LISTEN TO HELP CHILDREN SOLVE PROBLEMS

When children experience challenges inside or outside school it is tempting for parents to overprotect them or solve their problems for them.

Parents who understand the importance of promoting resilience skill their kids up to solve their own problems. They realise that they can’t always be with their kids so they need to equip them with the resources to resolve issues and help them develop coping mechanisms too.

One way of helping kids problem-solve is through careful listening. The following five step Listening process is a variation on ‘Listening Power’ from The 9 Steps to Emotional Fitness by Warren Redman. Not only does it require parents to listen but to ask good questions too. I have dubbed it **Listen & Ask Good questions Strategy** (LAG for short).

This is useful for children aged four and up. You just need to vary your approach and language according to children’s ages.

When kids have real problems or challenges such as a friend moving away, experiencing rejection at school, missing out on being picked for a team or just feeling down in the dumps the **5 step LAG Strategy** maybe just the approach you need.

Here is the 5 step LAG Strategy:

1. **Set the scene:** Let kids know you are ready to listen to them. Stop what you are doing. Make full eye contact. Go somewhere comfortable. Get the message across that “I am listening to you.”
2. **Spot the issue:** Help kids identify the real issue. Sometimes not being picked for a team masks a deeper issue of not feeling good enough. “So it sounds like the real issue is…….. Would that be right?”
3. **Check with what you’ve heard:** “I am hearing that you…………. Am I right?” You may be off the mark so keep checking and let your child direct you?
4. **Sum up what you have heard:** “Okay, I think I have the full picture now and how it affects you. I understand that……..”
5. **Let your child call the action shots:** Ask your child what he or she would like you to do. This is the most significant step as it places you in their hands (in the nicest possible way). “Can I help in any way? What support do you think you need?” From my experience you often don’t have to do a thing. Kids just appreciate being heard. It is reassuring when someone is on your wavelength.

The LAG Strategy is about developing real empathy, which is sometimes hard to do in our busy, frantic world. It is also a great relationship transformation strategy that could be used by many dads who can be either quick to judge their kids or just jump in with solutions regardless of its impact on kids as that is what blokes tend to do.

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