

Working Things Out Together

Supported Problem Solving in Practice

1. Regulate together

Are we both calm and ready to think?

Before solving the problem, use co-regulation to help yourself and the child feel calm and safe.

Try:

- Staying calm and connected
- Reducing what is being asked and giving time
- Offering what helps the child regulate - movement, quiet, sensory supports, closeness or space

If either of you is overwhelmed, pause and come back to it later.



2. Work out what's tricky

What is the problem or challenge?

Describe the difficulty **without blaming the child**.

Instead of: "The child won't join the group."

Try: "Joining the group is tricky right now."

Think about what might be making things difficult for the child, the adult or both.



3. Get curious

What might be making this hard for the child?

Look beyond what the child is doing and think about what might be contributing.

Think about:

- What happened before and afterwards
- What the child says, does or communicates
- Their strengths, communication and support needs
- Their family, culture, relationships and community

You don't need to get it right. Stay curious and check your ideas with the child where you can.



4. Think of ideas

What could we try?

Think of different things that might help. **Include the child's ideas and take them seriously.**

Ideas might include:

- Change the environment
- Adjust expectations
- Change how or when something happens
- Add support or scaffolding
- Offer a choice
- Practise a skill together
- Get help from someone else

There doesn't have to be one "right" answer.



5. Make a plan

What will we try?

Choose **one simple thing to try together**.

Where possible, give the child a choice: **"Would you like to try this way or this way?"**

The adult may need to make most of the plan. It is OK for adults to scaffold and make suggestions about what to try.

Look for ways the child can still participate in small ways they can manage.



6. Try and notice

Did it help?

Notice what happened without treating it as success or failure.

Consider:

- What helped?
- What was still tricky?
- What could we change?
- Do we need to try something different?

If it didn't work, **try again with a different idea, more support or a different approach.**

The goal is not to get it right the first time. The goal is to practise problem solving together.

