

Moving From Power and Control to Collaboration and Problem Solving

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PARADIGM SHIFT/KEY THEME

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

PARADIGM SHIFT/KEY THEME

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)
- T-I-M-E?

PARADIGM SHIFT/KEY THEME

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

PARADIGM SHIFTS/KEY THEMES

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

WHAT SKILLS?

Flexibility/adaptability
Frustration tolerance
Problem solving
Emotion regulation

These are the global skills that help us respond to problems and frustrations adaptively

Many skills can be taught through direct instruction, but these may not be among them

But the skills are enhanced by engaging kids in the process of solving problems collaboratively

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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ASSESSMENT OF LAGGING SKILLS AND UNSOLVED PROBLEMS (ALSUP)

ASSESSMENT OF LAGGING SKILLS AND UNSOLVED PROBLEMS (ALSUP)

- In the top section is a representative list of the skills frequently found lagging in kids with concerning behaviors
- Unsolved problems are identified in the bottom section
- The ALSUP is meant to be used as a **discussion guide**...not simply a checklist or mechanism for quantifying
- The ALSUP helps caregivers focus on things they can actually do something about (if we only focus on the things we can't do anything about, we are likely to conclude that we can't do anything to help)
- We're not trying explain how the kid came to exhibit concerning behaviors

USING THE ALSUP

- Participants receive a blank copy of the ALSUP
 - The kid is not present in the meeting
- Start with the lagging skills...check all that apply (about 10 seconds each)
- After completing the lagging skills section, begin identifying unsolved problems, using the prompts (about 1 minute per unsolved problem)
- Be exhaustive...identify as many unsolved problems as possible for each prompt
- No need to write the same unsolved problem twice

USING THE ALSUP

Guidelines for Wording Unsolved Problems

"A problem well stated is a problem half solved."

-Charles Kettering

The wording of the unsolved problem on the ALSUP is going to translate into the words that are used when the unsolved problem is introduced to the child when it comes time to solve it together.

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
4. As specific as possible
 - STRATEGY #1: Who, What, Where, When...NOT Why)
 - STRATEGY #2: What expectation is the child having difficulty meeting?

NEXT GOAL

Prioritizing

- You can't work on everything at once
- High priorities:
 - **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

OPTIONS FOR HANDLING UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

PLAN A:

Solve the problem unilaterally

PLAN B:

Solve the problem collaboratively

PLAN C:

Put the expectation on hold for now

PLAN A

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

Put the expectation on hold 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 putting the expectation on hold for now
- **EMERGENCY C: “OK”**

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

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

PLAN B The Empathy Step

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

The Kid Says Something

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

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 is the unsolved problem affecting the kid?

How is the unsolved problem affecting other people?
(e.g., health, safety, learning, fairness)

PLAN B The Invitation Step

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)