

# Collaborative & Proactive Solutions

THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED

## Moving From Power and Control to Collaboration and Problem Solving

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# WHAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT

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- Lenses
- Practices
- Structures

# SIX KEY THEMES

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1. Emphasis is on **problems** (and solving them) rather than on behaviors (and modifying them)...**upstream** (not downstream)
  - Challenging behavior is simply the signal...the fever...the means by which a child **communicates** that he/she is having difficulty meeting certain expectations
  - Behaviors are not the only observable, objective, quantifiable data...unsolved problems are too

## SIX KEY THEMES

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2. The problem solving is **collaborative** rather than unilateral
  - Something you're doing *with* the kid rather than *to* him
3. The problem solving is **proactive** rather than emergent
  - This is possible only if we answer two important questions: **why** and **when** is this kid challenging?
4. Understanding comes before helping

# SIX KEY THEMES

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## 5. Kids do well if they can

- If the kid could do well, he would do well
  - Not True:
    - Attention-seeking
    - Manipulative
    - Coercive
    - Unmotivated
    - Limit-testing

## 6. Doing well is preferable

- We've been focused on motivation when we should have been focused on skills

## ANSWER TO THE QUESTION WHY:

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### Challenging Kids are Lacking Skills

**Challenging kids are challenging because they're lacking the skills not to be challenging...**they are delayed in the development of crucial cognitive skills, such as flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, and problem-solving.

- Challenging kids aren't always challenging
- They're challenging in conditions in which certain skills are being demanded
- It's a developmental delay

# WHAT SKILLS ARE BEHAVIORALLY CHALLENGING KIDS LACKING?

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- ✓ Executive skills
- ✓ Language processing/communication skills
- ✓ Emotion regulation skills
- ✓ Cognitive flexibility skills
- ✓ Social skills

# THE TOP 5

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## Skills That Foster the Better Side of Human Nature

- Empathy
- Appreciating how one's behavior is affecting others
- Resolving disagreements without conflict
- Taking another's perspective
- Honesty



# ANSWER TO THE QUESTION WHEN:

## The Clash of the Two Forces

Challenging episodes occur **when expectations outstrip skills**

- “unmet expectations” = “unsolved problems”
- results in “incompatibility episodes”



# ADULT ROLES IN THE LIVES OF BEHAVIORALLY CHALLENGING KIDS

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- Identify lagging skills and unsolved problems
- Solve problems collaboratively and proactively
  - Promotes a problem solving partnership
  - Engages kids in solving the problems that affect their lives
  - Produces more effective, durable solutions
  - Simultaneously teaches skills

# ASSESSMENT OF LAGGING SKILLS AND UNSOLVED PROBLEMS (ALSUP)

**ALSUP** ASSESSMENT OF LAGGING SKILLS & UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

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CHILD'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTIONS:** The ALSUP is intended for use as a discussion guide rather than as a freestanding check-list or rating scale. It should be used to identify specific lagging skills and unsolved problems that pertain to a particular child or adolescent. If a lagging skill applies, check it off and then (before moving on to the next lagging skill) identify the specific expectations the child is having difficulty meeting in association with that lagging skill (unsolved problems). A non-exhaustive list of sample unsolved problems is shown at the bottom of the page.

| LAGGING SKILLS  | UNSOLVED PROBLEMS |
|---|-------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty handling transitions, shifting from one mindset or task to another  |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty doing things in a logical sequence or prescribed order  |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty persisting on challenging or tedious tasks  |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor sense of time   |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty maintaining focus   |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty considering the likely outcomes or consequences of actions (impulsive)  |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty considering a range of solutions to a problem   |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty expressing concerns, needs, or thoughts in words  |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty managing emotional response to frustration so as to think rationally  |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chronic irritability and/or anxiety significantly impede capacity for problem-solving or heighten frustration  |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty seeing "grays"/concrete, literal, black & white, thinking   |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty deviating from rules, routine   |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty handling unpredictability, ambiguity, uncertainty, novelty  |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty shifting from original idea, plan, or solution  |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty taking into account situational factors that would suggest the need to adjust a plan of action  |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inflexible, inaccurate interpretations/cognitive distortions or biases (e.g., "Everyone's out to get me," "Nobody likes me," "You always blame me," "It's not fair," "I'm stupid") |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty attending to or accurately interpreting social cues/poor perception of social nuances   |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty starting conversations, entering groups, connecting with people/lacking other basic social skills   |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty seeking attention in appropriate ways   |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty appreciating how his/her behavior is affecting others   |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty empathizing with others, appreciating another person's perspective or point of view   |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty appreciating how s/he is coming across or being perceived by others   |                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory/motor difficulties   |                   |

**UNSOLVED PROBLEMS GUIDE:**  
Unsolved problems are the specific expectations a child is having difficulty meeting. Unsolved problems should be free of maladaptive behavior; free of adult theories and explanations; "split" (not "clumped"); and specific.

