

Making Decisions

Give Children Advice So They Can Solve Their Own Problems

It's hard to take a "hands off" attitude when kids are making less-than-perfect decisions. But that's exactly what parents need to do to foster children's independence, say experts. Children's problems should be just that; problems they solve. If parents jump in and solve kids' problems, kids can't learn from mistakes. Plus they feel they're not capable. Next time you child must make a decision:

Let her go through the steps of problem solving. Encourage her to think aloud. "What are some possible solutions?" "What are the pros and cons of each?" Listen. Provide guidance if needed. Accept her solutions/actions. Let her handle the consequences of her actions. In this way, your child won't be alone with her concerns. But she will feel that she owns her problems and solutions.

Source: Drs. Kanchan P. Clark and Donovan D. Clark, "Shape Children's Conduct by Modifying Behavior," May 2000, The Brown University Child and Adolescent Behavior Letter, 208 Governor St., Providence, RI, 02906, 1-800-333-7771