

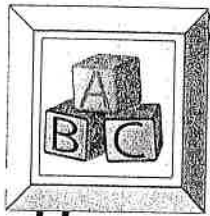
Toddler Visit #16

- PIPE: Playing is Problem Solving



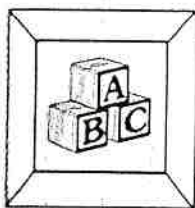
Topics for Next Visit:

- 20 Month Growth & Development
 - Family Strengths & Culture



Playing Is Problem Solving





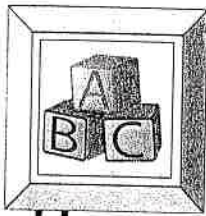
Conceptual Overview

PLAY TOPIC 10

1. Babies and toddlers learn to solve problems through play. They experiment with different ways to play with the same toy and learn something from each trial. Blocks can be chewed on, banged together, banged on the floor, put inside something, handed back and forth, or stacked in different ways. With blocks, toddlers can try to copy your model or create their own. They can pretend to build a train and go somewhere or build a house and live there. They are learning about options and possibilities. They are learning about problem solving.

When we solve a problem we feel competent. We feel internally pleased and strong. By gathering facts, watching others, and trying solutions, we solve our problems and are less anxious. This gives us a feeling of independence. Babies and toddlers constantly strive to “get it right,” to feel independent. Solving problems is one of the greatest feelings of mastery a person has. “I am in control. I am in charge of my life.”

2. Parents are the guides for their toddler's problem solving. They set the stage (define problem, set goal), provide the toys (tools and resources), suggest options (provide information and alternatives), stabilize trials (support systems), answer questions (identify facts and consequences), point out new directions (expand goals). They facilitate, support, and coach the learning process (they divide problems into small steps and praise strengths). They share pride with their child when a goal is gained. They do not do the task or solve the problem for the child.
3. Parents make problem solving fun. Parents ... who help their toddlers have fun solving problems, share their curiosity, let them try new things and meet new people ... are expanding their minds and preparing them for independence. Problems such as picking up clothes or cleaning up a spill can become a game when parents join in. This is how we learn to put tough challenges behind us ... by making them fun as well as challenging. When parents do this, they are raising children who will continue to enjoy exploring, learning, and working on tasks throughout life.
4. Sharing the frustrations of problem solving is another important dimension of parenting. It is easy to share interest, fun, and pride with babies and toddlers. It is harder to acknowledge the frustration, anger, and sadness that can come with failure. Awareness of the fears that babies and toddlers have because they are small, unsure, or responding to past failure is an important parenting skill. Parents should show understanding of their child's frustrations or fears. When they label feelings (“I know you must be angry”) and when they talk about feelings, they will help their children grow emotionally.



Building Blocks to Problem Solving

Identify the problem.

Whose problem is it?
Why is it a problem?
What is your goal?

Gather information.

Communicate ... share ... learn.
Gather resources, advisors, experts and books.
Find mentors, models, and support systems.



Brainstorm alternatives.

List several solutions
Describe a plan for each solution.

Imagine the consequences.

What will be the result of each solution in a week, a month, a year?
Who else will this decision affect?

Identify your strengths and skills.

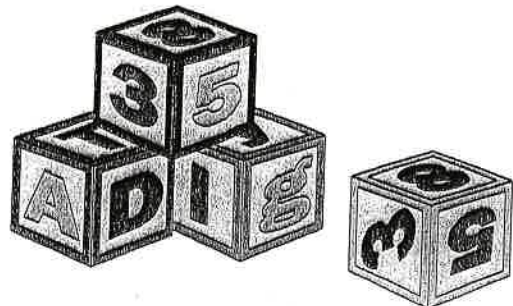
What do I know?
What am I good at?
Do I have good helpers?

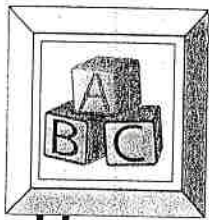
Divide the problem into small steps.

What is the simplest thing I could change?
What is the most important thing to change?

Take action.

Congratulate yourself for each step accomplished!





