

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

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# Session Goals

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- Learn what makes CPS paradigmatically different from other intervention models
- Become aware of the key components of the CPS model:
  - The ALSUP
  - Plan B
- Begin to consider possibilities for CPS implementation in your school or program

# Paradigm Shift #1

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

# Limitations of Modifying Behavior

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- Rewards and punishments solve no problems
- 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

Great news...In addition to being non-punitive and non-adversarial, CPS is non-exclusive and able to address disproportionately right away!

## Disproportionality Is Complex



Disproportionality refers to a group's representation in a particular category that exceeds expectations for that group, or differs substantially from the representation of others in that category...it is complex and hard to address



# CPS is Equity in Action

- Creates conversations that allow voices to be heard from both parties
- Changes staff lens
- Uses a structured approach to address the needs of all students
- Allows creativity and gives students the ability to participate in problem solving
- Helps identify barriers that are preventing kids from doing well and addressing these with solutions that negate the need for punitive and exclusionary discipline...thereby reducing disproportionality

“Better for schools to be disproportional in solving problems with students than to be disproportional in the application of punitive discipline.” Dr. Ross Greene

# Paradigm Shift #2

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## 2. The problem solving is **collaborative**, not unilateral

- Something you're doing *with* the kid rather than *to* them
- Even if the kid can talk but won't or won't talk because they can't
- Kid is still "accountable" (a lot more so than if they are passive recipients of our imposed solutions and consequences)
- Caregivers are off the hook for ingenious solutions

# Paradigm Shift #3

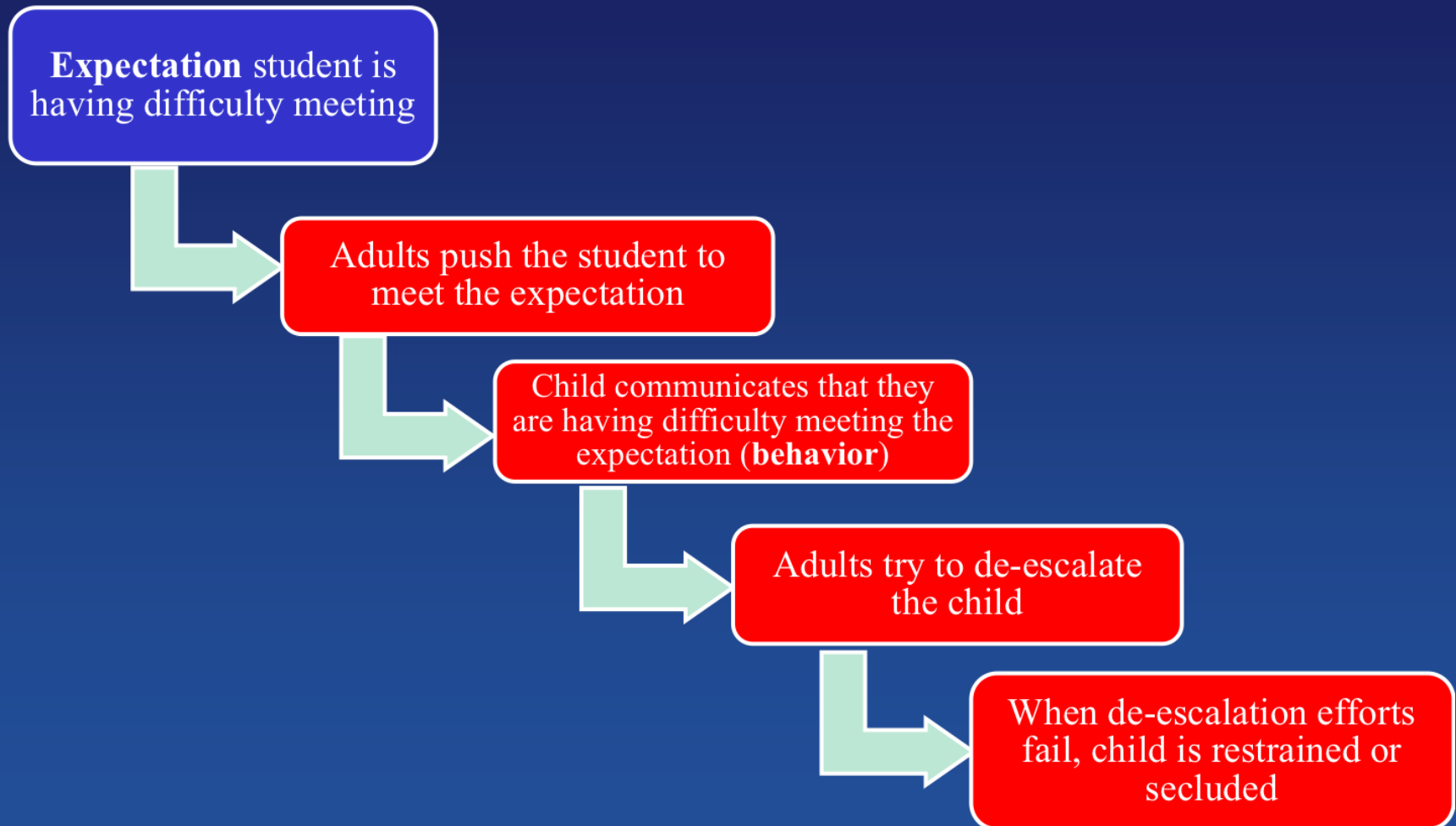
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## 3. The problem solving is **proactive**, not reactive

