

A more compassionate, productive, effective, approach to understanding and helping kids with concerning behaviors

Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) is an evidence-based, trauma-informed, neurodiversity-affirming approach for understanding and helping kids with concerning behaviors, as described in Dr. Ross Greene's books *The Explosive Child*, *Lost at School*, *Lost & Found*, and *Raising Human Beings*. The CPS model has been implemented in countless families, schools, inpatient psychiatric units, and residential and juvenile detention facilities, often with dramatic effect: significant improvements in behavior, enhancement of communication and relationships between kids and caregivers, and major reductions or total elimination of punitive, exclusionary disciplinary practices such as discipline referrals, suspensions, restraint, and seclusion.

CPS Basics: The approach is different from other approaches in some very important ways. First, it helps caregivers focus far less on a child's concerning behavior (and modifying it) and far more on the **problems** that are causing that behavior (and solving them). Second, the problem solving is **collaborative** (not unilateral), which means that the child is an integral and indispensable part of the problem-solving process. And third, the problem-solving is **proactive**, not reactive. These differences have major implications for whether adults are preventing crisis or merely managing them.

Why doesn't the CPS model focus on concerning behavior? Because a child's concerning behavior is just their frustration or stress response. It's the way kids communicate that they're having difficulty meeting certain expectations. In the CPS model, those unmet expectations are called "unsolved problems." The goal of intervention is to identify and solve those problems so they don't cause concerning behavior anymore. Why is it that detentions, suspensions, expulsions, paddling, restraints, seclusions, privilege loss, and other punitive, exclusionary procedures often don't improve behavior? Because those interventions don't solve any of the problems that are causing that behavior.

How are unsolved problems identified? Unsolved problems are identified using an instrument called the **Assessment of Skills and Unsolved Problems (ASUP)**. Once the unsolved problems are identified they are highly predictable and can therefore be solved proactively. Information provided by the ASUP can be easily incorporated in FBAs, BIPs, and IEPs.

Where do skills fit in to this equation? Research in the neurosciences over the past 40-50 years tells us that certain skills are crucial to handling life's problems and frustrations: flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, problem solving, and emotion regulation. That's important because, for a very long time, a lot of caregivers have believed that poor motivation is the cause of concerning behavior (which explains the popularity of motivational strategies aimed at reducing concerning behavior). There is no research telling us that poor motivation explains why kids respond poorly to problems and frustrations. There is a mountain of research pointing to skills as the primary contributor. So, characterizations such as attention-seeking, manipulative, coercive, limit-testing, and unmotivated are inaccurate. Beware: there are many models that claim to focus on "behavioral skills," but most of them are still focused on behavior and modifying it.

This is quite a shift! Let there be no doubt: focusing on problems, not behaviors, is huge. Solving those problems collaboratively, not unilaterally, is huge. And solving problems proactively, rather than in the heat of the moment, is huge. That last bit of huge helps caregivers finally start **preventing** crises rather than managing them. So many popular interventions – de-escalating, calming corners, taking a break (from a challenging task), using blocking pads, restraining, secluding – are actually crisis management tools. Remember, if a kid is starting to become escalated, you're already in crisis management mode. Contrary to what many millions of caregivers have been taught, **crisis prevention does not begin with de-escalation!** It begins with identifying and solving the problems that are causing kids to become escalated in the first place.

Is there research backing the effectiveness of the CPS model? Yes, quite a bit. As noted above, the model is recognized as evidence-based. You can find all the accumulated research on the Lives in the Balance website (www.livesinthebalance.org).

Where can I learn more?! The Lives in the Balance website has a ton of free resources, including streaming video, podcasts, all the paperwork of the CPS model, and lots more. And it's all free. You'll also find a variety of training options on the website (some of those are free too). We'd be happy to discuss your needs with you...just use the Contact form on the website.



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