

# Perspectives on Demand Avoidance: Is it PDA, or something else?

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*A two-day virtual conference hosted by POPARD,  
in collaboration with ACT*

## **Session 2:**

### **Collaborative & Proactive Solutions: Moving from Power and Control to Collaboration and Problem -Solving**

Thursday November 17, 2022

*Presented by*

**Ross W. Greene, PhD**


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## Moving From Power and Control to Collaboration and Problem Solving

*Ross W. Greene, Ph.D.*

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## PARADIGM SHIFT/KEY THEME

1. Emphasis is on **problems** (and solving them) rather than on behaviors (and modifying them)...
  - Concerning behavior is simply the **signal** by which a child **communicates** that they are having difficulty meeting certain **expectations** (not unmet needs)
    - Concerning behaviors can be “lucky” or “unlucky”
  - Behaviors are not the only observable, objective, quantifiable data...unsolved problems are too
  - This will require different assessment practices

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## PARADIGM SHIFT/KEY THEME

### 2. The problem solving is **collaborative**, not unilateral

- Something you're doing *with* the kid rather than *to* them
- Even if the kid can talk but won't or won't talk because they can't
- Kid is still "accountable" (a lot more so than if they are passive recipients of our imposed solutions and consequences)
- T-I-M-E?

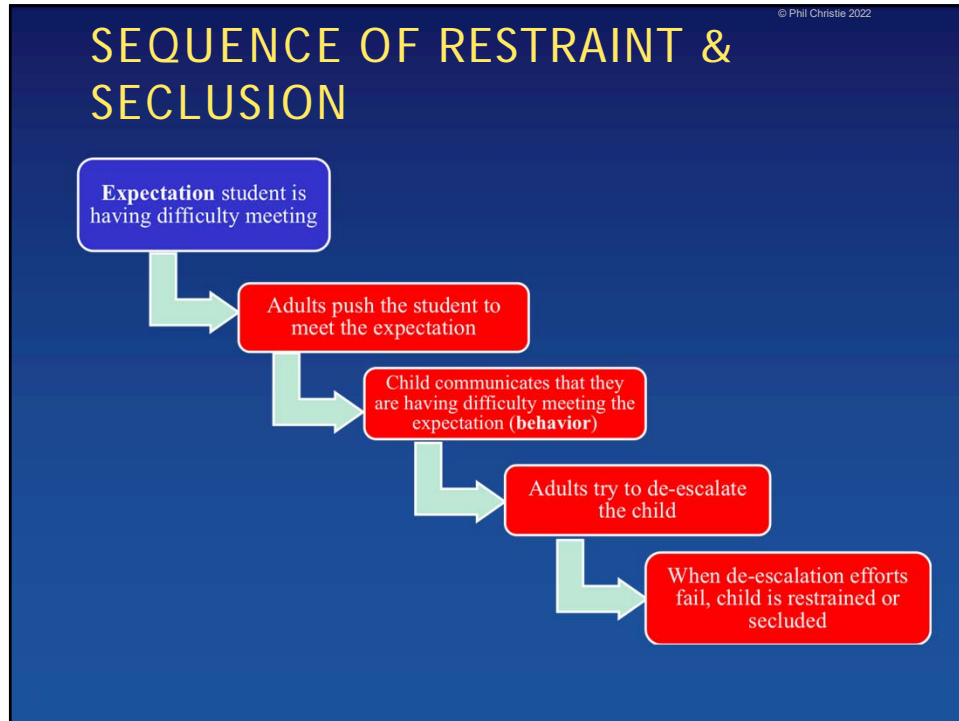
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## PARADIGM SHIFT/KEY THEME

### 3. The problem solving is **proactive**, not reactive

- These kids are predictable, if we answer two questions:
  - **Why** do some kids respond so poorly to problems and frustrations?
    - Answer: **Because they're lacking the skills to respond more adaptively (e.g., flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, problem solving, emotion regulation)**
  - **When** do kids exhibit concerning behavior?
    - Answer: **When they're having difficulty meeting certain expectations**
- Once unsolved problems are identified, intervention can be largely proactive

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## THE (non-exhaustive) LIST OF LATE

- Take a break
- Calming corner
- Coping strategies
  - especially the ones teaching kids how to cope once they're already frustrated
- De-escalating
- Restraint and seclusion
- Discipline referral
- Detention, suspension, expulsion, paddling

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## PARADIGM SHIFTS/KEY THEMES

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4. Kids do well if they can

- If the kid could do well, they would do well
  - **Not True:**
    - Attention-seeking
    - Manipulative
    - Coercive
    - Unmotivated
    - Limit-testing

5. Doing well is preferable

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## WHAT SKILLS?

