

## Social Skills

### Big Problem/Little Problem

Dear Parents,

This activity involves identifying if a problem or setback is a Big Problem or a Little Problem. This vocabulary helps children gain perspective on the size of a problem and supports their ability to self-regulate. Using the question “Is this a big problem or a little problem?” gives a child perspective on the magnitude of the problem and should be taught and practiced when a child is calm.

Big problems may involve safety, such as being injured or lost. These big problems warrant a heightened emotional response. While we validate the emotional response “I see that you are sad (mad/scared)”, it is important to remember that little problems are no big deal! A little problem may be: a friend doesn’t want to hold your hand, you don’t want to go to bed, you have a snack you don’t like, you want to play trains and your friend wants to play cars, etc. Little problems do not warrant a big emotional response. When your child becomes angry over a minor setback or problem, ask them “Is this a big problem or a little problem?” “It is a little problem. We do not need to become angry over a little problem”. Children should be encouraged to try to solve little problems themselves; if they are unable to, they can solicit help from their teacher or parent. We distinguish big problems as emergency situations and as requiring adult support.

In addition, we practice self-calming skills with the children. Remember to help them calm down if they become escalated when presented with a problem. Self-calming skills include self-talk (“calm down”), deep breathing and counting.

We hope you will practice these skills at home. Thank you for supporting our work with your children!