Fix It, Coach It, or Listen?

TOPIC: Resilience, problem-solving, independence, parent-child communication

AGE: About 7 to 14

SETTING: Family, classroom, youth program

A card game that helps kids and adults decide together what kind of help a problem really needs.

1 Pick a Card. Choose Your Help.

Read a situation card out loud. The child and the adult each choose one response on their own, then reveal at the same time.

LISTEN

"I mostly need someone to hear me."

COACH

"Help me think through my choices."

FIX / ACT

"An adult needs to get involved."

Safety first: If anyone could get hurt, is being threatened, or is in danger, an adult steps in. Those situations are always FIX / ACT.

2 Compare Answers. Talk About It.

How to play

1. Read a situation card out loud.
2. The child and the adult each choose Listen, Coach, or Fix / Act in private.
3. Reveal your choices together.
4. Compare. The learning happens where your answers differ.

Discussion questions

- Why did you choose that response?
- What would make this situation more serious?
- When should an adult step in?
- How could someone help without taking over?
- What could you try first?

Kids learn

Asking for help is appropriate. Some problems are also theirs to try first.

Adults learn

Helping does not always mean solving right away. Sometimes listening is the help.

Works for teachers, parents, mentors, and grandparents.

Inspired by: Saavedra, J. (Host). (2026, March 4). *Help kids face failure without stepping in to fix it* [Audio podcast episode, with guest Dr. Nanika Coor]. In *The Opportunity Gap*. Understood. https://www.understood.org/en/podcasts/the-opportunity-gap/help-kids-face-failure

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FIX IT, COACH IT, OR LISTEN?

Situation Cards

Cut on the dashed lines. Circle the help you would pick, then write why. Remember: if someone could get hurt, it is always FIX / ACT.

Left out

Your friends played a game at recess and didn't ask you to join.

PICK **Listen** **Coach** **Fix / Act**

WHY? _____

Stuck on homework

You tried a math problem three times, and you still don't get it.

PICK **Listen** **Coach** **Fix / Act**

WHY? _____

Rough day

Nothing went right today. You just want to tell someone about it.

PICK **Listen** **Coach** **Fix / Act**

WHY? _____

Missing library book

Your library book is due tomorrow, and you can't find it anywhere.

PICK **Listen** **Coach** **Fix / Act**

WHY? _____

Mean messages

Someone keeps sending you mean messages, even after you asked them to stop.

PICK **Listen** **Coach** **Fix / Act**

WHY? _____

Friend fight

You and a close friend had an argument, and now you're not talking.

PICK **Listen** **Coach** **Fix / Act**

WHY? _____

Big project

A big project is due on Friday, and you don't know where to start.

PICK **Listen** **Coach** **Fix / Act**

WHY? _____

Risky dare

Some older kids dare you to do something that could get someone hurt.

PICK **Listen** **Coach** **Fix / Act**

WHY? _____

Lost the game

Your team lost the big game, and you feel awful about it.

PICK **Listen** **Coach** **Fix / Act**

WHY? _____

Group project

One person in your group isn't doing their part of the work.

PICK **Listen** **Coach** **Fix / Act**

WHY? _____

Stranger online

Someone you don't know asks where you live during an online game.

PICK **Listen** **Coach** **Fix / Act**

WHY? _____

Your own situation

_____

_____

PICK **Listen** **Coach** **Fix / Act**

WHY? _____

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