**Flexibility/adaptability**

**Frustration tolerance**

**Problem solving**

**Emotion regulation**

These are the global skills that help us respond to problems and frustrations adaptively

Many skills can be taught through direct instruction, but these may not be among them

But these skills are enhanced by engaging kids in the process of solving problems collaboratively

Unsolved problems are the targets of intervention in the CPS model...not lagging skills

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## KEY HELPER ROLES IN CPS

- Identify lagging skills and unsolved problems
  - Helps make intervention proactive rather than reactive...otherwise, you're in "perpetual survival mode" or "walking on eggshells"
  - Lagging Skills: Help adults view kids through more compassionate, accurate, productive lenses
  - Unsolved Problems: Help us focus on the problems that are causing concerning behaviors rather than on the behaviors (behavior data can be informative, but only tells us that a child is having difficulty, not what they're having difficulty with)
- 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 enhances skills

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## ASSESSMENT OF LAGGING SKILLS AND UNSOLVED PROBLEMS (ALSUP)

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**ALSUP 2020**  
ASSESSMENT OF LAGGING SKILLS & UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

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CHILD'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

The ALSUP is intended for use as a **discussion guide** rather than as a freestanding check-list or rating scale. It should be used to identify specific lagging skills and unsolved problems that pertain to a particular child or adolescent.

**LAGGING SKILLS**

This section will help you understand why the child is responding to inabilities to problems and frustrations. Please note that these **lagging skills are not the primary focal point of intervention**. In other words, you won't be discussing the lagging skills with the student, nor will you be teaching most of the skills explicitly. The primary targets of intervention are the unsolved problems you'll be documenting in the next section.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty maintaining focus</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty handling transitions, shifting from one mindset or task to another</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty considering the likely outcomes or consequences of actions (impulsivity)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty persisting on challenging or tedious tasks</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty considering a range of solutions to a problem</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty expressing concerns, needs, or thoughts in words</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty managing emotional responses to frustration as well as to think rationally</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Chronic irritability and/or anxiety significantly impede capability for problem-solving or frequent frustration</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Sensory/motor difficulties</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty seeing "gray" (concrete, black &amp; white, thinking)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty taking into account situational factors that would suggest the need to adjust a plan of action</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Inflexible, inaccurate interpretations/cognitive distortions or biases (e.g., "Everyone's out to get me," "nobody likes me!")</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty attending to or accurately interpreting social cues/poor perception of social nuances</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty shifting from original idea, plan, or solution</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty appreciating how their behavior is affecting others</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty starting conversations, entering groups, connecting with people/facing other basic social skills</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty empathizing with others, appreciating another person's perspective or point of view</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty handling unpredictability, ambiguity, uncertainty, novelty</li> </ul>
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**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 an 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 ALSUP Guide for guidance on the four guidelines for writing unsolved problems.

**SCHOOL/FACILITY PROMPTS:**  
 Are there specific tasks/expectations the student is having difficulty completing or getting started on?  
 Are there times when the student is having difficulty getting along with in specific conditions?  
 Are there tasks and activities the student is having difficulty meeting 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 student about?

**HOME/CLINIC PROMPTS:**  
 Are there classes/activities the child is having difficulty completing or getting started on?  
 Are there situations/activities 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 meeting 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?

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# NEXT GOAL

## Prioritizing

- You can't work on everything at once
- High priorities:
  - **SAFETY:** Unsolved problems contributing to unsafe behaviors
  - **FREQUENCY:** Unsolved problems contributing to concerning behaviors most often
  - **GRAVITY:** Unsolved problems having the greatest negative impact on the kid or others

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# THE PROBLEM SOLVING PLAN

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## OPTIONS FOR HANDLING UNSOLVED PROBLEMS

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**PLAN A:**  
Solve the problem unilaterally

**PLAN B:**  
Solve the problem collaboratively

**PLAN C:**  
Put the expectation on hold for now

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## PLAN A

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### 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 concerning behaviors
- **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 expectation...solutions arrived at through Plan A are **“uninformed”**

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## PLAN C

### Put the expectation on hold for now

Not about giving in or giving up...it's about prioritizing (and stabilizing) – **expectation management** rather than behavior management

- **PROACTIVE C:**
  - don't bring it up
  - an agreed-upon interim plan for putting the expectation on hold for now
- **EMERGENCY C: "OK"**

*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 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

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## PLAN B The Empathy Step

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**GOAL:**  
Gather information from kids so as to understand their concern or perspective on a given unsolved problem...**especially, what's making it hard for them to meet the expectation.**

**INTRODUCTION:**  
The Empathy step begins with the words "I've **noticed that**" followed by an unsolved problem and an initial inquiry ("What's up?")