Problem Solving Is Developmental

AT ABOUT

- 0 - 3 months *"How does my body work? Who will take care of me? How will I survive? How do I find balance?"*
- 3 - 6 months *"I control my body! My hands, my feet, my voice! What can I reach? What can I taste? What does my voice say? Who do I influence?"*
- 6 - 9 months *"How do I get attention? How do I get what I want? How can I make interesting things happen? What are all these objects for?"*
- 9 - 12 months *"I can crawl. I can move away, go anywhere. It is fun and scary. I might be all alone. Who do I copy, who is my guide? Who will help me? Who will show me? How do I keep my parents close?"*
- 12 - 18 months *"I can walk now. I remember my parents. I remember my friends. I have favorite toys, foods, and things. I demand what I want. I have tantrums if I'm told no and then I feel alone. How do I get along? How do I fit in and belong?"*
- 18 - 24 months *"I can talk now. I can feed myself and put things together. My parents give me problems to solve and choices to make. They take me interesting places. They give me rules and instructions. I get confused and frustrated. I make mistakes. Who will help me?"*
- 2 - 4 years *"I'm learning a lot. I go to other places, meet other kids, have other caregivers. I remember a lot about how to solve problems the way my parents showed me. It works with new friends and in new places. I feel confident. I can keep learning and meeting the challenge each new day."*

Based on the works of Piaget, this chart illustrates how problem-solving skills grow as a child develops.

Pretending Is Problem Solving

■ Toddlers' pretend play is problem solving.

They try out different emotions and situations that they have watched.

They imitate the actions they have seen modeled around them.

They rehearse the rules they have learned.

They review the fear of a moment from watching TV.

■ Pretend is a way to see consequences.

By play acting several different endings to a situation, toddlers can begin to see what might happen in the future.

Pretend is a way to understand others. By playing the role of another, a toddler can feel the other person's experience. If a toddler pours juice for her dolls and the doll spills it, the toddler understands how a parent might feel.

■ Pretend is a way to set priorities.

By pretending, toddlers can practice several different outcomes to the same play. This allows them to think about which is the best.

■ Pretend is a way to copy adults.

By pretending, toddlers can act like the people they see and hear around them. This is why 1-year-olds like telephones and kitchen toys.

■ Pretend is a way to practice different emotions.

Pretend is a way for toddlers to try many emotions. It is a way to express anger or sadness. It is a way to tell their feelings to another pretend person or to their toys.

Fear is quieted or enhanced by pretend play. Using their toys to reenact fearful times is a way to try to understand their fear. If parents have had a fight, the toddler will often relive this with toys. Sometimes, toddlers need adults to help them find a happy ending to fearful pretend plays.

Often pretend play is a "private" affair for toddlers. They do not want adults to join in. They may quit pretending or get angry if a parent intrudes.

Adults also pretend. Most adults rehearse their actions or their words about an important challenge in their minds or even in front of a mirror. This is healthy.

■ Pretend play can be a teaching tool.

Parents can teach important lessons with pretend play. They can invent a pretend situation to teach health habits, safety rules, and problem-solving skills. In this way, they can define consequences and set patterns of behavior for the future. It is a way to teach toddlers to think ahead. It is a way to make problem solving more positive.

■ Pretend play can be a way to share fun in your family.

"Let's go swimming," says Dad. He makes a circle on the floor with a string and then jumps inside and pushes his arms in front of him as if swimming.

Baby squeals and jumps in also. Mom puts her toe in the "pool" and says, "Oooh, that's cold!"

Baby is excited and says, "Come in, come in, I'll splash you!"

Puppet Play

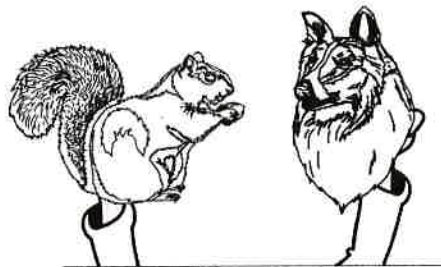
USING PUPPETS OR STUFFED ANIMALS, A PARENT CAN USE DIFFERENT VOICES AND PRETEND A SCENE THAT THE TODDLER MAY NOT YET HAVE EXPERIENCED.

"Look, Mr. Dog, here is a big street. Let's run across."

"Oh, no, Miss Squirrel. We must be careful. Cars and trucks can hurt us. We must stop and look first."

ROLE PLAY WITH PUPPETS THE FOLLOWING IDEAS OR RULES FOR TODDLERS. HOW DOES EACH "PRETEND PLAY" TEACH A SOLUTION TO A PROBLEM?

1. SHARP OBJECTS ARE DANGEROUS.
2. DO NOT PLAY WITH MATCHES.
3. THAT'S TOO HOT FOR BABY TO TOUCH.
4. WHY DO WE SHARE TOYS?
5. GOING TO THE DOCTOR.
6. HOW TO TREAT A PET.



PUPPET
PLAY