

SUPPORTING YOUR RELATIONSHIP
Thursday November 13th 6:30pm
Gov. Charles Stratton School Library
Dr. Stacy Haynes, Ed.D., LPC, ACS

SUPPORTING YOUR RELATIONSHIP

⦿ Learning Objectives

- Learn proven strategies to communicate effectively and keep relationship strong
- Learn the myths and truths related to relationships when unique needs are present
- Learn receive support and understanding from family
- Learn how to share your child's unique needs
- Learn how to bring awareness in public for your child

FORMAT FOR TODAY

- ⦿ Myth busting- a little research to support the truth
- ⦿ Thinking points- a chance for you to reflect on your own needs
- ⦿ Questions- use the index cards; plenty of time for questions at the end

WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT?

◉ Maybe you have heard this:

- 50% of all marriages end in divorce. This percentage jumps to between 80% and 90% for couples who have a child with special needs.
- the frequently-quoted statistic of an 80% plus divorce rate in marriages where the parents are raising a child with special needs.

WHY THIS IS SO IMPORTANT

◉ Maybe you have heard

- ◉ "almost like getting a diagnosis of autism and a diagnosis of divorce at the same time" -
Brian Freedman, PhD, Kennedy Krieger
Institute in Baltimore

Reflects a sense of hopelessness for their child
and for their marriage

WHY THIS IS SO IMPORTANT

◉ Myths or Reality?

MYTH VERSUS REALITY

- Researchers support that parents with children with autism have 3 in 4 chance of staying together
- Researchers at University of Wisconsin found 24% chance of divorce with autism, compared to 14% non autistic children
- Both groups show high rates of divorce when children are young
- Autism group show higher divorce as teenagers

MYTH VERSUS REALITY

- Study by Wymbs and Plham examined divorce rate with children with ADHD
- Parents divorce 22.7% compared to non Adhd parents at 12.6% by the time child was 8
- Factors increasing risk- antisocial in father, less educated mothers, earlier diagnosis, minority groups, Oppositional defiant disorder or Conduct Disorder present

MYTH VERSUS REALITY

- Robbers, et al looked at 6400 at age 3 to see if externalizing behaviors or internalizing behaviors had an impact on divorce
- Higher levels of externalizing (aggression, conduct, hyperactivity) in girls at age 3 predicted later parental divorce

MYTH VERSUS REALITY

- Urbano and Hodapp compared divorce rates among children with Down's Syndrome, compared to other birth defects, and non identified disabled children
- Divorce rates were lower among couples with a child with Down's syndrome
- Divorce more likely the first 2 years of child's life

MYTH VERSUS REALITY

- Center for Autism and Related Disorders at the Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore, MD found: 77,911 children, 3-17 age
- 64% of children with autism have two parent home; compared to 65% who do not have autism
- Stress is essential and acknowledging it but also letting parents know that their relationship can SURVIVE these stresses

THINKING POINT

- What did I believe about divorce and children with unique needs?
- How has this new research changed my view of my relationship?
- Share this new understanding with everyone you know...Your relationship can SURVIVE.

MARRIAGE IS HARD

- ⊙ Marriage in the best of circumstances is hard
- ⊙ There is give and take, sharing, financial and lifestyle decisions

- ⊙ Add in children- focus can change, our values change, our finances change
- ⊙ Add in unexpected unique needs

TOP 10 REASONS FOR DIVORCE

- ⊙ Lack of communication
- ⊙ Finances
- ⊙ Feelings constraint
- ⊙ Trust
- ⊙ Expectations from each other
- ⊙ You spouse doesn't fulfill/understand needs or desires
- ⊙ Quick change in lifestyle
- ⊙ Insecurity
- ⊙ Religious and cultural differences
- ⊙ Abuse

THINKING POINT

⊙ Before we go through each reason for divorce, what would most likely be your top 3? Why?

- ⊙ _____
- ⊙ _____
- ⊙ _____

⊙ Think about the conflict/problem that we are most consumed about. Identify your top 3.

- ⊙ _____
- ⊙ _____
- ⊙ _____

CPS IS THE SOLUTION

- Collaborative and Proactive Solutions developed by Dr. Ross Greene
- Used with children with challenging behaviors when all else fails

- Great when used in relationships! Finding solutions that work

- www.livesinthebalance.org

CPS

- First Step: Empathy Step
- Understanding the problem from your spouses' perspective; understanding all the details

- Second Step: Define the Problem Step
- What is your concerns about the problem; how it affects you/family

- Step Three: Invitation Step
- Brainstorm for real solutions that are realistic and mutually satisfying

CPS IN ACTION

- We will now apply CPS to your marriage and to the problems that arise

- Remember these are a list of the most common top 5; you may need to problem solve a unique reason or problem you are having

LACK OF COMMUNICATION

- ⊙ Major reason for divorce
- ⊙ Distance is created when we do not share our feelings
- ⊙ Time and energy parents use on children but not on each other "left over"

- ⊙ Thinking Point: What would be our areas of communication to improve?
- ⊙ CPS Step 1- spouse concern
- ⊙ CPS Step 2- my concern
- ⊙ CPS Step 3- solutions

TIME TOGETHER

- ⊙ Children with special needs require more time
- ⊙ Everyone is busy and demands squeeze out time for each other
- ⊙ It is important to make time for yourselves and your relationship
- ⊙ Everyone needs time together and alone; including children

- ⊙ Thinking Point: When can we spend time? CPS Step 1- spouse concern
- ⊙ CPS Step 2- my concern
- ⊙ CPS Step 3 - Daytime, lunch, evening out? Respite care?

