CONVERSATION STARTERS
for a Problem-Solving Discussion
with Tweens & Teens

1

IDENTIFY THE PROBLEM
★ What information do you know?
★ Can you describe what happened?

2

WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?
★ What's upsetting you? How does this problem make you feel?
★ Why is this important to you?
★ What's the worst thing that could happen?

3

WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS?
★ What are possible solutions to this?
★ What do you think would happen if...?
★ How could we work together to solve this?

→ Solution 1

→ Solution 2

→ Solution 3

4

PUT A SOLUTION INTO ACTION
★ Which solutions seem like a good option for this problem?
★ Is it safe and fair? How might people feel about it?
★ What are the biggest obstacles to this solution?

5

EVALUATE THE OUTCOME
★ What solution worked well?
★ What did not work?
★ What would you do differently next time?

How to teach
PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS
» by age group «

Big Life Journal

"SHOW ME THE HARD PART"

3-5 YEARS

- Use **emotion coaching**:
  - Step 1: Name & validate emotions.
  - Step 2: Let them process emotions.
  - Step 3: Problem-solving.
- Say, **"Show me the hard part."**
- Problem-solve with **storybooks** (use the "dialogue-reading" technique).
- Problem-solve with **creative play**.

REFLECT:
What worked? What didn't?

5-7 YEARS

- Teach the problem-solving **steps**:
  - Step 1: What am I feeling?
  - Step 2: What's the problem?
  - Step 3: What are solutions?
  - Step 4: What would happen if...?
  - Step 5: Which one will I try?
- Problem-solve with **craft materials**.
- Ask **open-ended questions**: "How could we work together to solve this?", "What do you think will happen next?"

BREAK PROBLEMS INTO CHUNKS

7-9 YEARS

- **Break down** problems into chunks
  - – brainstorm together
  - – ask open-ended questions
  - – LISTEN
- Show **"The broken escalator"** YouTube video and have a discussion

CREATIVE PROBLEM-SOLVING

9-11 YEARS

- **Creative** problem-solving with **prompts** (e.g., create a jump ramp for cars, design your own game with rules).
- Make them **work** for it (ask HOW they can earn the money to get what they want).
- Encourage them to put it on **paper** with problem-solving graphic organizers available online.

S ituation
O ptions
D isadvantages
A dvantages
S olution

METHOD

12+ YEARS

- **Play chess** together. Players use critical thinking, creativity, analysis of the board, and more.
- Have them learn to **code**. It promotes creativity, logic, planning, and persistence.
- Encourage to start a meaningful **project**.
- Apply the **SODAS** method. This method can be used for big or small problems.
- Encourage to **join** problem-solving **groups**: Odyssey of the Mind, Model U.N., Debate team, Science Olympiad, and others!