

If we don't start doing right by kids with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges, we're going to keep losing them at an astounding rate. Doing the right thing isn't an option...it's an imperative. There are lives in the balance, and we all need to do everything we can to make sure those lives aren't lost.

KIDS WITH CONCERNING BEHAVIOR HAVE THE RIGHT:

1. To have caregivers understand that their maladaptive responses to problems and frustrations are due to lagging skills -- not lagging motivation or faulty learning -- especially in the domains of flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, emotion regulation, and problem-solving.
2. To have caregivers understand that concerning behavior is no less a form of developmental delay than delays in reading, writing, and arithmetic, and is deserving of the same compassion as is applied to these other cognitive delays.
3. Not to be characterized as bratty, spoiled, manipulative, attention-seeking, coercive, limit-testing, controlling, or unmotivated.
4. To have caregivers recognize that concerning behavior occurs in response to specific expectations kids are having difficulty meeting -- called unsolved problems -- and that these unsolved problems are usually highly predictable and can therefore be solved proactively.
5. To have caregivers understand that the primary goal of intervention is to collaboratively solve these problems in a way that is realistic and mutually satisfactory so that they no longer precipitate concerning behavior.
6. To have caregivers (and peers) understand that time-outs, detentions, suspensions, expulsion, paddling, restraint, seclusion, and arrests do not solve problems and often make things worse.
7. To have caregivers recognize that the best source of information on what's making it hard for a child to meet an expectation is the child, and that kids' concerns are legitimate, important, and worth listening to and clarifying.
8. To have adults in their lives who are aware of the damage caused by physical intervention and are knowledgeable about and proficient in solving problems.
9. To have adults who understand that solving problems collaboratively -- rather than insisting on blind adherence to authority -- is what prepares kids for the demands they will face in the real world.
10. To have adults understand that blind obedience to authority is dangerous, and that life in the real world requires expressing one's concerns, listening to the concerns of others, and working toward mutually satisfactory solutions.