

Rethinking Challenging Behaviors

Moving from Power Struggle to Problem Solving

Eleni E. Siderias, Founder

April 1, 2024

Bergen County CHADD Speaker Series



Adenda

Me

You

Backwards Design Your Hopes & Dreams for your Child(ren)

Proactive Strategies

Problem-Solving

Healing



Me - Educational Leader & Consultant

Theory & Practice → Bespoke Solutions

LD, ADHD, Gifted Ed, Curriculum, Instruction, Adult Learning

B.S. (Childhood Education) from St. John's University

M.A. (Gifted Education) & M. Ed. (Leadership in Curriculum and Teaching) from Teachers College, Columbia University

theorypracticed.com

eleni@theorypracticed.com



Theory
&
Practice

You

Ages of your child(ren) → chat

You are here!

Put your questions in the chat or raise your hand and ask to speak!



Backwards Design - Hopes & Dreams

Picture your child
as a young adult.

What are your hopes
and dreams for them?

→ add to chat



Backwards Design - Goals

What do you want your child to
know or be able to do?

* specific * measurable * achievable * relevant * time bound *



“Kids do well
if they can.”

- Dr. Ross Greene



Theory
&
Practice

Proactive Strategies: *Understand Behavior*

Upstream - unsolved problems



Downstream - behaviors

**Emphasis is on solving problems NOT
modifying behaviors (Greene)**

- Challenging behavior is a signal
- Work upstream, not downstream



Theory
&
Practice

Proactive Strategies: *Understand Development*

Early Childhood

0-3 and 4-5

This is when a lot of habits, routines, and family expectations are formed



untangled

GUIDING TEENAGE GIRLS
THROUGH THE
SEVEN TRANSITIONS
INTO ADULTHOOD

Lisa Damour, Ph.D.

Adolescence

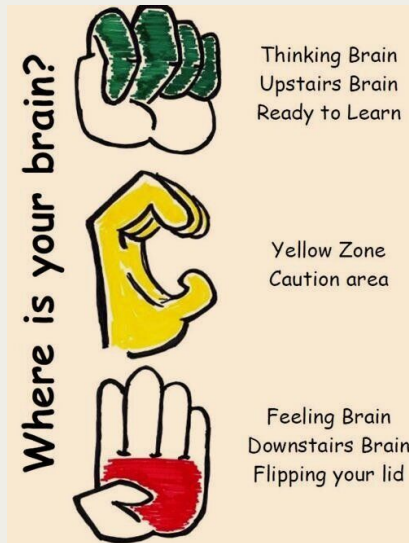
12 -14 and 15-17

Yes, Puberty & Hormones

But, also - Interests Expand,
Moral Thinking Develops,
Worldview Forms

Hang on - be the pool's edge

Proactive Strategies: *Understand Emotions and Reason*



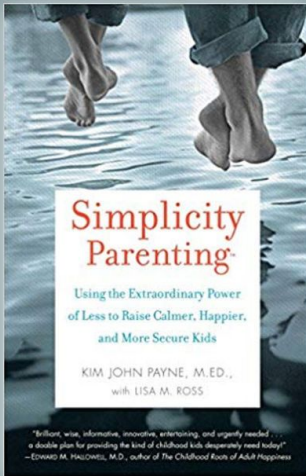
Flipping Your Lid (Dr. Dan Siegel)

Proactive Strategies: *Understand Siblings*

- Family is where we learn relationship skills
- Learn to express anger without hurting others
- Equal is less
- Plan time to talk about siblings
- Children often experience praise of one child as a put-down of themselves
- Do not lock siblings into roles



Proactive Strategies: *Understand Stimulation & Simplicity*



“Childhood is not a race to accumulate all of the consumer goods and stresses of adulthood in record time.”

- Reduce stress at the daily level
- Fear vs. Love
- Less is More

Proactive Strategies: *Fill Their Bucket*



5 Minutes of
Collaborative Play:

Praise
Reflect
Imitate
Describe
Enjoy

Theory
&
Practice

Problem-Solving: Don't Get on the Escalator!



Reason doesn't work in an
irrational (emotional) moment

Problem-Solving: Pause & Reset



JANET
LANSBURY



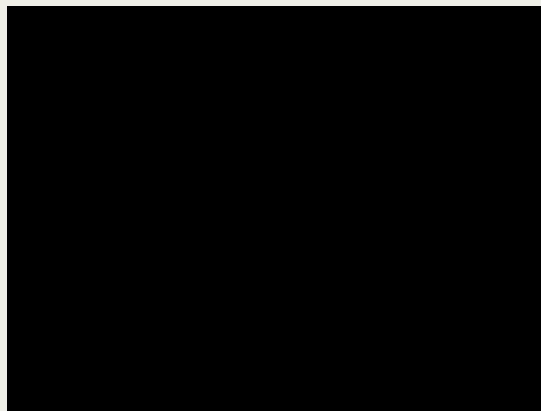
NO BAD KIDS
toddler discipline without shame

