

PESOS: Joint Problem Solving Steps

Permission

- Ask permission, and agree on a good time to talk (pick a time when you are both “level-headed!”)
- Asking Permission is not only respectful, but increases the odds that the conversation will be productive.

Empathize

- **“I’ve noticed that _____ (highly specific and neutral description of the problem.) What’s up?”**
- Gather information about child’s perspective (Who, What, Where, When, How). Be truly curious.
- Probe deeper for more complex issues: “Tell me more.” “I’m a bit confused about. . . “
- Re-state what you’re hearing to check for understanding.
- *Do not* begin to problem solve!
- ‘Bottom line’ it: **“So it sounds like your concern is _____.”**
Validate concern: **“Seems like a valid concern.”**

State Your Concern

- **“My concern is _____” or “The thing is, _____.”**
- The problem is that there are *two* concerns, your child’s and yours. Both are valid.

Options brainstorming

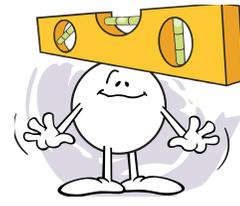
- Invite problem solving: **“I wonder if there’s a way to (address your concern) and also (address my concern.) Do you have any ideas?”**
- Don’t be a genius! Let your child think and give ideas.
- Brainstorm together without any evaluation whatsoever.
- Your goal: demonstrate that you are as interested in your child’s ideas as your own. If you already know the solution, you are doing it wrong.

Select an idea to try

- Must be realistic
- Must be mutually satisfactory

Then implement, observe, and repeat PESOS as needed. Sometimes the first try does not work, and you have to try again.

Prepared by Marcilie Smith Boyle, and based on Ross Greene’s Collaborative Problem Solving from “The Explosive Child.” PESOS acronym created by Marcilie Smith Boyle.



PESOS: Joint Problem Solving Steps *Toddler or Short Cut Version*

Use this version when you have a good sense of your child's perspective already, or if your child is under 4.

(Permission)

- If needed, ask permission, and agree on a good time to talk.
- Often problem solving with toddlers occurs "in the moment," and so this step is unnecessary (as long as both are "level-headed.")

Empathize

- "I can see that you would like _____."

State Your Concern

- "And I need _____."

Options brainstorming

- "What should we do? / How can we solve this problem?"
- Brainstorm if child is able
- Give *limited choices* if child is not: "You can ____ or _____. What do you pick?"

Select an idea to try

- Let child choose among acceptable options.

Then implement, observe, and repeat PESOS as needed. Sometimes the first try does not work, and you have to try again.

Example:

(Permission): Can you listen to Mommy with your eyes and whole body?

Empathize: I can see that you would like to play with me . . .

State Your Concern: And I need to finish cooking dinner now.

Options brainstorming: So would you like to play with the measuring cups or help me stir?

Select an idea to try: Let child choose which option to do

Prepared by Marcilie Smith Boyle, and based on Ross Greene's Collaborative Problem Solving from "The Explosive Child." PESOS acronym created by Marcilie Smith Boyle.

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