

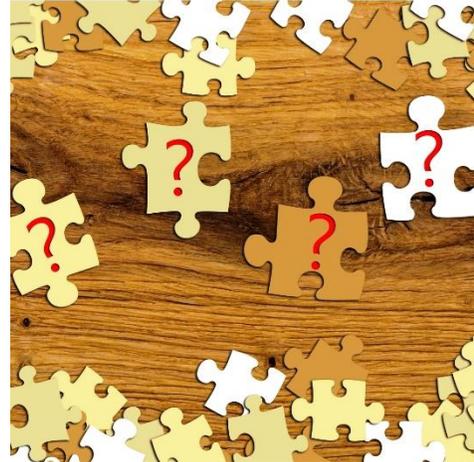
Using Curiosity Questions To Solve Problems

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Your kids are encountering and solving problems all day long. When they are babies, they let you know they have a problem by crying. You then try to solve their discomfort by doing things like feeding them, changing their diaper, or rocking them.

The older they become the more they can solve their own problems. If you continue to solve their problems for them, they do not learn how to think through their problems on their own. They learn to rely on you instead of themselves.

How can you provide guidance without jumping in with solutions? Asking the right questions can help your children think through problems. The trick is asking helpful questions that do not feel like an interrogation!



Avoiding Unhelpful Questions

Rhetorical questions are not helpful as their aim is to shame. [Shaming kids is harmful](#), not helpful. When you ask a rhetorical question, you are expressing your displeasure. The question does not provide guidance in solving the problem. These are some examples of rhetorical questions:

- Why can't you behave?
- What were you thinking?
- What's wrong with you?
- How many times do I have to ask you?
- Why are you so stubborn?

Hearing these questions is likely to make your children feel bad about themselves. If your child tries to answer a rhetorical question, it adds fuel to the fire. These questions do not help your child move towards coming up with a solution.

Another thing to avoid is asking questions that aim to fix the blame instead of the problem. For example, suppose you see dirt tracked in by the front door. You might be tempted to ask your kids, "Who forgot to take their shoes off and tracked in this dirt?" This question promotes finger pointing and denial. Instead, ask one of your kids to clean up the dirt. That child may protest claiming not to have made the mess. Calmly respond, "Regardless, I'd like you to clean it up. Thank you!"

How do you know if you are asking questions that will help your child solve the problem? Answering the question should cause your child to think more broadly or consider different angles. When your children become defensive, they are feeling attacked by your questions. That's a signal to reconsider your approach.

Using Curiosity Questions

When your kids have a problem, they are the best ones to solve it. They know how they feel about the situation and what went into creating it. They control their behavior and decisions about what they will or won't do.

You can help them think through problems by asking curiosity questions. Curiosity questions are ones that you wonder about but to which you do not already know the answer. These questions can help your children see their logic and emotions in a situation.

You aren't telling your child what to do. Rather, you are helping them consider various aspects of the problem. Your goal is to guide them in coming to their own decisions. You listen to their responses and ask further clarifying questions as needed.

Here are some examples of curiosity questions:

- What is it you would like in this situation?
- How are you feeling about this?
- What is your plan for handling this?
- If you put yourself in the other person's shoes, what do you think they are experiencing?
- How might your choice affect others?
- What changes could you make to improve the situation?
- What would it look like if you got what you wanted?

The intention behind the questions is to help your children think more deeply. Pause and give your child plenty of time to come up with an answer. Be comfortable with a few minutes of silence. In answering the questions your kids may gain new insights into solving their problem.

Let's look at a few examples.

Situation: You learn that your child has three missing science assignments.

Curiosity Question: What is your plan for getting your science assignments turned in?

Situation: Your child has posted the picture on social media that you don't think is appropriate.

Curiosity Question: How did you decide to post that picture?

Situation: Your kids are fighting over which movie to watch.

Curiosity Question: You each want to watch a different movie. How are you going to solve this?

These questions will likely lead to a longer discussion. Carefully listen to your child. Request clarifying information by saying things like

- "Say more about ..."
- "Help me understand ..."
- "Tell me what you meant when you said ..."

Keep your tone gentle. Reassure your child that you would like to help them. Avoid interrupting them or offering unsolicited advice. Remember your goal is to let them come to their own conclusions. You are helping them mature by allowing them to take responsibility for solving their own problems.

Kathy Slattengren is an internationally recognized, inspirational parent educator and founder of Priceless Parenting, <http://www.PricelessParenting.com>. Priceless Parenting offers online [parenting classes](#), [parenting presentations](#) and [parent coaching](#). Parents learn to effectively handle misbehavior while building loving relationships. © Priceless Parenting, LLC