Theory
&
Practice

Problem-Solving: Collaborative & Proactive Solutions

- **Collaborative** (adult partners with the child)
- **Informed** (adult gathers information from the child about what's making it difficult for them to meet the expectation)
- **3 Steps:** Empathy, Define Adult Concern, Invitation

Dr. Ross Green -
livesinthebalance.org



Problem-Solving: Collaborative & Proactive Solutions



Theory
&
Practice

Problem-Solving: Getting More Information

- “I noticed you’re having difficulty X, what’s up”
- Reflective listening
- Who, what, where, when, but NOT why
- Why in some conditions and not others
- What are they thinking?
- Breaking into component parts

$$4\frac{2}{6} - 2\frac{3}{8}$$
$$= \frac{\quad}{\quad} - \frac{\quad}{\quad}$$
$$= \frac{\quad}{\quad} - \frac{\quad}{\quad}$$
$$= \frac{\quad}{\quad}$$



Problem-Solving: Identify Unsolved Problems

Have a conversation w/ caregivers

and/or

Use the ALSUP (Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems)

Discussion guide for adults to identify expectations the child is having difficulty meeting...

a.k.a. Unsolved Problems

Theory
&
Practice

ASUP 2024
ASSESSMENT OF SKILLS AND UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

Collaborative & Proactive Solutions
THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED

CHILD'S NAME: _____ DATE: _____

NAMES OF CAREGIVERS COMPLETING THIS INSTRUMENT: _____

STEP 1: SKILLS

Whether neurotypical or neurodivergent, children communicate that they're having difficulty meeting expectations in diverse ways, including through their concerning behavior. This behavior is best conceived as a frustration or stress response, the nature of which is determined by a variety of factors, most especially certain skills related to flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, problem solving, and emotion regulation. Some kids can demonstrate these skills under some conditions but not under other conditions.

This section is aimed at helping caregivers discuss those skills and the degree to which they may be impacting a particular child. Being aware of and considering the skills that may impact a child's capacity to handle life's problems and frustrations and meet various expectations helps caregivers move away from motivational explanations for concerning behavior (e.g. attention-seeking, manipulative, coercive, unmotivated) and toward a more compassionate, accurate understanding of such behavior. Note that these skills are not the primary focal point of intervention in the CPS model; the unsolved problems you'll be identifying in Step 2 will be the "targets" of intervention.

■ Please check off a skill if it's difficult for the child to access at times and appears to be making it difficult for the child to handle problems and frustrations and/or meet certain expectations:

<input type="checkbox"/> Maintain focus	<input type="checkbox"/> Consider a range of solutions to problems	<input type="checkbox"/> Regulate emotional response to problems and frustrations
<input type="checkbox"/> Regulate activity level	<input type="checkbox"/> Flexibly handle ambiguity, uncertainty	<input type="checkbox"/> Empathize with others, appreciate another person's perspective or point of view
<input type="checkbox"/> Handle transitions, shift from one mindset to another	<input type="checkbox"/> Shift from original idea, plan, or solution	<input type="checkbox"/> Interception (ability to understand and feel what's going on inside their body)
<input type="checkbox"/> Consider the likely outcomes or consequences of actions (impulse control)	<input type="checkbox"/> Express concerns, needs, or thoughts in words or other means of communication	<input type="checkbox"/> Understand what is being communicated by others
<input type="checkbox"/> Persist on challenging or tedious tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Understand what is being communicated by others	<input type="checkbox"/> Tolerate and manage the sensory environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Sense of time (time that has passed, time needed)	<input type="checkbox"/> Appreciate how their actions affect others	

STEP 2: UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

Unsolved problems are the specific expectations a child is having difficulty meeting. The wording of an unsolved problem will translate directly into the words that you'll be using when you introduce the unsolved problem to the child when it comes time to solve the problem together. Poorly worded unsolved problems often cause the problem-solving process to deteriorate before it even gets started. Please reference the ASUP Guide for guidance on writing unsolved problems.

