

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

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## 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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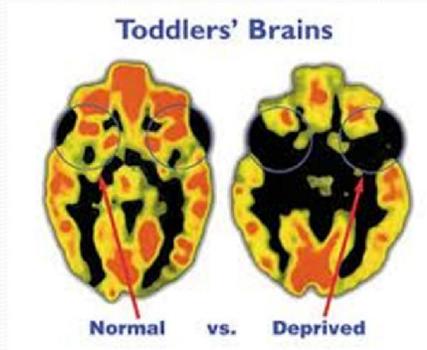
## Unconventional Wisdom: It's a Learning Disability

- 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:

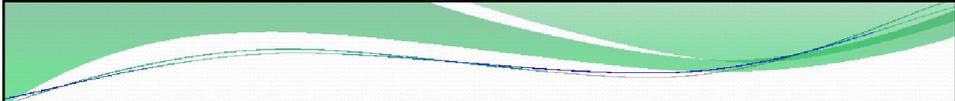
Inpatient:	Outpatient:	Residential:	Juv. Detention:	Schools:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↓ number and duration of restrictive interventions (includes restraints, short holds, and seclusions)</li> <li>↓ staff turnover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>↓ disruptive behaviors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

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