



Penn State Better Kid Care Distance Education Lesson

• Problem Solving with Children

Professional Development Code K2C1
Child Development Associate CDA 3

Problem Solving with Children

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Assignments & Required Forms



Lesson Instructions

1. Watch the educational video.
2. Read the workbook.
 - Plan time each day to work on the lesson.
 - Set a goal to complete the lesson in about two weeks.
3. Complete all assignment pages and forms written in ink. Save a copy of all completed work for your files in case there is a need to refer to your saved copy. We will not return incomplete lessons. You will be notified if lessons are incomplete.
4. We encourage the use of distance education lessons in staff meetings; however, all assignments need to be completed independently. Copied answers, “does not apply” answers, or incomplete assignments are considered not complete.
5. **To avoid delays in processing your registration for this professional development, be sure to go over the check list on the Registration Form, include all items, and mail to :**

Penn State Better Kid Care
 Distance Education Program
 341 North Science Park Road, Suite 208
 State College, PA 16803

Please note:

- Two professional development hours will be given for successful completion of this lesson.
- Completed assignments will be checked and returned to you with a certificate of completion.
- Penn State University Better Kid Care Distance Education provides:
 - Continuing Education Units (CEUs)
 - Keystone STARS professional development
 - PA Dept. of Public Welfare required hours
 - Act 48 hours for certified educators
 - Child Development Associate (CDA) credential hours
- Completed assignments must arrive at the Penn State Better Kid Care office for processing at least **6 weeks** before your certification or registration renewal due date.
- The video portion of this lesson was a previous satellite broadcast. Discussion questions are included in most lessons. They can be used by a group of staff members in a child care center or group home. They can also be used in planning a family night to help spark discussion among families.
- If you are completing this as a Web-based lesson, please refer to the online instructions at <http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu/AngelUnits/GeneralDirections.html>

Problem Solving with Children



Important Information about This Lesson

The video portion of this distance education lesson involves working on handouts provided in the workbook. Be sure to have the handouts in the workbook ready to use. You will be encouraged to discuss your results in a group setting. If that is not possible, be thinking of how to apply what you are learning in your child care program.

After you have viewed the video and gone through the exercise handouts, you are ready to begin your assignments. The assignments will involve your active participation as you apply the goals learned in the lesson.

Mail **only** your completed assignment (**not the handouts**) and required forms to the Better Kid Care office for review. See Registration Form for a checklist of all items.

Problem Solving with Children

Distance Education Lesson Overview

When you think about the most important skills that children need to learn before they go to school, you might think of the ability to count, recite the ABC's, or recognize their name in print. Kindergarten teachers and research tell us that success early in school depends more on the social and emotional skills of young children than academic skills. Studies show that children can't learn to read if they can't get along with others, have trouble following directions, and have problems making relationships with other children, teachers, and family. To quote a 2004 study by Zins, et al, "Learning is a social process."

This lesson will focus on ways to teach young children the social and emotional skills they need to be successful in school and throughout life.

Most people don't like conflict and try to avoid it. Many early childhood professionals view conflict in this negative sense. This is clearly seen in responses to children's conflict, when the adult steps in to control the situation and quickly put things back in order. Unfortunately, what children learn from this approach is that if there's a problem, an adult will step in and handle it. Adults who view children's conflict as an opportunity to teach will be more likely to take the time to help children learn the steps to solve their own problems.

This distance education lesson will take a step-by-step approach for teaching children how to solve conflicts. It will include exercises to recognize emotions, an activity for participants to identify and discuss their present methods for dealing with conflict, and techniques to help children learn to solve their own problems. Your workbook also includes a handout with questions to help you reflect on what you just learned and make an action plan to help you begin to use the new information.

Distance Education Lesson Objectives

Participants in the workshop will be able to discuss why it's important to help children develop their social and emotional skills.

Participants in the workshop will be able to describe two ways to help children learn to recognize others' feelings.

Participants in the workshop will be able to talk about three things they can do to begin teaching children how to solve problems with others in non-violent ways.



