

Collaborative & Proactive Solutions
THIS IS HOW PROBLEMS GET SOLVED

Understanding and Helping Kids with Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Challenges

Ross W. Greene, Ph.D.

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SIX KEY THEMES

1. Emphasis is on **problems** (and solving them) rather than on behaviors (and modifying them)...
upstream (not downstream)
 - Behaviors are not the only observable data...unsolved problems are observable too

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SIX KEY THEMES

2. The problem solving is **collaborative** rather than unilateral ...something you're doing *with* the kid rather than *to* him
3. The problem solving is **proactive** rather than emergent
 - This is possible if we answer two important questions: **why** and **when** is this kid challenging?
4. Understanding comes before helping

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SIX KEY THEMES

- 5. Kids do well if they can
 - If the kid could do well, he would do well
- 6. Doing well is preferable
 - We've been focused on motivation when we should have been focuses on skills

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Answer to the Question Why:
Challenging Kids are Lacking Skills

Challenging kids are challenging because they're lacking the skills not to be challenging...they are delayed in the development of crucial cognitive skills, such as flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, and problem-solving.

- **Challenging kids aren't always challenging**
- **They're challenging in conditions in which certain skills are being demanded**
- **It's a developmental delay**

Challenging behavior communicates that the kid doesn't have the skills to meet certain demands and expectations...behavior is simply the signal...the fever...the byproduct

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WHAT SKILLS ARE BEHAVIORALLY CHALLENGING KIDS LACKING?

- ✓ Executive skills
- ✓ Language processing/communication skills
- ✓ Emotion regulation skills
- ✓ Cognitive flexibility skills
- ✓ Social skills

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The Top Five: Skills That Foster the Better Side of Human Nature

- Empathy
- Appreciating how one's behavior is affecting others
- Resolving disagreements without conflict
- Taking another's perspective
- Honesty

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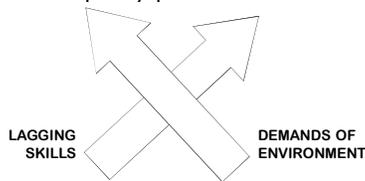
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ANSWER TO THE QUESTION WHEN:

The Clash of the Two Forces

Challenging episodes occur **when the demands being placed upon a person outstrip his or her skills**

- best conceived as "unmet expectations" or "unsolved problems"
- results in "incompatibility episodes"



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ADULT ROLES IN THE LIVES OF BEHAVIORALLY CHALLENGING KIDS

- Identify lagging skills and unsolved problems
- 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 (but indirectly) teaches skills

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ASSESSMENT OF LAGGING SKILLS AND UNSOLVED PROBLEMS (ALSUP)



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ASSESSMENT OF LAGGING SKILLS AND UNSOLVED PROBLEMS (ALSUP)

- On the left side is a representative list of the skills frequently found lagging in challenging kids
- Unsolved problems are identified on the right side
- 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 things we can't do anything about, we are likely to come to the conclusion that we can't do anything to help)
- We want to avoid the "correlation equals causation error"

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Using the ALSUP

- Participants receive a blank copy of the ALSUP
 - The kid is not present in the meeting
- Start at the top...don't "cherry-pick" lagging skills
- After checking off a given lagging skill, identify the unsolved problems that spring to mind when thinking of that lagging skill ("Can you give me some examples of times when Theresa is having difficulty...")
- Come up with as many unsolved problems as possible for an endorsed lagging skill

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USING THE ALSUP

- Don't go down the entire list of lagging skills and then go back to identify unsolved problems
- Don't identify unsolved problems first and then go back to decide which lagging skills apply to that unsolved problem
- No need to write the same unsolved problem more than once
- No need to establish which lagging skill best explains a particular unsolved problem...just assume multiple lagging skills can contribute to the same unsolved problem
- Don't include the wording of the lagging skill in an unsolved problem (wording should be kid-friendly)
- You're not looking for "hundred percenters"
- A verb usually comes after the word "Difficulty"

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Using the ALSUP: Guidelines for Identifying 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. The wording should be kid-friendly and should be:

- Free of challenging behaviors (Difficulty...)
- Free of adult theories (no need to explain anything)
- Split, not clumped
"Split early, maybe you can clump later...but if you clump early, you'll never find out"
- As specific as possible
Strategy #1: Who, What, Where/When...NOT why
Strategy #2: What expectation is the child having difficulty meeting?

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USING THE ALSUP

Expect lightbulbs to go on when...

- Caregivers come to recognize that a kid is, indeed, lacking many skills
- Caregivers come to recognize why prior interventions have been ineffective
- Caregivers begin to regret the manner in which they've been interacting with a kid based on incorrect assumptions
- Caregivers become aware that unsolved problems occur under highly specific conditions
- Caregivers recognize that unsolved problems are predictable and therefore be solved proactively
- Caregivers begin pondering how they're going to create mechanisms for changing practices given what they now know about a kid's difficulties

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TIMING IS EVERYTHING

INCOMPATIBILITY EPISODES ARE HIGHLY PREDICTABLE

CRISIS MANAGEMENT: Intervention is reactive and occurs emergently, in the heat of the moment (“What should I do when?”)

CRISIS PREVENTION: Intervention is planned and occurs proactively, well before highly predictable incompatibility episodes occur again (“What am I going to do before?”)

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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 incompatibility episodes in challenging kids
- 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 expectations...solutions arrived at through Plan A are “uninformed”

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Plan C: Set the problem aside for now

Not about giving in or capitulating...it's about prioritizing

- Emergency C: “OK”
- Proactive C:
 - don't bring it up
 - an agreed-upon interim plan for tabling the problem for now

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

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PLAN B

Solve the problem collaboratively

1. **Empathy Step**
(gather information so as to identify child's concerns)
2. **Define Adult Concerns Step**
(identify adult concerns)
3. **Invitation Step**
(collaborate on a solution that is realistic and mutually satisfactory)

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