

Talking with Your Child

Joyce E. Juntune, Ph.D. Texas A&M University



1. It is always important to begin a frustrating situation by acknowledging the child's feelings. Many children are highly sensitive and operate by emotions more than logic. However, they are bright and when their feelings are acknowledged, they are often able to think more logically. *"It must have been difficult for you to leave your old school, your teacher and your friends. It is not easy to be the new kid in the class. They do not know you and you do not know them."*
2. Brainstorm together on the situation. Write down all ideas (no evaluation of any of the ideas). *"Let's put our heads together and think of what we could do to make it easier for you at school."* *"Let's put our heads together and think of things we could do to make some new friends."*
3. Go through the list together to decide which ideas you like, which you do not like, and settle on a few ideas to try. As you go through the list together, take turns crossing off ideas either one of you does not like or ideas which cannot work—such as "moving back to our old house".
4. When you have settled on a couple ideas, ask the child to decide which idea they want to try first.
5. Help the child (let the child go first with ideas) come up with a plan for implementing the idea. What will they do first, second, third...etc. What problems might come up when trying this idea? What could you do then? Decide how many days you will stick with this plan. Remind the child that a plan does not always work the first time. Sometimes one has to make changes. BUT, you do not know what needs changing until you try it.
6. Have the child make simple pictures or write simple step reminders for the plan.
7. Post the plan where the child can see them—on the mirror, by the bed, on the bedroom door, on the refrigerator—let the child decide.
8. Each morning—ask the child about their plan—what is it? At the end of the day—talk about how the plan worked and if they want to change anything.
9. If the first idea does not work as well as expected—make a plan for idea two and try it for several days.

Children enjoy being an active participant in problem solving. They also become intrigued by the thinking that goes on in problem solving and the rethinking of plans.

Let them own the problem. When a parent owns the problem, the gifted child often sabotages any solution suggested by the parent—"See I told you it wouldn't work." One of the best gifts you can give your child is the confidence of knowing they can solve their own problems.