STYLES OF HANDLING CHILDREN'S CONFLICT

Watch the video clip. Read the answers below and place an "X" by the answer that best describes how you would handle the situation.

- _____ 1. You stop both children and tell them they need to share the baby.
- _____ 2. You ask each child to tell you what's happening and then you tell them that you will set a timer. Mike can play with the baby until the timer rings, then Sue will be able to play with it.
- _____ 3. You take the baby away, telling the children, "If you can't share it no one will play with it."
- _____ 4. You tell Sue that Mike had the baby first. She needs to give it back to Mike and wait until he's finished to play with it.
- _____ 5. You tell Sue to give the baby back to Mike and to wait for her turn to play with it.
- _____ 6. You tell the children that you will set a timer. Mike can play with it until the timer rings and then Sue will be able to play with it.
- _____ 7. You ask each child to tell you what's happening, then ask the children to come up with ways to solve the problem and to choose a solution that works for both of them.
- _____ 8. You ask each child to tell you what's happening, then you tell Sue to give the baby back to Mike and to wait for her turn to play with it.
- _____ 9. You take Sue aside, tell her that Mike is playing with the baby, then help her find another baby to play with.
- _____ 10. You put one child or both children in time-out to think about what they did.
- _____ 11. No one seems to be getting hurt, so you do nothing.

IF YOUR ANSWER WAS	YOUR STYLE IS
1, 3, 5, 6	Sergeant
2, 8	Judge & Jury
4, 9, 10	Referee
7	Peacemaker
11	Bystander

Turn the page for more information about your style of handling children's conflict.

STYLES OF HANDLING CHILDREN'S CONFLICT (CONTINUED)



Sergeant

The adult decides what needs to be done and directs the children to do it. The direction doesn't need to be unkind; children can be told nicely, but clearly, what they need to do.

If safety is an issue, the sergeant style is needed to quickly move children to a safe area.

Problems – The adult makes all the decisions. This style doesn't teach children how to solve their own problems. Children may become angry because the problem may never be solved.



Judge & Jury

The adult decides who was right and who was wrong, then takes action.

Problems – Children learn to depend on adults to solve their problems. One child wins and the other child loses.



Referee

The adult listens to both sides of the story, and then tells the children what they're going to do.

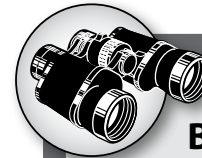
Problems – The referee may never get to the root of the problem. The children don't have the chance to work on solving the problem.



Peacemaker

The adult listens to both sides of the story, and then asks the children for ways to solve their problem. Both children must agree to the solution.

Problems – Takes time!



Bystander

The adult doesn't like conflict and doesn't take any action unless someone is getting hurt.

Problems – The children have no limits as long as no one gets hurt. They quickly learn how to manipulate bystander adults to get and do what they want.

FEELING FACES

Children can't manage their own emotions or understand anyone else's feelings if they don't learn to identify feelings and to "read" the faces of other people. You can help children develop these skills by discussing "feeling faces" with children.

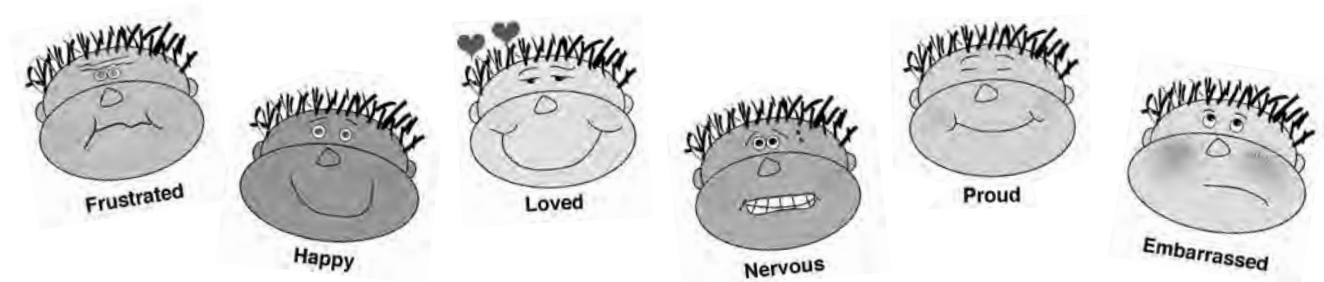
Find pictures of faces showing anger, sadness, disappointment, happiness, irritation, frustration, joy, etc.

