



## PROBLEM-SOLVING & SOCIAL SKILLS... the connection to PARENTING STYLES

- **Helicopter Parents** continually hover and solve problems for their child
- **Lawnmower Parents** clear the way by “mowing down” obstacles and smoothing the path of their child so they do not encounter any issues
- **Free Range Parents** set some rules and guidelines, but with looser parameters and more freedom for their child to explore the world
- **Jet Fighter Parents** keep their distance then swoops in for their child’s emergencies, then flies out
- **Satellite Parents** watch from a distance, which makes them less likely to intervene in issues with their child

In a society that loves to put labels on everything, you may have heard these parenting style references before. There is no perfect parenting style. The above mentioned styles are intended to help you think about what you do when a situation that involves problem-solving comes up with your child.

No matter what your parenting approach, the ultimate goal of parenting is to raise children who are prepared to become independent adults. In order to be successful as adults, children need to acquire problem-solving skills. These skills are gained from experiences in solving their own problems, whenever possible, at every age.

PROBLEM-SOLVING continued on p.2...

## HOW DOES YOUR PARENTING STYLE AFFECT YOUR CHILD’S SOCIAL SKILLS?

<p><b><i>High Initiators</i></b></p> <p>Parents that make sure that their children have opportunities to interact with children their age.</p>	<p><b><i>High Monitors</i></b></p> <p>Parents who intervene in conflicts. The child does not gain the experience of working it out themselves.</p>
<p><b><i>Low Initiators</i></b></p> <p>Children of these parents do not have opportunities to interact with children their age.</p>	<p><b><i>Low Monitors</i></b></p> <p>Parents who do not intervene in conflicts. They allow their children to work out the problem themselves.</p>

Parents who are “High Initiators” and “Low Monitors” are the most likely to have children who interact well in school. Children need opportunities to interact with children their age, and opportunities to work out their own problems with peers. This rule of thumb applies to all ages. Parents can initiate social opportunities throughout the years, such as playing with neighborhood kids, being in 4-H, or playing sports. No matter what the activity, let kids interact and work out their own problems as much as possible!

**PROBLEM-SOLVING... What's a parent to do?** Practice these three simple steps that come from the book and parenting series Parenting with Love and Logic: Teaching Children Responsibility by Foster Cline and Jim Fay.

**When your child has a problem:**

1. **Listen - Really listen, ask clarifying questions (Get all the facts)**
2. **Empathize - This is crucial. Try to understand where they are coming from. Respond in a way so they know you understand them. Say something like, "That's got to be really hard for you." (Children need to know you understand and are on their side.)**
3. **Ask your child, "How are you going to handle it?" - The key word is "YOU". Let your child take ownership of solving their own problem.**

Responding in this way lets your child feel supported. Whether their attempts to solve the problem go well, or not, they have learned skills. Your child has learned to brainstorm and which responses to use again. They have also learned that solving their own problems is achievable. Your child may experience consequences for their actions, and that's ok! Once a parent consistently takes this approach, the results are amazing.

### **AGE APPROPRIATE EXAMPLES FOR LISTENING, EMPATHIZING, AND ALLOWING YOUR CHILD TO BE THE PROBLEM-SOLVER:**

**An Elementary age** child tells you that no one will play with them at recess. You listen, get the details of what they mean by "no one", find out what they would like to be playing at recess, etc. You empathize by saying, "Sounds like you'd like to join in the game of kickball with other kids." Then ask, "How are you going to handle this?"

**A Middle school age** child is upset about a rumor that has been going around about them and "everyone" has heard it. You listen and get the details. You empathize by saying, "That must feel terrible." Then ask, "What can you do about it at this point?"

**A High school teenager** is angry because they missed turning in an assignment that is worth a lot of points. Because it's past due, they're not sure if they can still turn it in. You listen and get the details. You empathize by saying, "That really affects your grade." Then ask, "When can you talk to the teacher about it?"

Material from page one and further information on this topic can be found in the following articles:

<http://www.startribune.com/many-millennials-who-are-the-products-of-helicopter-parenting-are-giving-their-children-more-room-to-grow/504056272/>

<http://www.startribune.com/helicopter-bulldozer-or-lighthouse-identify-your-parenting-style/504056232/>

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