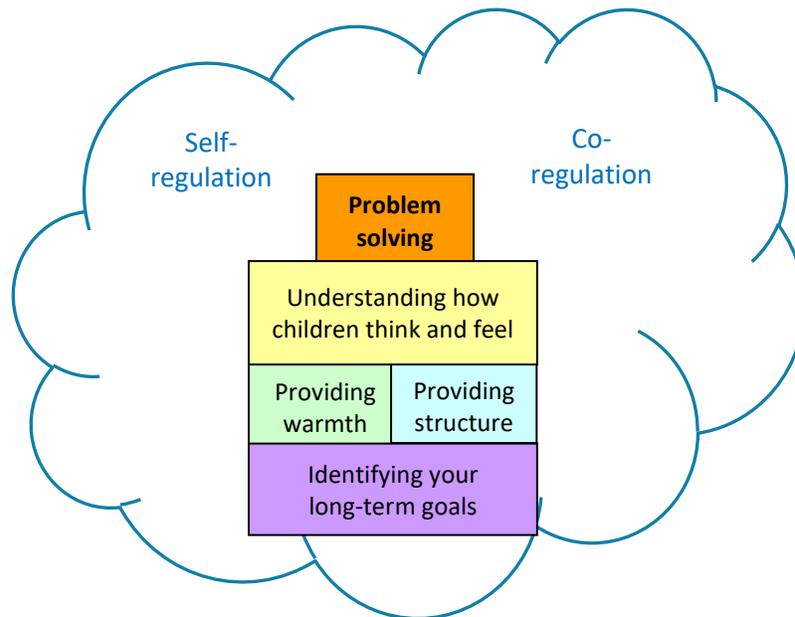


Problem Solving

In Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting (PDEP), we view conflict as a problem to be solved. Rather than punishing, we put all the parts of the PDEP model together to think our way through the problem.



First – Self-regulate. Whether it's building a house or raising children, to solve any problem we need to start with a calm mind. It's hard to find solutions when we're upset, angry or frustrated. So, the first step in resolving a problem such as conflict with a child is self-regulation. As adults, we need to calm our feelings and body, so that our minds can think before we approach the problem with our children.

This is not easy to do at first. It takes practice. It might help to think of these feelings of tension and stress as if they were a traffic light. Body tension, shallow breathing, rapid heart rate, and anger are like a yellow light – a signal to slow down, breathe and relax your body before proceeding.



Self-regulation is a learned skill. Once we know how to do it for ourselves, our calm presence and understanding words can help our child learn this critical life skill through **co-regulation** (see below), so together we can think about what to do next.

Then – Focus on your long-term goals. In PDEP, we are guided by our long-term goals. Shifting our focus from the immediate conflict to our long-term vision pulls us out of the power struggle. It reminds us of what we’re trying to accomplish as parents, and what we want to model for our children. For example, we might want our children to be good at managing stress and to be good problem solvers who don’t hurt other people. When we hold that vision in our minds, it helps to guide our responses.

Then – see it through the child’s eyes. In PDEP, we ask ourselves, what might our child be thinking and feeling? We remind ourselves of the child’s age and level of understanding. Maybe a young child doesn’t have a concept of time yet. Or maybe a teenager is really missing her friends. If we think of their behaviour as ‘bad,’ we get an urge to punish them by hitting, sending them to time-out, or taking away the things they love. Remember that their behaviour – just like ours – is an expression of their thoughts and feelings. When we see the situation through our child’s eyes, it can look very different.

Then – co-regulate with your child by providing Warmth and Structure to solve the problem together.

When our nervous system is calm and regulated, this helps our child soothe their stress response. This is called ‘co-regulation’ because we are self-regulating together. We help our child learn to self-regulate by providing Warmth and Structure.

Providing **Warmth** means ensuring that our child feels safe and secure, not afraid. This helps them soothe their nervous system, which makes it easier for them to learn.

Providing **Structure** means ‘scaffolding’ their learning with information, guidance and support. We listen to their point of view and provide clear information and explanations in a way that they’ll understand and that will help them learn.

Problem Solving across the Lifespan

Babies are totally dependent on their parents for regulation. By holding and rocking them, and speaking in a soothing voice, parents help their babies feel safe and secure. Babies are completely dependent on adults to solve their problems for them.



As children get older and more experienced in self-regulation, they will start problem-solving *with* us. As we go through this process together through the years, *they* will get better and better at self-regulating, thinking about their long-term goals, reflecting on what they're thinking and feeling, and finding ways to solve problems without hurting other people.

Remember. Each conflict is unique and so is each child. But each conflict can be solved using this approach – because it focuses our minds on what we want to model for our child.

And practice. You can practice problem solving at every age with the examples in the PDEP Parent Book, available for free download from PDEL's website www.positivedisciplineeveryday.com.