- These kids 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
- Once unsolved problems are identified, intervention can be largely proactive



# Sequence Of Restraint & Seclusion



# The (non-exhaustive) List of Late Interventions

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- Take a break
- Calming corner
- Deep breathing/counting to 10
- De-escalating
- Restraint and seclusion
- Discipline referral
- Detention, suspension, expulsion, paddling

# Paradigm Shift #4

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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

# Paradigm Shift #5

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## 5. Doing well is preferable...CPS vs Conventional Wisdom

- Behaviour is functional- designed to get, escape and avoid
- Therefore, interventions are designed to demonstrate concerning behaviour won't "work" for them; interventions are designed to elicit and encourage replacement behaviours that will work better
- But wait... all of us get, escape & avoid sometimes

Question isn't- "what is the child trying to get, escape or avoid?"

Question is- "why is he going about it in such a maladaptive way?"

Answer...

Because they lack the skills to get, escape and avoid in a more adaptive way!

# WHAT SKILLS?

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- Flexibility/Adaptability
- Frustration Tolerance
- Problem Solving
- Emotion Regulation
- These are the global skills that help us respond to problems and frustrations adaptively; not the same as “behaviour skills”
- These skills can be enhanced by engaging kids in the process and experience of solving problems collaboratively

# Key Helper Roles In Cps

- Identify lagging skills and unsolved problems
  - Helps make intervention proactive rather than reactive...otherwise, you're in "perpetual survival mode" or "walking on eggshells"
  - Helps adults view kids through more compassionate, accurate, productive lenses
  - Helps us focus on the problems that are causing concerning behaviors rather than on the behaviors
- 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

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

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.

**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 discussing 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.

<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty maintaining focus	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty seeing "grays"/concrete, literal, black & white, thinking
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty handling transitions, shifting from one mindset or task to another	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty taking into account situational factors that would suggest the need to adjust a plan of action
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty considering the likely outcomes or consequences of actions (impulsive)	<input type="checkbox"/> Inflexible, inaccurate interpretations/cognitive distortions or biases (e.g., "Everyone's out to get me," "Nobody likes me")
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty persisting on challenging or tedious tasks	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty attending to or accurately interpreting social cues/poor perception of social nuances
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty considering a range of solutions to a problem	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty shifting from original idea, plan, or solution
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty expressing concerns, needs, or thoughts in words	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty appreciating how their behavior is affecting others
<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty managing emotional response to frustration so as to think rationally	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty starting conversations, entering groups, connecting with people/lacking other basic social skills
<input type="checkbox"/> Chronic irritability and/or anxiety significantly impede capacity for problem-solving or heighten frustration	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty empathizing with others, appreciating another person's perspective or point of view
<input type="checkbox"/> Sensory/motor difficulties	<input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty handling unpredictability, ambiguity, uncertainty, novelty

**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?
- 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 student about?

