

# What Does the CPS Model Have to Say About Autism and PDA?

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# Why Has the CPS Model Been Embraced By the Neurodivergent Community?

- We don't blame parents for their kids' concerning behavior.
- We don't blame kids for their concerning behavior.
- We understand that concerning behavior is a **frustration response**...it communicates that there's an expectation a child (or any other human being is having difficulty meeting)
- We understand that frustration responses occur when a child is having **difficulty meeting expectations**
- We know that big frustration responses are a major impediment to belonging

# Why Has the CPS Model Been Embraced By the Neurodivergent Community?

- We understand that the nature of a frustration response is related to **skills**, not motivation; so we don't see the point of using motivational/behavior modification strategies (rewards and punishments)
- We therefore believe that characterizations such as attention-seeking, unmotivated, manipulative, coercive, and limit-testing are inaccurate and harmful
- We believe that it is critical that caregivers focus on **problems** -- the expectations kids are having difficulty meeting – and solving them rather than on concerning behaviors and modifying them
- We believe that the problem solving should be **collaborative** (meaning with the full involvement of the kid) and **proactive** (meaning early, not late)

# Why Has the CPS Model Been Embraced By the Neurodivergent Community?

- We believe that the definition of good parenting, good teaching, and good treatment – and the definition of **equity** -- is **meeting kids where they're at and being responsive to the hand you've been dealt**
- We believe in emphasizing **developmental variability (e.g., diversity)**
- We believe that **kids do well if they can** and that **each child is their own reference point (forever)**

# Operationalizing All That



Identify skills  
and unsolved  
problems



Solve problems  
collaboratively and  
proactively

# Assessment of Skills and Unsolved Problems (ASUP 2024)

## ASUP 2024

### ASSESSMENT OF SKILLS AND UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

Collaborative & Proactive Solutions  
THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED

CHILD'S NAME:

DATE:

NAMES OF CAREGIVERS COMPLETING THIS INSTRUMENT:

#### STEP 1: SKILLS

Whether neurotypical or neurodivergent, children communicate that they're having difficulty meeting expectations in diverse ways, including through their concerning behavior. This behavior is best conceived as a frustration or stress response, the nature of which is determined by a variety of factors, most especially certain skills related to flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, problem solving, and emotion regulation. Some kids can demonstrate these skills under some conditions but not under other conditions.

This section is aimed at helping caregivers discuss those skills and the degree to which they may be impacting a particular child. Being aware of and considering the skills that may impact a child's capacity to handle life's problems and frustrations and meet various expectations helps caregivers move away from motivational explanations for concerning behavior (e.g. attention-seeking, manipulative, coercive, unmotivated) and toward a more compassionate, accurate understanding of such behavior. Note that these skills are not the primary focal point of intervention in the CPS model; the unsolved problems you'll be identifying in Step 2 will be the "targets" of intervention.

☐ Please check off a skill if it's difficult for the child to access at times and appears to be making it difficult for the child to handle problems and frustrations and/or meet certain expectations:

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Maintain focus  | <input type="radio"/> Consider a range of solutions to problems                                     | <input type="radio"/> Regulate emotional response to problems and frustrations                        |
| <input type="radio"/> Regulate activity level   | <input type="radio"/> Flexibly handle ambiguity, uncertainty  | <input type="radio"/> Empathize with others, appreciate another person's perspective or point of view |
| <input type="radio"/> Handle transitions, shift from one mindset to another                     | <input type="radio"/> Shift from original idea, plan, or solution                                   | <input type="radio"/> Interception (ability to understand and feel what's going on inside their body) |
| <input type="radio"/> Consider the likely outcomes or consequences of actions (impulse control) | <input type="radio"/> Express concerns, needs, or thoughts in words or other means of communication | <input type="radio"/> Tolerate and manage the sensory environment                                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Persist on challenging or tedious tasks                                   | <input type="radio"/> Understand what is being communicated by others                               |   |
| <input type="radio"/> Sense of time (time that has passed, time needed)                         | <input type="radio"/> Appreciate how their actions affect others                                    |   |

#### STEP 2: 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 the 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 ASUP Guide for guidance on 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 child about?

☐ List unsolved problems here:  
(or on a separate sheet)

##### 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?

# The ASUP is a Game-Changer

- Caregivers come to recognize that a kid is, in fact, struggling with many skills and is having difficulty meeting many expectations.
  - Are they all important?
  - Can the kid reliably meet them all?
- Caregivers come to recognize why prior interventions have been ineffective.
- Caregivers begin to regret the way they've been treating the child.
- Caregivers recognize that unsolved problems are predictable and can therefore be solved proactively.

# 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 C

# Put the Expectation on Hold for Now

Reasons to use Plan C:

- **Prioritizing/Triaging-** You can't solve everything at once.
- **Stabilizing-** Unsolved problems that have been put on hold don't cause concerning behavior.
- **Expectation management-** Removing expectations that are out of reach at this point in development.

