

This guide has clickable links embedded to expand on the information provided in the handout. Look for this symbol to direct you to more information ✨➡

## Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS)

### • What is CPS?

- The CPS approach (previously known as Collaborative Problem Solving) is proven to reduce challenging behavior, teach kids the skills they lack, and build relationships with the adults in their lives. This model uses the premise that **kids with challenging behavior don't lack the will to behave well, they lack the skills to behave well.**
- CPS was created by Dr. Ross Greene. His educator workshop videos provide more detail on this approach and can be found here - <https://livesinthebalance.org/educators-tour/> ✨➡
- Dr. Greene believes that concerning behaviour is not the result of poor parenting, poor teaching methods, faulty learning, or poor motivation, rather, its the result of demands that are above the child's current abilities as a result of missing or poorly developed skills
- Support the lagging skills = Improved behaviour

### • How do we do it? (for cheatsheets related to the below steps click [HERE](#) ) ✨➡

- Empathy - gathering information to have a better understanding of what's making it hard for a kid to meet a particular expectation.
- Define the Problem - entering the adult's concern or perspective into consideration (i.e., why it's important that the expectation be met).
- Invitation - adults and kids brainstorm solutions so as to arrive at a plan of action that is both realistic and mutually satisfactory - a solution that addresses both concerns and that both parties can actually do.

### • Common Lagging Skills: Difficulty with....

- maintaining focus
- transitions
- persisting
- inflexibility and considering alternative views/solutions
- expressing needs/concerns/thoughts
- chronic irritability and/or anxiety
- sensory/motor functioning
- concrete/black and white thinking
- taking into account situational factors and adjusting the plan
- social skills/ social cognition
- impulsivity
- language and communication
- handling unpredictability

Kids do well  
if they can  
-Ross Greene



How do we know what the missing skills are?  
The Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems (ALSUP) ✨➡

discussion guide is a free resource that can be very helpful at identifying the child's skill deficits

To read more:

The Explosive Child (6th Edition): A New Approach for Understanding and Parenting Easily Frustrated, Chronically Inflexible Children by Dr. Ross Greene ✨➡



**Emotion is an  
elevator and  
reason is the  
ground floor**

Emotion dysregulation and anxiety can often present as defiance, aggression, poor behaviour choices, shutting down, and oppositionality. However, these outward behaviours should be considered evidence of the level of difficulty the youth is having internally at that moment in time.

## Emotion Coaching

Emotion coaching involves helping youth recognize and manage their emotions in a healthy way. By helping youth learn to regulate their emotions, you are creating the new neural pathways in their brain for them to learn to do this for themselves!

- **Emotional Awareness:** Knowing what they are feeling is vital for implementing effective emotion regulation tools - help them to describe their bodily felt sense
  - Encourage youth to label their emotions.
  - Create a feelings chart or "emotion word wall" to help youth identify and express their feelings.
  - Use storytelling or literature to explore characters' emotions.
- **Validate their emotional experiences**
  - Validating emotions is the key to letting youth know that you understand why they are feeling an emotion, and that it is ok for them to have that emotion. It lets them know that you get it, they can come to you for support, and they are not alone!
  - Along with labeling the emotion, tell them you understand the why behind it (e.g., the reason for the emotion)
  - Avoid the word "but" - It takes away from all your hard work validating their experiences prior to using this word
  - It does not need to be a long conversation, when done well, this can be quick!
- **How does this sound?**
  - *"It can be so frustrating to wait your turn because it is so exciting to to get to go on the slide at the park"*
  - *"I can see you are sad that your friends didn't want to play with you because you really look forward to playing with them"*



## Putting It All Together

### Label the Emotion & Validate


*"I can see you are/I get why you would be (emotion label) because (reason why)"*

### Meet the Need

Sadness: Needs comfort/soothing  
 Anger: Validation/help asserting boundaries  
 Shame: Needs reassurance  
 Anxiety: Needs support for exposure

### Fix/Problem-Solve:

This is often not needed when steps 1 and 2 are done, but is necessary in the event of bullying or unsafe relationships

Learn more & find helpful resources at  
 [\\*mentalhealthfoundations.ca](https://www.mentalhealthfoundations.ca)

## Environmental Accommodations

Some children need accommodations to the environment to help them thrive.

- Sensory sensitivities:
  - Make the environment more sensory neutral
  - Permit the use of noise cancelling headphones during homework time
  - Provide fidget toys, wobble seats, or other sensory materials to support youth that require specific sensory input to stay regulated
- Flexible seating:
  - Offer alternative seating options, like standing or rocking chairs
  - Help support them in identifying where and what kind of seat seems to support their best engagement
- Communication supports:
  - Encourage youth to use a designated signal or card when they need a break during homework
  - Establish a system for youth to communicate their emotional state without verbalizing it (e.g., emotion thermometer, emotion wheel)
- Provide a quiet/calm space for youth to retreat to
- Flexibility and Choice
  - Offer choices- during activities, tasks, what to wear, etc. when possible
  - Allow youth to have some control over their environment

### 4 Categories of Accommodations to consider:

**Presentation-** how the information is received

**Responding-** how the youth show what they know

**Setting-** how the environment is made accessible for their needs

**Scheduling-** how time demands and schedules may be adjusted

## Supporting Transitions

- Here are strategies to help youth who struggle with transitions:
  - Predictability:
    - Create a predictable daily routine with visual schedules.
    - Announce transitions in advance, providing a countdown and/or visual cues.
  - Transition Activities:
    - Use transition activities or games to make the shift more engaging and enjoyable.
    - Give the youth a job or activity to do during the transition.
    - Offer the option of a transition item.
    - Encourage youth to participate in planning and organizing the transition.



## Address Learning/Attention Regulation Needs

- Children can often present with higher levels of emotional dysregulation and difficulty with engagement in tasks when the expectations are above their level
- Appropriate academic and learning accommodations and modifications will reduce the frustration load, free up cognitive resources to better engage in tasks, and lower resistance!

## Does there need to be consequences?

- When you engage in collaborative problem solving and emotion coaching the need for behaviour consequences is dramatically reduced!
- It is important to remember to distinguish between emotions and behaviours: You can validate emotions and not the behaviours!
- Take a pause! Then consider if the situation warrants a consequence and what that consequence should look like.
- Shame, time outs, suspensions, being sent to the office etc. do not result in improving behaviours long-term, because they are not dealing with the underlying lagging skills (including the need for emotion regulation).
- In these circumstance it is also important to support youth in learning more appropriate behaviours to achieve their needs/wants and support their lagging skills so that they are better able to show these behaviours.
- It's important to use consequences that promote learning and growth:
  - **Natural Consequences:**
    - Help them understand the natural cause-and-effect relationship between their behaviour and outcomes
      - Eg. If the child pours the paint down the drain they cannot paint in the class that day.
  - **Logical Consequences:**
    - Establish logical consequences that are directly related to the poor behaviour choice
    - Ensure consequences are proportionate and fair, taking into account the youth's age and emotional regulation abilities
      - E.g. A youth uses their phone in class, so the teacher confiscates it until the end of class.
  - **Restorative Practices:**
    - Encourage youth to take responsibility for their actions
    - Promote empathy by involving youth in repairing the harm caused by their behaviour
      - Eg. If a child breaks another child's block structure they can help the child rebuild it.

## Three R's of Logical Consequences

- ① Reasonable
- ② Respectful
- ③ Related



## Need help implementing these recommendations?

**WonderTree has psychologists, social workers, educational consultant, tutors, SLPs, OTs, DSWs, and executive functioning coaches that can help support youth to successfully engage at home and school!**