** A child who is 0 to 8 years of age.

#### Minding Our Language

**Families come in all shapes, sizes, and styles. A “family” may include people who are related by blood, by marriage, and by choice. “Parents” may be biological, step-, foster, adoptive, legally appointed, or something else. When we use the words “family” and “parent” in these materials, we do so inclusively and with great respect for all adults who care for and work with young people.**

Everyone has problems now and then, even young children. Problem-solving is an important skill children will need and use all through their lives. Preschoolers need loving and caring adults in their lives who will teach them effective ways to think about and solve problems.

Try these steps to teach your child ways to solve problems without making the troubles bigger:

- Acknowledge your child and their feelings:
  - Approach them quickly and calmly.
  - Say their name to get their attention.
  - Bend or crouch down and get on the child’s level so they can talk to you face-to-face.
  - Acknowledge the child’s feelings. (*“You seem very mad right now.”*)
- Identify the problem:
  - Ask your child what happened.
  - Use open-ended questions to find out more about the situation. (An open-ended question is one that requires more than a yes or no answer.)
  - Listen carefully to what your child says.
- Clarify the problem:
  - Say what you heard using your child’s words as much as possible.
  - Ask your child if you have it right.
  - Describe the problem as you see it.
- Communicate:
  - Use “I” messages. (*“I do not like it when you yell.”*)
  - Help her see that her feelings are completely normal. (*“I think lots of kids worry about that, too.”*)
  - Use simple words that your child understands.
- Problem-solve:
  - Ask your child to think of solutions for their problem. (*“You really have a problem. What can you do about it?”*) Have her offer ideas first but offer support as needed.
  - Ask your child if you can give them one of your ideas.
  - Ask your preschooler what might happen if they try each of the ideas. You might need to help them predict what might happen.
  - Help them pick the best idea.
  - Help them follow through with the plan.
  - Talk with them about how the new plan is going.

## Find Out More

MSU Extension provides the following resources for parents and caregivers of preschoolers and young children at no or low cost. Be sure to check out these and other MSU Extension resources available at [www.extension.msu.edu](http://www.extension.msu.edu).

**Extension Extras** (<https://bit.ly/2LC2vdX>) – These compilations of news articles, activities, parenting tips and advice are published online Monday through Friday. The resources are designed for parents and caregivers of young children who are home all day during the novel coronavirus pandemic. Each day has a theme: Mindful Mondays, Tips on Tuesday, Working Wednesdays, Thinking Thursday, and Fun Fridays.

**Extension Extras Enrichment Kits** (<https://bit.ly/35QAplQ>) – These kits feature five or six early childhood activities with learning goals focused in areas such as social and emotional health, literacy, and STEM; a supply list; suggested children's books; introduction letters explaining how to use the materials; and an evaluation. The kits are available as free downloads.

**Early Childhood Videos** (<https://bit.ly/3ioyEkS>) – These short videos offer parents and caregivers of young children information on parenting topics. Titles include "Perspective Taking," "Family Movies," "Goals of Misbehavior," "Using Thinking and Feeling Words," "The Waiting Game," and "When Siblings Fight."

**Building Early Emotional Skills (BEES) in Young Children** (<https://bit.ly/38XW4Kl>) – This page provides links to a variety of free online parenting courses, workshops, and events offered by MSU Extension for parents and caregivers of young children aged 0 to 3.

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