Look at pictures in magazines or go on the Web to print your own feeling faces.

Check this Web address for illustrations:

<http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/practical-ideas.html#teachingskills>

Talk about the emotions the children see on the feeling faces. Talk about when they might have had these feelings.



30 Feelings to Talk about with Children

You can help preschool children learn how to manage their own feelings and to understand the feelings of others by talking about feelings. Label the feelings you see. Saying "You look sad today" can open up conversation with a child. Don't be too shy to talk about sad, angry, and frustrated feelings. These feelings are very real to preschoolers. When you give children a chance to talk about their feelings directly, they are less likely to act out or misbehave.

Give children a wide vocabulary of feeling words and they will surprise you with how many of these feelings they have from time to time. Start simple with the youngest children and build up to talking about more complex feelings like sorrow and pride with the older children. Talking about feelings helps children make sense of their own experiences and helps build empathy for others.

Here's a list of feelings to talk about with children:

Happy, sad, mad, frustrated, annoyed, worried, shy, bored, confused, curious, disappointed, fearful, joy, surprise, sorrowful, helpless, hopeful, interested, lonely, loved, peaceful, proud, relieved, confident, cautious, satisfied, hurt, stubborn, guilty, thoughtful



STEP-BY-STEP PROBLEM SOLVING WITH CHILDREN

Do you think children under the age of five are too young to solve their own problems? Try guiding them through the steps of problem solving and you'll find that they can be creative and thoughtful problem solvers.

1. Stop the children as soon as you see a problem starting. Don't let the conflict get worse.

Adult says -- "You have a problem."

Adult describes what you think the conflict is about. For example: "Destiny and Felicia both want the truck."

If you are wrong about what is going on, the children will tell you; then state the problem simply in your own words.

Write what you will say to the children on the video:

2. Ask each child what can be done to handle the conflict.

Make sure the children take turns talking and don't allow one child to interrupt another. For young children, the adult may have to repeat what the child says to make sure the other child understands. Communication needs to be solution-focused and respectful. No name calling or other rude communication is permitted. Listen to each child carefully.

Write each child's ideas for solving the problem on the video:



STEP-BY-STEP PROBLEM SOLVING WITH CHILDREN (CONTINUED)

3. Select a positive solution that each of the children can agree on.

You might not agree with the solution the children choose. Let them try it and figure it out. Then help them find a better solution. Remember: the solution should come from the children, not from an adult.

If the children can't agree, ask other children for their ideas and keep trying until both children agree to a solution.

Sometimes children will get bored with the process and decide to agree or even walk away. This is an OK way to solve a problem in preschool.

Describe the solution that the children on the video chose:

4. Follow through.
Sometimes the solution works but sometimes it doesn't. Problem solve again if the solution isn't successful. Let the children try to come up with a better idea and think through what they learned.

ASSESSING THE EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS OF THE CHILDREN IN YOUR CARE

These questions can help you see the growing emotional and social skills of the children in your care. Building emotional and social skills is the best way to make the children truly ready for success in school and life. Ask yourself these questions about each of the children in your care.

	Child Name									
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Does this child know the names of basic feelings?										
Is this child beginning to express feelings with words rather than with behavior?										
Can this child "read" the basic emotions of another child, like happiness and anger?										
Is this child showing some signs of understanding another person's feelings?										
Is this child able to ask for a toy rather than grab it?										
When a child is playing with a toy and another child wants it, is the playing child able to say, "No, I'm using this" or "I'll give it to you when I'm done"?										
Can this child tell another child to stop if he is doing something the first child doesn't like? For example: "Stop pushing me."										
Can this child stop herself when necessary?										
Can this child speak up for a turn with a toy he wants?										



