**The Size of a Problem**

Problems are not created equal. For children they can be as commonplace as a paper cut or as complicated as having to cope with a family tragedy. When working with our socially-challenged kids we talk about problems in three sizes: small problems, medium problems, and big problems. Regardless of scale, the hidden rule in problem solving with preschool and elementary school age children is that we are expected to react to problems in a manner that matches (or is smaller than) the size of the problem. This is where social problem solving can get tricky. A problem that is perceived by one person as being small could cause a person with social learning challenges to have big feelings about it and then have a big reaction, which would be unexpected. Not only does this mismatch create more anxiety in the individual, it can also limit the effectiveness of solving the current problem while at the same time creating a new problem.

Figuring out the size of the problem is the first step in being able to match our emotional reaction accordingly.

