



COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT COLLABORATIVE & PROACTIVE SOLUTIONS

Because the Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) model is different from the status quo, it's not unusual for people to misunderstand (or even misrepresent) the model. We love setting the record straight. After all, kids and their caregivers need good help more than ever, so the stakes are high. Here are some of the most common misconceptions and false beliefs about the CPS model, followed by our efforts to set the record straight.

Fiction: We (Ross Greene and Lives in the Balance) are gaslighting teachers into blaming themselves for failing to solve the problems that cause student behavior because students are never responsible and it's always the teacher's fault.

Fact: We've never said – nor even intimated – that it's always the teacher's fault when students exhibit concerning behavior. We don't shame or blame anyone. We think doing so is counterproductive. There are four types of gaslighting: outright lying, reality manipulation, scapegoating, and coercion. We don't engage in any of them. We do have concerns about some of the training teachers receive and many of the structures and practices of school discipline they must abide by, which aren't working very well for a lot of kids and a lot of educators.

Fiction: Student misbehaviors are frequently unprovoked violence.

Fact: While unprovoked violence does occur, we find that it's rare. Concerning behaviors are almost always frustration responses that occur when students are having difficulty meeting specific expectations (we refer to those unmet expectations as unsolved problems). Those unsolved problems tend to be predictable, which means that they can be solved proactively. Unfortunately, a lot of the training teachers receive and a lot of school structures foster interventions that are reactive rather than proactive. But that's something we can change, and many schools have.

Fiction: Violence and disruption still happen no matter how proactive you are. How will we respond to keep everyone safe? How will we protect the learning environment? There's no no-consequences solution.

Fact: It's true that violence and disruption are going to occur no matter how proactive we are. It's also true that, in the schools that have implemented the CPS model, such violence and disruption are extraordinarily rare. Consequences don't solve the problems that are causing violence and disruption, so we don't see the benefit of them. The students who are struggling behaviorally have almost always endured more adult-imposed consequences than most of us will experience in a lifetime. All those consequences haven't worked for those students. They need something different. Why would we keep doing what isn't working? That said, some of the schools that have implemented the CPS model still use consequences sometimes. Not because they think they're effective, but because they have no choice.

Fiction: It would be nice if we could proactively prevent every unsafe behavior, but of course that's a fantasyland that only Dr. Greene has the luxury of living in.

Fact: Yes, that would be nice. And it's what we should strive for. And, no, we're not there yet. But the schools that have implemented the CPS model have dramatically improved student behavior and dramatically reduced their use of punitive, exclusionary disciplinary practices. We're always happy to connect those who have their doubts talk with the principals and staff in those schools.

Fiction: The foundational misconception of the CPS model is that student misbehavior is a result of unsolved problems and is in no way a choice.

Fact: The research that has accumulated over the past 40-50 years – and we do encourage people to become familiar with it -- indicates that it's unsolved problems that are causing frustration responses. And it's skills – flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, problem solving, and emotion regulation among them – that are causing maladaptive frustration responses. Once those problems are solved, the maladaptive frustration responses subside. That wouldn't happen if the misbehavior was a choice. We are aware of no research indicating that misbehavior is a choice. None.

Fiction: Dr. Greene's destroys any evidence suggesting that the CPS model doesn't work.

Fact: That's simply not true.

Fiction: Dr. Greene advocates approaches that are likely to increase violence.

Fact: There is no evidence whatsoever that the CPS model increases violence. The evidence points in the exact opposite direction. We always encourage skeptics to review the [research](#) on the evidence-based CPS model so they can speak in an informed fashion about what the model does and doesn't accomplish. Doing otherwise is, quite frankly, irresponsible.

Fiction: The loophole in the research on CPS is that schools don't generally report data on behavior -- they only report data on consequences -- so if Johnny's still punching people but we stop sending him home, POOF, Johnny starts looking great on paper.

Fact: The CPS model doesn't just reduce punitive, exclusionary disciplinary practices, it improves behavior as well. Dramatically.

Fiction: The goal of the CPS model is to turn educators into amateur therapists.

Fact: We don't train educators to be amateur therapists. We train them to solve problems with students, something educators have been doing forever. Our model helps them do it better. Schools spend a ton of money on interventions that don't work and aren't evidence-based. The CPS model is evidence-based and does work.

Fiction: Hope is not a strategy schools can pursue.

Fact: Why not? Especially if hope is pursued with an evidence-based game plan.