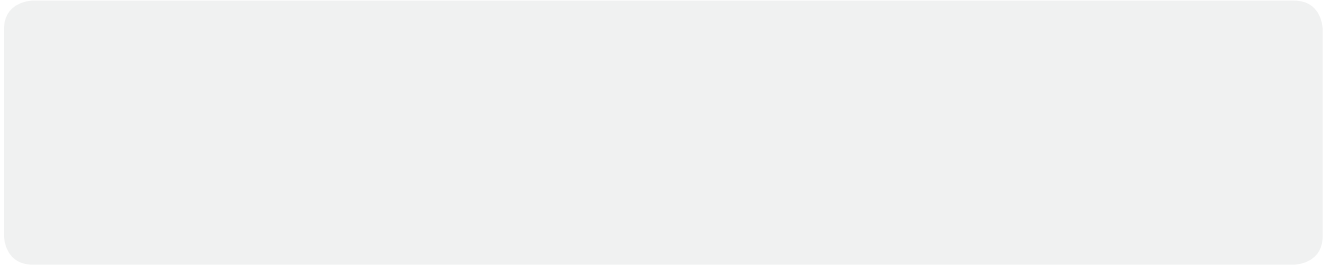
**ASSESSING THE EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS
OF THE CHILDREN IN YOUR CARE (CONTINUED)**

	Child Name									
	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Can this child wait for a turn?										
Can this child find other toys that are similar or use her imagination to make do?										
Can this child find a place to play without invading someone else's space?										
Can this child calm herself down when overexcited?										
Can this child solve a problem with another child by listening to others' ideas and offering solutions?										
Can this child stick with problem solving until a solution is found?										
Can this child ask for adult help in an age-appropriate way?										

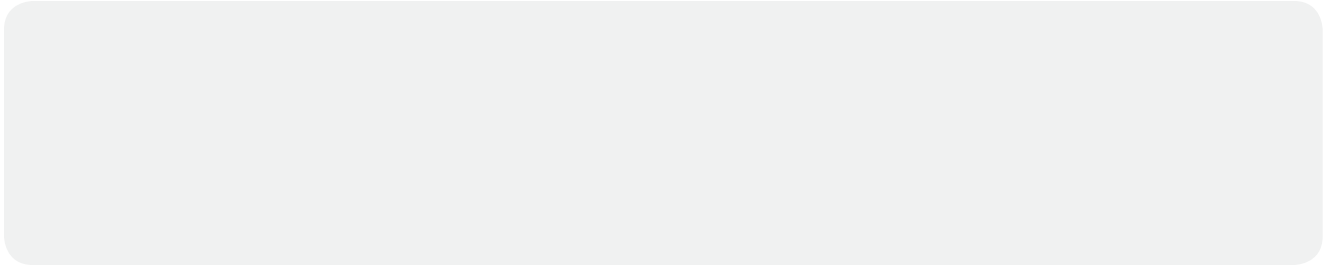
ACTION PLAN

For Problem Solving with Children

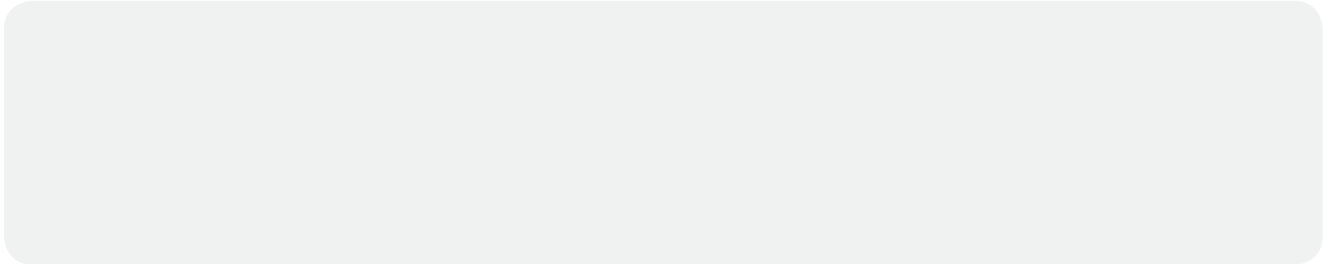
1. What did you learn in this workshop that you would like to try with the children in your care?



