

# Problem-Solving with Young Children

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My young grandson loves listening to Lion King music when driving to and from preschool. Each time we get into the car he has me start the CD at the beginning.

Immediately, when the dramatic music of flight from the kingdom begins, he asks why the music is so sad. Each time I respond with the same answer that the animals are sad because they have to leave their homes. I do not embellish on the fighting, the killing and the war that is part of the story; but he knows it is a sad situation. Finally, after talking about the Lion King story for several weeks, I asked my grandson what he thought was happening when he heard the sad music. He painted a vibrant picture with words of sadness, but still asked why. Part of my response to his question will be to take him to see the Lion King play. After

reading John F. Barell's book, "Why Are School Buses Always Yellow", I was able to engage in the following critical thinking dialogue with my grandson by asking good questions:

When my grandson asked, "Grandma, why are they playing sad music?"

I responded by asking, "What makes you think the music is sad?" This encouraged my grandson to discuss what he heard in relation to what he already knows. When the music represents the animals flight from home, I asked "What do you think is happening during this music?"

Then I asked, "How do people feel when they have to leave their homes or their schools?" My goal in asking these questions was to have my grandson describe his own feelings. In addition, John Barell's book includes the following other reflective questions that can be asked:

"Have you ever had a similar experience? Or one where you might play such sad music? Tell me about it."

"Let's pretend I am an animal in the show. What do you wish to ask me about what's going on?" If the answer is something you do not know, then what?

"What might you ask me or one of the animals?"

"How is your situation and that of the animals alike or different?" It is helpful to pose a question that would guide the child to make the comparison himself without providing the language.

By guiding my grandson to answer open ended questions about the sad music in the Lion King story, he was able to talk about how sad a person feels when they have a

conflict at school or when they have had to move from a home that they loved to a different home. My grandson was able to relate his feelings to the sad music to his own life experiences and suggest answers to his questions. Happily, he now enjoys the Lion King CD without anxiety about the emotions conveyed by the music.

Please share with us challenging questions that your child has asked in the comments section below or by email on the contact page. We will share responses to your challenging questions in the reply section under this blog.

Enjoy discussions with your children!

Warm regards,

Mary Ann

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