

Best Practices for School Safety & Student Interaction: The Collaborative Problem Solving Approach

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RETHINKING CHALLENGING KIDS

What We Learned

School Safety Agents and Officers told us:

- The stakes are high: their job is keeping kids and schools safe, but they end up having to enforce school rules
- They often don't have the time to talk with kids
- They are sometimes told not to become friends with the students
- They feel like they have to clean up messes they didn't start
- They are asked to play the heavy when kids don't comply with other authority figures
- They are asked to back people up even if they don't agree with how they are handling things
- Every building is different

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Goals: What Agents / Officers Care About

1. Compliance
2. Keeping student calm
3. Solving the problem so it doesn't happen again

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The Missing Link

To accomplish these goals, we have to have an accurate understanding of the behaviors are happening in the first place

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Conventional Wisdom

Because of poor (passive, permissive, inconsistent) parenting, kids learn to use challenging behavior to get things (e.g., attention) or escape / avoid things (e.g., work).

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Logical Solution

Motivate better behavior through traditional discipline: rewards, punishments, consequences, ignoring.

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Limits of Traditional Discipline

What Power and Control / Motivational Strategies

Can Do:

- teach basic rules
- facilitate external motivation

What Power and Control / Motivational Strategies

Can't Do:

- help kids stay calm (they activate the stress response)
- facilitate internal motivation (they actually demotivate kids)
- teach kids skills

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Why Traditional Discipline Doesn't Work with our Most Challenging Kids:

Challenging kids lack *skill* not will

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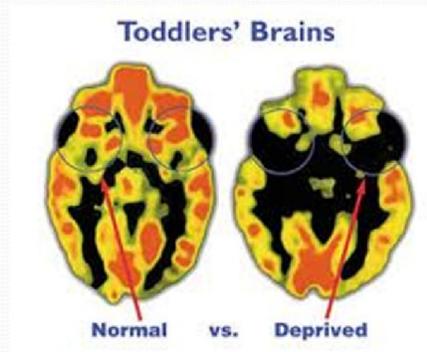
Unconventional Wisdom: It's a Learning Disability

- Which skills do these kids lack?
 - flexibility/adaptability
 - frustration tolerance
 - problem-solving

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Effect of Chronic Stress and Trauma

Chronic, overwhelming stress and trauma arrests brain development:



Research on Skills Deficits

Challenging behavior is linked with deficits in the following areas. In other words, you need these skills to be compliant:

- **Executive skills**
- **Language processing skills**
- **Emotion regulation skills**
- **Cognitive flexibility skills**
- **Social thinking skills**

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Logical Intervention

Treat challenging behavior like you would any other learning disability:

- **Figure out which skills are lagging**
- **Help the student practice and learn those skills**

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The Definition of Discipline is?

TO TEACH!

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A Helping Relationship

- Regardless of approach you use, the best predictor of success in helping people change is the **relationship** between helper and helpee
- Helping is messy and takes time
- Helping is a **working alliance**, a two-way **collaborative process**, a two-person **team effort**
- Helping is not something you do *to* kids; rather, it is a process that adults and kids work through **together**

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Expanded Goals

1. Compliance
2. Keep student calm
3. Solve the problem so it doesn't keep coming up
4. Teach skills
5. Create a helping relationship

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CPS as Roadmap for New Job Description

CPS provides a common philosophy, language, and replicable structure with clear guideposts for adults to:

- Maintain authority and elicit compliance via collaboration
- Help students build skills
- Build a helping relationship

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Three Plans

(Your Options for responding to Problems/Unmet Expectations)

Plan A: Impose adult will

Plan B: Solve the problem collaboratively

Plan C: Drop it (for now, at least)

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Plan B Ingredients

1. **EMPATHY: Clarify child concern**
2. **SHARE adult concern**
3. **COLLABORATE: Brainstorm, assess and choose solution**

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Research Summary

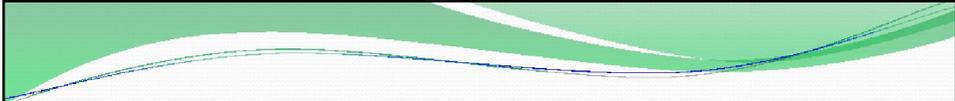
One-stop shopping for all known **published** and **unpublished** studies of child and caregiver outcomes:

Inpatient:	Outpatient:	Residential:	Juv. Detention:	Schools:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ number and duration of restrictive interventions (includes restraints, short holds, and seclusions) ↓ staff turnover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ disruptive behaviors (e.g., symptoms of ODD and ADHD) ↓ parent stress ↑ parent-child relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ restrictive interventions ↓ aggression ↑ social skills and community participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ restrictive interventions ↓ staff injuries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ↓ teacher stress ↓ discipline referrals ↓ restrictive interventions

*Pollastri, Epstein, Heath, & Ablon (2013), Harvard Review of Psychiatry
Available at www.thinkkids.org*

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Kids do well if they can...

*...if they can't,
something is getting in the way.
We need to figure out what
so we can help.*