## 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

# Solve the Problem Collaboratively

- Solved problems don't cause concerning behaviors; only unsolved problems do
- The collaborative process is far more productive and far less adversarial than unilateral processes
- Children are to be seen *and* heard

# What is the CPS view on Autism/PDA?

- As a species, humans have never done very well with diversity
- There's always been a lot of judgment around behavior
- We view diagnoses as descriptive (categories of concerning behavior)
  - We love the pride, community, and advocacy!
- We don't think a kid should need a diagnosis to access the help they need
  - Though diagnoses have been the traditional gatekeeper on services
- We don't think it's the best use of time to get caught up over how to "slice the pie"
  - ADHD has had different slices in every edition of the DSM

# What is the CPS view on Autism/PDA?

- Categories are interesting, perhaps, but the focal point should be on developmental variability (**diversity**), meeting individual kids where they're at (**equity**), and **inclusion**

# Additional Information/Resources

**Visit us at:**

[livesinthebalance.org](https://livesinthebalance.org)

[truecrisisprevention.org](https://truecrisisprevention.org)

Learn More





Register Today!



## 2-Day Live Webinar on CPS with Dr. Ross Greene

Moving From Power and Control to  
Collaboration and Problem Solving



**April 24-25, 2025**

**9:45-5:15 ET**

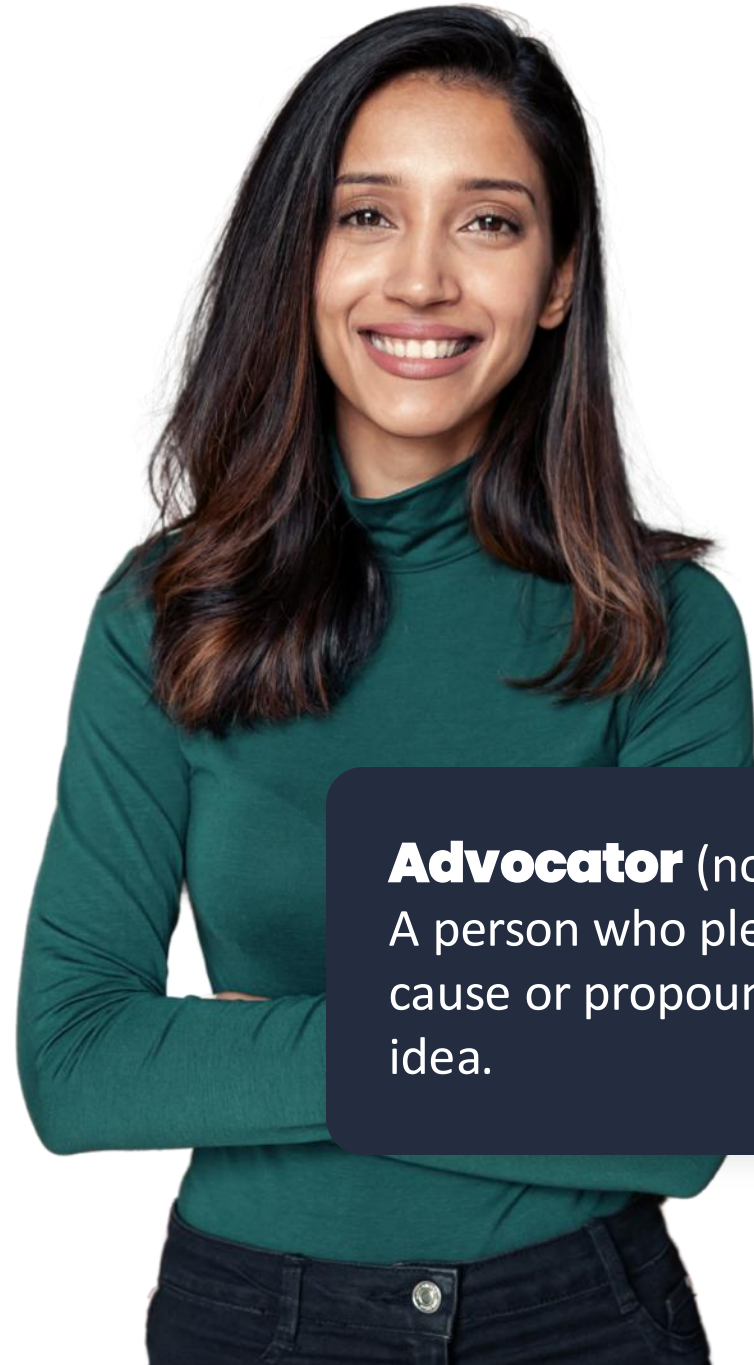
Register Here: [bit.ly/2daysofCPS](https://bit.ly/2daysofCPS)  
CEs Available




# Will you step up to change things up?

Lives in the Balance Advocators are helping us change things for the better on behalf of kids with concerning behaviors and their caregivers throughout the world... it takes one minute to sign up here:

[livesinthebalance.org/advocators](https://livesinthebalance.org/advocators)



**Advocator** (noun):   
A person who pleads for a cause or propounds and idea.

**LIVES**  
in the  
**BALANCE**



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and include the code below.

Afternoon Code:

**Meet Kids Where They're At**

*Thank You* **for Joining!**



**LIVES IN THE BALANCE  
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