Moving From Power and Control to Collaboration and Problem Solving

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PARADIGM SHIFT

1. Emphasis is on **problems** (and solving them) rather than on behaviors (and modifying them)...
   - Concerning behavior (whether lucky or unlucky) is simply the *signal* by which a child *communicates* that they are having difficulty meeting certain *expectations*
   - Behaviors are not the only observable, objective, quantifiable data...unsolved problems are too
   - This will require different assessment practices
PARADIGM SHIFT

2. The problem solving is collaborative, not unilateral
   - Something you’re doing *with* the kid rather than *to* them
PARADIGM SHIFT

3. The problem solving is proactive, not reactive

- Unsolved problems are highly predictable, if we answer two questions:
  - Why do some kids respond so poorly to problems and frustrations?
    - Answer: Because they’re lacking the skills to respond more adaptively
  - When do kids exhibit concerning behaviors?
    - Answer: When they’re having difficulty meeting certain expectations
- This is the information that’s been missing
SEQUENCE OF RESTRAINT & SECLUSION

**Expectation** student is having difficulty meeting

Adults push the student to meet the expectation

Child communicates that they are having difficulty meeting the expectation (**behavior**)

Adults try to de-escalate the child

When de-escalation efforts fail, child is restrained or secluded

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Collaborative & Proactive Solutions

THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED
PARADIGM SHIFT

4. Kids do well if they can
   - If the kid could do well, they would do well
     - Not True:
       - Attention-seeking
       - Manipulative
       - Coercive
       - Unmotivated
       - Limit-testing

5. Doing well is preferable
   - Concerning behaviors are set in motion by lagging skills and unsolved problems...not by poor motivation
LIMITATIONS OF MODIFYING BEHAVIOR

- Rewards and punishments solve no problems and enhance no skills
- Rewards and punishments are distracting...they cause us to focus on signals rather than the problems that are causing those signals
- There is significant disproportionality in the ways in which rewards and punishments are administered
- There wouldn’t be disproportionality if we weren’t using punitive, exclusionary disciplinary practices
- Better to be disproportional in solving problems than in administering detentions, suspensions, expulsions, paddling, restraint, seclusion, and arrests
KEY HELPER ROLES IN CPS

- Identify lagging skills and unsolved problems
  - Makes concerning behaviors highly predictable and intervention proactive rather than reactive…otherwise, you’re in “perpetual survival mode” or “walking on eggshells”
  - Once lagging skills and unsolved problems are identified, there are very few surprises left

- 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 enhances skills
**ASSESSMENT OF LAGGING SKILLS AND UNSOLVED PROBLEMS (ALSUP)**

**LAGGING SKILLS**

This section will help you understand why the child is responding so maladaptively to problems and frustrations. Please note that these lagging skills are not the primary focal point of intervention. In other words, you won’t be re-teaching the lagging skills with the student, nor will you be teaching most of the skills explicitly. The primary targets of intervention are the unsolved problems you’ll be documenting in the next section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty maintaining focus</th>
<th>Difficulty seeing “gray,” concrete, literal black &amp; white thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty handling transitions, shifting from one mindset or task to another</td>
<td>Difficulty taking into account situational factors that would suggest the need to adjust a plan of action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty considering the likely outcomes or consequences of actions (impulsive)</td>
<td>Inflexible, inaccurate interpretation/cognitive distortions or biases (e.g., “Everyone’s out to get me.” “Nobody likes me!”)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difficulty persisting on challenging or tedious tasks</td>
<td>Difficulty attending to or accurately interpreting social cues/poor perception of social nuances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty considering a range of solutions to a problem</td>
<td>Difficulty shifting from original idea, plan, or solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty expressing concerns, needs, or thoughts in words</td>
<td>Difficulty appreciating how his/her behavior is affecting others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty managing an emotional response to frustration so as to think rationally</td>
<td>Difficulty starting conversations, entering groups, connecting with people/lacking other basic social skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic irritability and/or anxiety significantly impede capacity for problem-solving or heighten frustration</td>
<td>Difficulty empathizing with others, appreciating another person’s perspective or point of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensory/motor difficulties</td>
<td>Difficulty handling unpredictability, ambiguity, uncertainty, novelty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**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 an 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 ALSUP Guide for guidance on the four guidelines for writing unsolved problems.

**SCHOOL/FACILITY PROMPTS:**
- Are there specific tasks/expectations the student is having difficulty completing or getting started on?
- Are there classmates this student 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 classes/activities the student is having difficulty attending/being on time to?

**HOME/CLINIC PROMPTS:**
- Are there chores/tasks/activities the child is having difficulty completing or getting started on?
- Are there siblings/other children the child is having difficulty getting along with in specific conditions?
- Are there aspects of hygiene the child is having difficulty completing?
- Are there activities the child is having difficulty ending or tasks the child is having difficulty moving on to?
THE ALSUP CHANGES LENSES

Expect lightbulbs to go on when...

- Caregivers come to recognize that a kid is, in fact, lacking many skills and having difficulty meeting many expectations
- Caregivers come to recognize why prior interventions have been ineffective
- Caregivers begin to regret the way they’ve been treating the child based on incorrect assumptions
- Caregivers become aware that unsolved problems occur under highly specific conditions
- Caregivers recognize that unsolved problems are predictable and can therefore be solved proactively
NEXT GOAL
Prioritizing

- You can’t work on everything at once
- Focus on the “big fish” first
  - **SAFETY**: Unsolved problems contributing to unsafe behaviors
  - **FREQUENCY**: Unsolved problems contributing to concerning behaviors most often
  - **GRAVITY**: Unsolved problems having the greatest negative impact on the kid or others
THE PROBLEM SOLVING PLAN
OPTIONS FOR HANDLING UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

PLAN A:
Solve the problem unilaterally

PLAN B:
Solve the problem collaboratively

PLAN C:
Set the problem aside for now
PLAN B

Solve the problem collaboratively

1. **Empathy Step**
   Gather information from the child about what’s hard about meeting the expectation

2. **Define Adult Concerns Step**
   Identify adult concerns

3. **Invitation Step**
   Collaborate on a solution that is realistic and mutually satisfactory
FINAL QUESTIONS

- Why do the problems that affect kids’ lives so often cause conflict between us and them?
- 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

livesinthebalance.org
cpsconnection.com
thekidswelose.com
truecrisisprevention.org