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## PLAN B The Empathy Step

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What happens after "What's up?"

- The kid says something
- The kid says nothing or "I don't know"
- The kid says, "I don't have a problem with that" or "I don't care"
- The kids says, "I don't want to talk about it right now"
- The kid responds defensively ("I don't have to talk to you!")

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## PLAN B The Empathy Step

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### The Kid Says Something

**DRILLING STRATEGIES:**

1. **Reflective listening** and **clarifying statements**
2. Asking about the **who, what, where, when** of the unsolved problem
3. Asking about the **situational variability** of the unsolved problems
4. Asking kids what they are **thinking** in the midst of the unsolved problem
5. Breaking the problem down into its **component parts**
6. **Discrepant Observation**
7. **Tabling** (and asking for more concerns)
8. **Summarizing** (and asking for more concerns)

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## PLAN B The Empathy Step

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### I Don't Know/Silence

**WHAT TO DO:**

- Don't freak ("I don't know" and silence are typical)
- Keep drilling

**FIGURE OUT WHY:**

**Adult Factors**

- You used Plan A
- You used Emergency Plan B instead of Proactive Plan B
- The unsolved problem wasn't worded according to the guidelines

**Child Factors**

- The kid doesn't trust you and/or the process yet (they have a lot of experience with Plan A)
- The kid really doesn't know
- The kid has lost faith and doesn't see the point in talking anymore
  - Strategy: "Was it always so?"
- The kid needs time to think (adults better get comfortable with silence)
- The kid is having difficulty putting their thoughts into words
  - Strategy: Educated guessing/hypothesis testing

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## PLAN B The Define Adult Concerns Step

**GOAL:**  
Enter the adult's concern or perspective into consideration in a way that doesn't cause the child to feel that their concerns are being dismissed or disregarded (beginning with "The thing is..." or "My concern is...")

**WHAT'S HARD:**  
Adults frequently don't know what their *concerns* are...adult concerns are related to **why it's important that the expectation be met:**

How is the unsolved problem affecting the kid?  
How is the unsolved problem affecting other people?  
(e.g., health, safety, learning, fairness)

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## PLAN B The Invitation Step

**GOAL:**  
Collaborate on a solution that is **realistic and mutually satisfactory**

**WHAT'S HARD:**

- The Wording:
  - Should recap two concerns so as to summarize the problem to be solved (Starts with: "I wonder if there's a way...")  
Generically: "I wonder if there's a way for us to do something about (one party's concerns) and also do something about (the other party's concerns)"
  - The kid is given the first opportunity to generate solutions ("Do you have any ideas?"), but resolution of the problem is a team effort (collaborative)

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## PLAN B The Invitation Step

- Goal is to demonstrate to kids that you're as invested in getting their concerns addressed as you are in getting your own concerns addressed
- You don't know where the plane is landing before it takes off (no preordained solutions)
- If there are multiple concerns that cannot be addressed by the same solution, prioritize which concerns are going to be addressed in this Plan B and which may be addressed in a subsequent Plan B
- Before agreeing on a solution, give conscious, deliberate consideration to whether the solution is realistic and mutually satisfactory...if not, refine the original solution or think of alternatives (one solution at a time...no brainstorming)
- Goal is to solve the problem so it doesn't arise again...not to come up with a solution for what the kid should do in the heat of the moment when the problem recurs (don't use the word "when" in the Invitation)
- Battling over solutions define a power struggle (a win/lose proposition)...solving problems collaboratively is a win/win proposition

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advocate on behalf of kids with behavioral  
challenges and their caregivers across the world...

Sign up here:

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## advocator

(noun) a person who pleads for  
a cause or propounds an idea.

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## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/RESOURCES



[livesinthebalance.org](https://livesinthebalance.org)  
[cpsconnection.com](https://cpsconnection.com)  
[thekidswelose.com](https://thekidswelose.com)  
[truecrisisprevention.org](https://truecrisisprevention.org)

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