Creating Problem Solvers

Parenting is hard. Especially right now. Parents hear the same thing every day:

"I'm Thirsty."

"He Took My Toy."

"I Have To Go To The Bathroom."

"My Pencil's Broken."

"I Can't Find My Socks."

"She Won't Play With Me."

Children constantly state their problems. From an early age, they are wired to notice things around them.

It is *SO tempting* to respond to their statements with a solution, right? They state the problem; we give a solution.

The Child Says, "*I'm Hungry.*" The Adult Responds, "*Here's A Snack.*"

The Child Says, "*He Pushed Me,*" And The Adult Responds, "*Keep Your Hands To Yourself.*"

The Child Says, "*I'm Cold,*" And The Adult *Hands Over A Jacket.*

The difficulty with these types of verbal transactions is that we favor solving an immediate need over teaching children to become *thinkers*, *doers*, and *problem-solvers*. We are just trying to get through this day, this hour, this minute (especially right now!). We can sometimes forget that these minutes add up. These minutes shape our children and their futures every single day.

Let's start with the end-game in mind.

Think **BIG PICTURE**. *What do we want for our children?*

We hopefully want our young children to grow up to be *independent*, *successful*, and *productive* members of society. We want them to be *inventors*, *innovators*, and *creators*. We need them to be able to solve world problems that haven't even been created yet.

And so, even though it seems like light years in the future, we have to build the foundation for problem-solving **NOW**, while they are young. It is our responsibility to develop the pathways for creative thinking and problem-solving in their brains **NOW**.

When children state a problem as fact, they are not necessarily asking us to solve it for them. (And if they are, it's our job to guide them through the steps to solving it themselves.)

That is why it is crucial that we ask this most important question every single day:

How Are You Going To Solve That Problem?

When your child says, "*I can't reach the juice box*," one response can be:

"What Are You Going To Do To Solve That Problem?"

When your child announces, "*My hands are dirty*," you can ask:

"How Did That Happen?" Or "What Can We Do About That?"

There are dozens of variations of this question:

What are you going to do next?

How did that happen?

How can we fix this?

What's the solution to this problem?

Who's going to take the next step?

The message to the child is the same:

You are capable.

You are a thinker.

You are smart.

You can figure this out.

You are a problem-solver.

You've got it!

Problem-Solving Example:

When your child spills their milk, resist the urge to jump up and grab a towel. Maybe your child exclaims, "I spilled!" Maybe your child just sits there and stares at the puddle. Either way, encourage them to work through it like this:

Notice the problem if they don't say anything: "***Oh! You spilled your milk.***"

And if they still sit and stare, continue: "That's a mess. ***What are we going to do to fix it?***"

And if they still stare guide them through the process:

"What could we use to clean this up?" or

"Where could you go to find a paper towel?"

By "answering" their problems this way, we prompt them to think for themselves and to start solving their own problems. We are fostering independence. We are building the foundation that they need to be successful humans. We are making the future world a better place because your child is the future!