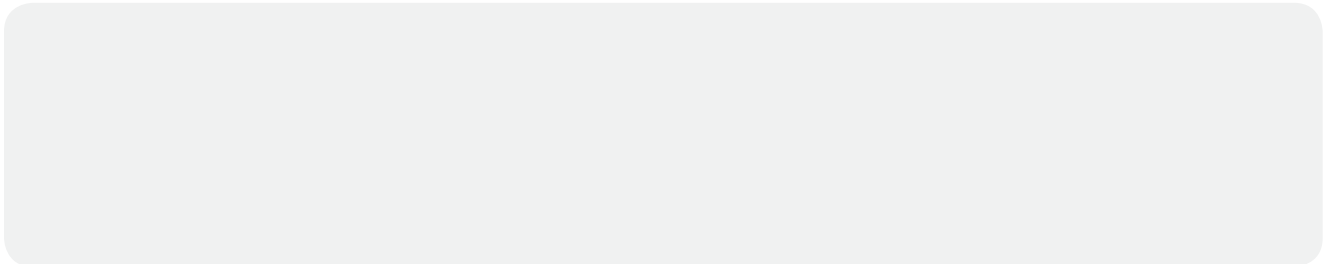
2. What idea(s) will you try tomorrow with the children?



3. What ideas would you like to think more about and try with the children in the future?



4. What steps will you need to take to put your ideas into action?



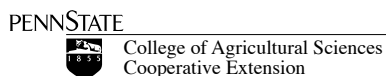


ACTION PLAN (CONTINUED)

5. List any problems you might run into as you put your ideas into action.

6. Do you need to get approval from your supervisor or director before you try out your new ideas?

7. What do you hope will happen from these new ideas?



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This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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Developed by the Penn State Better Kid Care Program
253 Easterly Parkway, State College, PA 16801 • Phone: 800-452-9108 • Website: betterkidcare.psu.edu.

Dr. James E. Van Horn, Better Kid Care Program Director • Lyn Horning, Assistant Director of Programs



Success in School and Life

Learning about Emotions

What do children need to be successful in school and life? Most parents feel that learning their ABCs, numbers, and colors is the way to school success, but teachers tell us that emotional intelligence may be more important than knowing all the right things. Kindergarten teachers say that if a child can share with others, express his feelings and ideas with words, and can be sensitive to others' feelings, then he is really ready for kindergarten.

How can you build your child's emotional intelligence? The first step is to help children learn the language of feelings. Children can't learn to talk about their feelings until they have been taught the words to describe them. Talk with young children about feelings when they are happening. When your child is playing with joy, use the word "happy." When your child is angry, say, "You seem angry." When your child is frustrated, use this big word to describe this big feeling: Say, "It looks like you're frustrated." It often calms children to put their feelings into words.

Sharing books is another great way to help children learn about feelings. Many stories for young children involve characters who show strong feelings—mad, sad, happy, frustrated, annoyed, or frightened. When you are reading a story, take a moment to talk about the feelings of the characters; children can learn a great deal from this. When children have the words to describe how they feel, it is less likely that the feeling will come out in misbehavior.

The next step is to help your child learn how to "read" the feelings of other people. People vary in how naturally empathic they are, but everyone can learn to be more sensitive to the feelings of others. Children learn this best when they are playing with other kids. When a child is sad or mad (or having any strong feeling), gently describe to your child how you know this through their nonverbal signs. For example, clenched fists and tight face muscles can mean anger. When children learn to read emotions on people's faces they become better at finding the right things to do. They might go and get a blanket for a child who is sad, or help find a toy for a mad child. Encourage them to try to help other children. When they do, they are learning to be caring and sensitive friends.