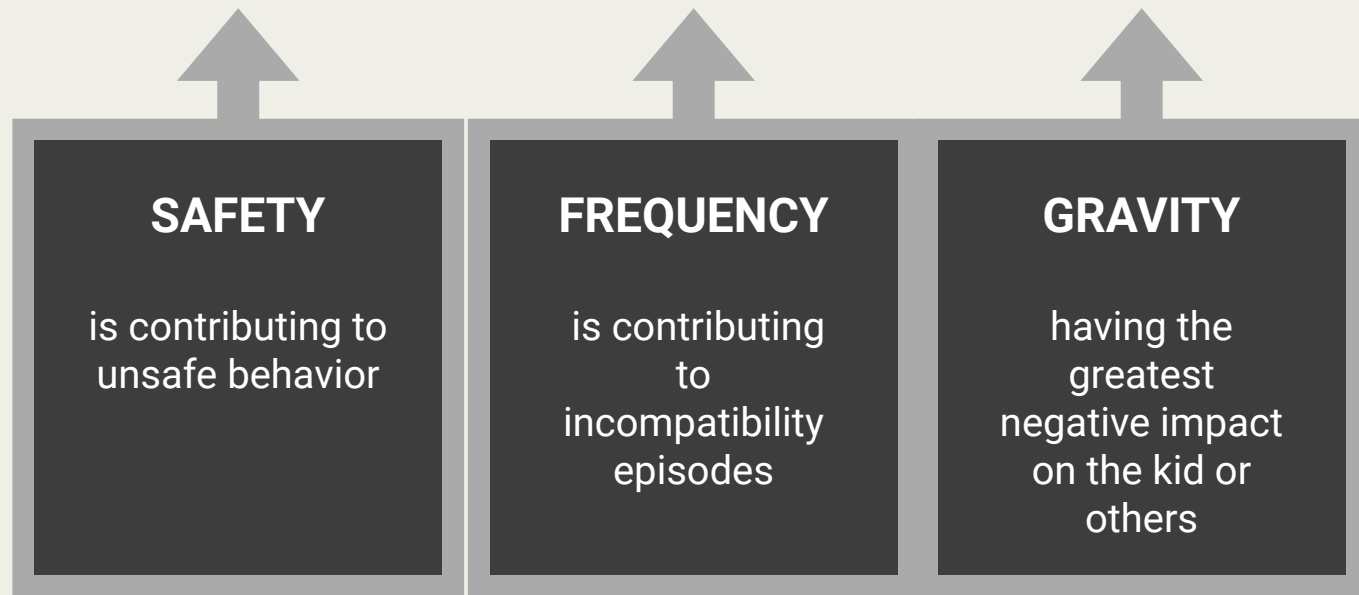
BEHAVIORAL/ACTIVITY PROMPTS	Are there specific tasks/expectations the student is having difficulty completing or getting started on?	Are there chores/tasks/activities the child is having difficulty completing or getting started on?
	Are there situations where this student is having difficulty getting along with in specific conditions?	Are there obligations/other children the child is having difficulty getting along with in specific conditions?
	Are there tasks and activities this student is having difficulty moving from or to?	Are there aspects of hygiene the child is having difficulty completing?
	Are there classes/activities the student is having difficulty attending/being on time to?	Are there activities the child is having difficulty ending or tasks the child is having difficulty moving on to?
	As you think about the start of the day to the end, are there any other expectations the student has difficulty reliably meeting or that you find yourself frequently reminding the child about?	As you think about the start of the day to the end, are there any other expectations the child has difficulty reliably meeting or that you find yourself frequently reminding the child about?

■ List unsolved problems here: (or on a separate sheet)

LIVESINBALANCE.ORG

LIVES
IN THE
BALANCE

Problem-Solving: Prioritize What & When



HEALING

- Beware of distracted parenting
- Take care of yourself - play!
- Family Fun List
- Invest 5 minutes
- Make mistakes & apologize
- Ask for help
- Breathe

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget *how you made them feel.*”

Maya Angelou
1928 - 2014



all half the sky movement

Theory
&
Practice

References

- Mah VK, Ford-Jones EL. Spotlight on middle childhood: Rejuvenating the 'forgotten years'. Paediatr Child Health. 2012 Feb;17(2):81-3. doi: 10.1093/pch/17.2.81. PMID: 23372398; PMCID: PMC3299351.
- The Dangers of Distracted Parenting
- Howe, F. C. (1993). The child in the elementary school. *Child Study Journal*, 23(4), [227]–362.
- Pappas, S. (2020, April). What do we really know about kids and screens? *Monitor on Psychology*, 51(3). <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2020/04/cover-kids-screens>
- Pruitt, D. B., & American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (1999). *Your adolescent: Emotional, behavioral, and cognitive development from early adolescence through the teen years*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Pruitt, D. B., & American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (2000). *Your Child: Emotional, Behavioral, and Cognitive Development from Birth through Preadolescence*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Siegel, D. J., & Payne Bryson, T. (2011). *The whole-brain child: 12 revolutionary strategies to nurture your child's developing mind*. Bantam Books.
- Wood, C. (2007). *Yardsticks: children in the classroom, ages 4-14*. 3rd ed. Turner Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.
- Child Development Guide by the Center for Development of Human Services, SUNY, Buffalo State College, 2002



Proactive Strategies: *Understanding Play*



- **Play is the work of childhood** - Jean Piaget
- Un-Toys
- Natural items
- YES Space & Time
- Moving Beyond Toys
- 5 mins a day