**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?
- 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?

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**LIVES IN THE BALANCE**

# ASSESSMENT OF LAGGING SKILLS AND UNSOLVED PROBLEMS (ALSUP)

# GUIDELINES FOR WRITING UNSOLVED PROBLEMS



1. Free of concerning behaviors (*Most unsolved problems start with the word “Difficulty,” followed by a verb...*)
2. Free of adult theories (*no need to explain anything*)
3. Split, not clumped
  - *“Split early, maybe you can clump later...but if you clump early, you’ll never find out”*
4. As specific as possible
  - STRATEGY #1: Who, What, Where, When...NOT Why)
  - STRATEGY #2: What expectation is the child having difficulty meeting?



# THE ALSUP CHANGES LENSES

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## 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

# 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

# PLAN A

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## Solve the problem unilaterally

- The adult decides what the solution is and imposes it, often accompanied by adult-imposed consequences
  - *“I’ve decided that...”*
- **PLAN A** causes concerning behaviors
- **PLAN A** is not a partnership
- **PLAN A** does not involve kids in solving the problems that affect their lives
- **PLAN A** provides no information whatsoever about the factors making it difficult for the kid to meet a given expectation...solutions arrived at through Plan A are **“uninformed”**

# PLAN C- Stabilizing & Increasing Safety for All

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## Set the problem aside for now

Not about giving in or giving up...it's about prioritizing (and stabilizing) – expectation management rather than behavior management

- **PROACTIVE C:**
  - don't bring it up
  - an agreed-upon interim plan for setting aside the problem for now
- **EMERGENCY C: “OK”**

*Good parenting and good teaching mean  
being responsive to the hand you've been dealt*

# 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



# PLAN B

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## 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

# PLAN B- The Empathy Step

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## GOAL:

Gather information from kids so as to understand their concern or perspective on a given Unsolved Problem...**especially, what's making it hard for them to meet the expectation.**

## INTRODUCTION:

The Empathy step begins with the words “**I've noticed that**” followed by an Unsolved Problem and an initial inquiry (“**What's up?**”)

# PLAN B-The Empathy Step

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## Drilling Strategies:

1. **Reflective listening** and **clarifying statements**
2. Asking about the **who, what, where, when** of the unsolved problem
3. Asking about the **situational variability** of the unsolved problems
4. Asking kids what they are **thinking** in the midst of the unsolved problem
5. Breaking the problem down into its **component parts**
6. **Discrepant Observation**
7. **Tabling** (and asking for more concerns)
8. **Summarizing** (and asking for more concerns)



# PLAN B The Define Adult Concerns Step

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## GOAL:

Enter the adult's concern or perspective into consideration in a way that doesn't cause the child to feel that their concerns are being dismissed or disregarded (beginning with “The thing is...” or “My concern is...”)

## WHAT'S HARD:

Adults frequently don't know what their *concerns* are...adult concerns are related to **why it's important that the expectation be met:**

How the problem is affecting the kid (e.g., health, safety, learning)

How the problem is affecting others (e.g., health, safety, learning)

# PLAN B The Invitation Step

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## GOAL:

Collaborate on a solution that is **realistic** and **mutually satisfactory**

## WHAT'S HARD: The Wording:

- Should recap two concerns so as to summarize the problem to be solved (Starts with: “**I wonder if there’s a way...**”)
- Generically: “I wonder if there’s a way for us to do something about (one party’s concerns) and also do something about (the other party’s concerns)”
- The kid is given the first opportunity to generate solutions (“**Do you have any ideas?**”), but resolution of the problem is a team effort (collaborative)

# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/RESOURCES



[livesinthebalance.org](https://livesinthebalance.org)  
[cpsconnection.com](https://cpsconnection.com)  
[thekidswelose.com](https://thekidswelose.com)  
[truecrisisprevention.org](https://truecrisisprevention.org)