

---

---

## Problem Solving with Infants and Toddlers

### INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with the video, “Approaches to Learning (Problem Solving) - 8 to 18 Months,” from All About Young Children. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

### Goals

- ◆ Discuss how young children develop problem-solving skills as well as how they benefit from opportunities to problem-solve.
- ◆ Discuss effective strategies for facilitating children’s problem-solving skills at home and within the learning environment.
- ◆ Plan to partner with families to support infants’ and toddlers’ problem-solving skills.

### Activity

- ◆ Watch the video.
- ◆ Use the questions below to reflect on effective ways to support infants’ and toddlers’ problem-solving skills.
- ◆ Implement your plan and adjust as needed to support infants’ and toddlers’ problem-solving skills.

---

**I really learned to sit down and talk him through problems versus just doing it for him because it was not beneficial.**

**All About Young Children**

---

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ◆ What caught your attention from the video? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?
- ◆ The video shows several examples of young children’s attempts to problem-solve as they figure out how things work.
  - How do young children in your care attempt to problem-solve during play?
  - What have families shared about their children’s early attempts at problem-solving? What are they noticing at home? Are there any similarities or differences from your own observations?
- ◆ During the discussion, families shared their experiences as they supported their young children’s problem-solving skills. One family member shared that often when children are experiencing difficulties resolving a problem, educators may ask questions such as, “How could I help you with that?” This allows the child an opportunity to process how they need help to resolve the problem in the moment.
  - How do you respond to young children as they seek help in figuring out how things work or try to reach a goal?
  - What strategies might you use to support families to consider asking questions and allowing children time to process how they need help as they explore materials?
- ◆ One parent shared that his child enjoys opportunities to independently solve problems rather than seeking adult help. Another shared that one important lesson he learned was the importance of allowing children time to problem-solve rather than resolving problems for them.
  - Some families may have concerns about allowing young children time to independently resolve problems. For example, some may have time constraints and find it easier to quickly resolve children’s problems. Consider the unique needs of the families in your care. How can you be a resource to families and share strategies that support children’s abilities to independently problem-solve while respecting their unique situations and values?
- ◆ Partner with families to plan an activity at your center that allows children opportunities to problem-solve. For example, plan an investigation of materials in which educators and families co-facilitate children’s problem-solving skills. Note that some family members may feel more comfortable observing as you model strategies while others may want to immediately participate and support children’s problem-solving skills.
  - How will you encourage families to ask questions and engage in meaningful interactions with children as they explore materials?
  - Consider planning a follow-up discussion with families to learn more about their experience and encourage them to engage with children as they solve problems at home, allowing children opportunities to independently resolve problems.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about supporting infants' and toddlers' problem-solving skills:

- ◆ **Source:** Zero to Three
- ◆ **Article:** Building Problem-Solving Skills: Gather Round Activities
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/building-problem-solving-skills-gather-round-activities/>
- ◆ **Description:** This article shares strategies for developing young children's problem-solving skills through gather round activities. Use this resource to share activities that parents can use to promote young children's problem-solving skills.
  
- ◆ **Source:** All About Young Children
- ◆ **Video:** Approaches to Learning (Problem Solving) - 18 to 36 Months
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjtxgPABR2Y>
- ◆ **Description:** This video is an extension of the main resource; it shows examples of how children are learning to solve problems for ages 18 months to 36 months followed by a group discussion by parents. Use this video to spark conversations with families on what they see at home as children problem-solve or what strategies they use to support children in resolving problems.
  
- ◆ **Source:** Lane Kids
- ◆ **Article:** Boost Your Child's Problem-Solving Skills
- ◆ **Link:** <https://www.lanekids.org/boost-your-childs-problem-solving-skills/>
- ◆ **Description:** This article outlines how young children develop problem-solving skills as well as strategies to promote children's problem-solving skills at home. Use this article to share strategies for facilitating children's problem-solving skills with families.