



FAMILIES TACKLING TOUGH TIMES TOGETHER

ORIENTATION FOR ENGAGEMENT AND DISSEMINATION PARTNERS

Our Family is Creative! Collaborative Problem Solving

Theme 2: “*Our Family is Creative! Collaborative Problem Solving!*” is the *Families Tackling Tough Times Together* resilience theme for this week. According to Froma Walsh, one of the world’s leading scientific experts on family resilience, every day the pandemic brings families big and little problems to solve. Collaborative **problem solving** helps family members build skills in shared decision-making, meeting in the middle on differences, and a feeling that everyone’s input is valued.

Creative brainstorming, as a key part of collaborative problem solving, helps all families get through tough times. *Shared decision making*, as a key part of collaborative problem solving, includes the opportunity for family members to share and respect differences, while working toward a common goal. *Conflict management*, as a key part of collaborative problem solving, helps families address issues with positive emotional response while focusing on the greater good. Overall, this collection includes ideas to help parents and/or caregivers, children, youth, young adults, and older adults to enhance problem solving skills together.

In order to practice skills of **problem solving** this week’s activities encourage family members to:

1. Focus on goals and take steps to reach them
2. Collaborate in making decisions and solving problems
3. Pull together as a team to manage and master challenges
4. Try at least one resilience-building activity this week

For example, in this week’s collection there is an activity for youth titled, “Reframing.” You can engage in discussion about the activity by sharing ways families with youth were successful or ways they struggled to use this activity. Families can post examples of statements they worked to reframe and/or share stories about ways they encouraged youth to positively reframe statements. Another approach is to “seed” the conversation of the families you work with by sharing your own attempts at using this activity.

Another way to create connection with families this week is to encourage them to share personal examples of how they used the activity. For example, using the Families Together Facebook group, one parent shared an example of collaborative problem solving after a hike with her two young children. In her post she shared, “It may not look like it, but this is some collaborative problem solving. My 4-year-old got tired at the end of our hike. We talked about solutions like me carrying him (not an option because I was already carrying the baby). He came up with the solution of taking a rest and laid down to “fill up his tank.” I wasn’t wild about him lying all the way down in the middle of the trail, but this was his choice and it worked! He happily made it all the way back to the car after his rest.” She posted pictures of her child lying down and a picture of him smiling after he made it through the trail. She received messages of encouragement from other group members and other shared stories as well.

For Additional Information on this Week’s Theme

[Watch the interview with Froma Walsh on ways families can engage in collaborative problem solving](#)