

# PARENTING TIPS

## Help Kids Choose Solutions

When a child runs into a problem, often the most efficient solution at the time is for the parent to solve the problem. But that isn't always what's best for the child. When troubleshooting a problem with your son or daughter you may want to offer several alternatives by saying, "Let's think of ways other people might solve this problem."

Depending on your child's responsiveness at the moment, you may want to share the worst alternatives first. This gives the child the opportunity to reject some of the poorer suggestions before the good ones come. As you share each alternative, help your child anticipate the consequences. After sharing a possible solution ask, "What might happen if you do that?" Or "I wonder if \_\_\_\_\_ might happen if you do that?" Anticipating consequences helps your child learn to think through each alternative carefully.

After you've given your suggestions, let your child solve the problem. After all, it is his or her problem. As much as possible, avoid solving problems for children that they can solve for themselves. When faced with available alternatives children may not want to make any choice. Life is hard. The possible solutions may all look bleak.

You may ask, "What are you going to do now?" or "Which one of these choices seems like the best one for you?" Then allow the child to think about the situation. Once your children realize that the solution is up to them, they are more apt to take responsibility for choosing a response.

Keep in mind that sometimes children don't want any of the available solutions and therefore resort to complaining. Complaining takes place in two ways along the process here. First, children bring us problems by complaining sometimes and then other times children complain because they don't like any of the available alternatives. Complaining is focusing on a problem without acknowledging or taking responsibility for the solution. Complaining is unacceptable.

Don't take responsibility for a child's problem when the child just wants to focus on the negative. Encourage your children toward solutions, but leave the responsibility in their hands.

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This parenting tip comes from the book, Home Improvement, the Parenting Book You Can Read to Your Kids by Dr. Scott Turansky and Joanne Miller, RN, BSN