

# The Travell Counselor's Corner



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## **April: Problem Solving**

Welcome back! I hope everyone enjoyed a happy, healthy and hopefully restful spring break. Just prior to the time off, your children should have all entered the first stage of Second Step's **Unit 4: Problem Solving**, which they will continue to explore the remainder of this month. This will be the last official unit of the Second Step curriculum for all grade levels, which leaves several weeks for classes to really review & practice applying all they have learned this year! 🎉

**In Grades K-2**, children will learn how to identify problems and practice stating them without using blame or name calling, which is often an initial response. Children will also practice taking a calming moment before responding. This could include stepping away to a new location, counting to 10 or incorporating breathwork. Later this month, children will be introduced to the basics of problem solving. They will practice apologizing, offering solutions such as sharing or taking turns, and clearly advocating for what they need. As problems arise at home between family members or friends, you can both model this type of solution focused response and provide the encouragement your child needs to do the same. Reinforce the importance of apologizing, asking for what they need, and brainstorming until they have found the most appropriate way to make amends.

**In Grade 3**, children will be explicitly introduced to the STEP method of problem solving. S: Say the problem, T: Think of solutions, E: Explore the outcomes, and P: Pick a solution. Feel free to try this process out for yourselves, role play with your children at home, or provide them with reminders as real time situations arise. Your reminders could include: Stating the problem respectfully and without blame, encouraging them to come up with several solutions and reflect on which seems like the best fit for all parties involved, and selecting a solution that is based on compromise and kindness.

**In Grades 4-5**, the focus will shift toward the honing of skills and demonstration of mastery with regard to the problem solving approach presented in this unit. Children will be asked to consider all they have learned about empathy in previous units and use this knowledge to help view the perspective of others. During the explore phase, children may be encouraged to consider and list the pros and cons of each solution. They will also be asked to consider the best 'where, when, and with whom' to try solving interpersonal problems. This includes knowing when it might be most appropriate to seek out adult assistance.

Research has shown that children who develop the skills mentioned above are more likely to exhibit improved mental health, make more positive choices, feel more connected to and display more compassion for others. However, it is no easy feat! As we grow taller, so do the sizes of our problems it seems. However, by starting to flex their problem solving muscles at such a young age, children will only become stronger and more confident to face whatever interpersonal challenges come their way. And it is never too late for us to begin as well 😊