**HOME EXAMPLES**

- Difficulty getting out of bed in the morning in time to get to school
- Difficulty getting started on or completing homework (specify assignment)
- Difficulty coming indoors for dinner when playing outside
- Difficulty agreeing with brother about what TV show to watch after school
- Difficulty with the feelings of seams in socks
- Difficulty brushing teeth before bedtime

**SCHOOL EXAMPLES**

- Difficulty moving from choice time to math
- Difficulty sitting next to Kyle during circle time
- Difficulty raising hand during social studies discussions
- Difficulty getting started on project on tectonic plates in geography
- Difficulty standing in line for lunch

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# USING THE ALSUP

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## Expect lightbulbs to go on when...

- Caregivers come to recognize that a kid is, indeed, lacking many skills
- Caregivers come to recognize why prior interventions have been ineffective
- Caregivers begin to regret the manner in which they've been interacting with a kid based on incorrect assumptions
- Caregivers become aware that unsolved problems occur under highly specific conditions
- Caregivers recognize that unsolved problems are predictable and therefore be solved proactively
- Caregivers begin pondering how they're going to create mechanisms for changing practices given what they now know about a kid's difficulties

# THE PROBLEM SOLVING PLAN

**PROBLEM SOLVING PLAN** Collaborative & Proactive Solutions  
THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED

CHILD'S NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

**UNSOLVED PROBLEM #1**

Adult taking the lead on Plan B:

Kid concerns identified: (Empathy step)  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Adult concerns identified: (Define the Problem step)  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Solution agreed upon: (Invitation step)  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Problem Solved?  
YES?  DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
NO?  COMMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

**UNSOLVED PROBLEM #2**

Adult taking the lead on Plan B:

Kid concerns identified: (Empathy step)  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Adult concerns identified: (Define the Problem step)  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Solution agreed upon: (Invitation step)  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Problem Solved?  
YES?  DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
NO?  COMMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

**UNSOLVED PROBLEM #3**

Adult taking the lead on Plan B:

Kid concerns identified: (Empathy step)  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Adult concerns identified: (Define the Problem step)  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Solution agreed upon: (Invitation step)  
DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Problem Solved?  
YES?  DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
NO?  COMMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

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# OPTIONS FOR HANDLING UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

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## PLAN A:

Solve the problem unilaterally

## PLAN B:

Solve the problem collaboratively

## PLAN C:

Set the problem aside for now

# TIMING IS EVERYTHING

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## INCOMPATIBILITY EPISODES ARE HIGHLY PREDICTABLE

**CRISIS MANAGEMENT:** Intervention is reactive and occurs emergently, in the heat of the moment (“What should I do *when?*”)

**CRISIS PREVENTION:** Intervention is planned and occurs proactively, well before highly predictable incompatibility episodes occur again (“What am I going to do *before?*”)

# PLAN B

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## Solve the problem collaboratively

1. Empathy Step

(gather information so as to identify child's concerns)

2. Define Adult Concerns Step

(identify adult concerns)

3. Invitation Step

(collaborate on a solution that is realistic and mutually satisfactory)



# HOW ARE THE SKILLS TRAINED?

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- Some skills can be trained explicitly (in the traditional sense)
  - some social skills
  - language processing/communication skills
- Skills are being taught in each of the three steps of Plan B

# FINAL QUESTIONS

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- Do you still have expectations?
- Is adult-child conflict inevitable?
- Are the ways in which we're going about parenting, teaching, disciplining, and interacting with our kids teaching the skills on the better side of human nature?

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/RESOURCES

A photograph of a woman carrying a young child on her back. They are in a grassy field, and the scene is backlit by a bright sun, creating a strong lens flare and a warm, golden glow. The woman is wearing a dark top, and the child is wearing a striped shirt. The overall mood is peaceful and intimate.

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