Learning to Solve Problems

All children have problems getting along with others. Young children often try to solve these problems with force: grabbing, pushing and shoving, and biting. The preschool years are the perfect time for children to learn better ways, so that by the time they are in elementary school they have the skills to get along positively with other children. But how do children learn to get along with others? The most important skill we can give young children is to teach them to solve their own problems. Adults won't always be around to solve problems for kids, and children who solve problems with force will eventually find it hard to make and keep friends, so it is critical that children learn the skills they need to handle problems on their own.

You can guide your child toward solving problems with other kids. Most kids are not short on problems to solve. They happen anytime you put two preschoolers together. The next time your child is fighting over a toy, don't put it away. Instead, set it aside and say, "You two have a problem; you both want the toy. When you have a plan for sharing the toy that you both agree to then you may have the toy." Both children want the toy, so they need to figure out a way to work together to get what they want. Sometimes this is all it takes to get kids talking to each other and working out a solution. Other times you may need to provide more specific help and make some suggestions. Often it isn't just who has the toy, the problem is how to play with it. If the children are fighting over a milk carton, you might say, "You could pretend that you are going to the store first and buy it and then you can pretend to cook with it."

Sometimes the idea that the children come up with is highly unlikely to be successful. For instance, two three-year-old girls were fighting over a pair of high-heel dress-up shoes and decided to share them by having each child have one. Their child care professional decided to let them try it, even though it seemed like a solution that was doomed to fail. "They aren't going to learn this unless they try it out. We had to go back and resolve the problem because the girls were fighting again, but it was worth it since the kids were learning to become better problem solvers."

When children are given a chance to practice problem solving, they become better at it. Research has found that kids with problem-solving experience come up with more solutions than those with no experience, and that their solutions are better suited to the situation and more positive rather than forceful.

"Peace Building and Conflict Resolution in Preschool Children," Anita Vestal and Nancy Aaron Jones, *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, Vol. 19, No. 2, p. 131, 2004.



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Discussion Questions

1. Why is it important for children to recognize the feelings of others?
2. What is social-emotional readiness for kindergarten in your view?
3. Why are these social and emotional skills important for a lifetime?
4. How do you begin teaching infants about feelings?
5. How can you help children find other ways to express their feelings besides crying?
6. How can you get children to do acts of kindness?
7. Think of ways you can let infants and toddlers solve their own problem.
8. Discuss the steps of problem solving with three-, four-, and five-year-olds.
9. Talk about what to do when children don't agree to the solution.
10. Discuss the benefits of children learning to problem solve for themselves.



Assignments

Name
Address
City/State/ZIP
County
Phone Number

BKC OFFICE USE ONLY

1. What challenge(s) do you face in teaching problem solving to the children in your early learning program?

2. List an idea you learned in this lesson that you want to try with the children in your program.

Now put your idea into action and tell us how it worked with the children in your care!

3. Describe how you introduced this idea to the children.

4. Describe the children's response to this idea.



Assignments (continued)

Name

5. Do you think your new idea was successful or should you make some changes? Tell us why you think this way.

6. Describe two benefits that you see to teaching children to solve their own problems.



Tell Us More About You...

Since we can't meet face to face, we are interested in knowing more about you. This information is very helpful to the early education specialists who review your assignments. Please return this sheet with your assignment pages.

1. Which of the following best describes you?

- I provide child care in my own home
- I provide child care in someone else's home
- I work in a child care center
- I'm thinking about becoming a child care professional
- Other, please describe

2. How long have you been a child care professional? _____

3. What are the ages of the children in your care? Check all that apply.

- Birth to 12 months
- 13-24 months
- 25-36 months
- 3 years
- 4-5 years
- 6-8 years
- 9 years and over
- Special needs

4. Please feel free to tell us a little about yourself and/or the work you do with children.

5. Other comments (please use the back of this page if necessary).

**Thank you for taking the time to help us make a connection to you
and for being part of our program!**



**Penn State
Better Kid Care Program**

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