FINANCES

- ⊙ Disability costs money
- ⊙ Budget we planned for not realistic w/added costs
- ⊙ Insurance doesn't always cover
- ⊙ Working hours, one stay home

- ⊙ Thinking point: What is our real argument about money/finances?
- ⊙ CPS Step 1- spouse concern
- ⊙ CPS Step 2- my concern
- ⊙ CPS Step 3- solutions

BLAME GAME

- ◉ Many of us need to find someone to blame when things go wrong
- ◉ Blaming oneself lead to guilt and suffering; which makes it harder to connect in a loving relationship; anger and denial common
- ◉ Feel restrained or held back by circumstances
- ◉ Thinking Point: What blame do I hold for my spouse? What do I blame myself for? Am I ready to let blame go?
- ◉ CPS Step 1- spouse concern
- ◉ CPS Step 2- my concern
- ◉ CPS Step 3- solutions

TRUST

- ◉ Do you really trust your spouse?
- ◉ Are you concerned with someone leaving the relationship during hard times?
- ◉ Trust is a leading factor in a successful marriage and relationship
- ◉ Thinking point: What is our concern about trust?
- ◉ CPS Step 1- spouse concern
- ◉ CPS Step 2- my concern
- ◉ CPS Step 3- solutions

EXPECTATIONS FROM EACH OTHER

- ◉ When expectations aren't met it puts a strain on the relationship
- ◉ This leads to conflict as we refuse to "bend" to meet each others needs when ours are not met
- ◉ Mind reading gets everyone in trouble
- ◉ Classic superhero or one parent show

EXPECTATIONS FROM EACH OTHER

- Thinking point: What expectations do I have? Have I communicated these expectations?
- CPS Step 1- spouse concern
- CPS Step 2- my concern
- CPS Step 3- solutions

FULFILL YOUR NEEDS/DESIRES

- Different from expectations
- More about your core desires in your relationship with one another
- What were the things that attracted you to each other?
- What does your spouse like you to do/say?
- Are we having intimacy? Do we like each other?

FULFILL YOUR DESIRES/NEEDS

- Thinking point: What do I know about my spouses needs? Have I tried to actively meet my spouses needs?
- CPS Step 1- spouse concern
- CPS Step 2- my concern
- CPS Step 3- solutions

POWERFUL PEACEFUL PARENTING

- Research supports the effectiveness of parents when they work together as a team
- Often one parent is better at managing behaviors, but the other parent can be part of the team
- Parents reduce a child's risk of adverse mental health outcomes and increase their ability for good mental health outcomes just by being present and involved in their child's life

POWERFUL PEACEFUL PARENTING

- Thinking point: Do we have peace in our home? What is keeping us from working together as parents?
- CPS Step 1- spouse concern
- CPS Step 2- my concern
- CPS Step 3- solutions

WHO ELSE MAKES A DIFFERENCE

- Family
- Friends
- Community support

FAMILY

- ◉ Crime scene tape - family involvement is important however this can also cause a major conflict in relationships when extended family offer advice or opinions
- ◉ Inform family of special needs and ways to be helpful; don't assume they know what you know

FAMILY

- ◉ They may not respond the way you would like- labels, criticism, lack of understanding
- ◉ Frustration with explaining once again why interventions, treatment or discipline is the way it is
- ◉ Avoid family gatherings and events
- ◉ Always the Imagined Audience- watching your every interaction with critical eyes

FAMILY

- ◉ Have a conversation on purpose w/ family
- ◉ Be honest about your experience
- ◉ Allow them to walk in your shoes for a day

- ◉ Thinking point: Who in our family do we need to spend time talking about our child?
- ◉ CPS Step 1- spouse concern
- ◉ CPS Step 2- my concern
- ◉ CPS Step 3- solutions

FRIENDS

- Rely on positive sources in your life
- Allow each person to have friends outside of the family that they can share and enjoy life with
- Allow time for each other to develop friendship- shopping or golf outing
- Friends do not all need to have similar circumstances

FRIENDS

- Friends help you to take care of yourself
- Thinking point: Who are my friends? Who are my spouses friends? How can we increase our time with friends and yet support our relationship?
- CPS Step 1- spouse concern
- CPS Step 2- my concern
- CPS Step 3- solutions

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Connecting yourself to resources
Take a day and research all the activities in your area
- "no man is an island"- ask other parents what do they do with their children in the community- form a network with other families

PUBLIC

- Prevention is better than cure- prepare for the worst and the best case scenario
- Have a safety plan and a Plan B-
- Be flexible and try not to rush through activities

PUBLIC

- Special Needs Oriented Community Events
- Metrokids- Special Kids Event Guide, resources
- Sahara Sam's Water Park Host Special Needs Night; AMC Theatres; local attractions
- Special Olympics and Sports Clubs; ex. Cheer or Dance programs
- Social Support Groups like SEPAC
- Hospital family support groups

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

- Thinking point: What have been some barriers to utilizing community support? What are some things we would like to do in the community?
- CPS Step 1- spouse concern
- CPS Step 2- my concern
- CPS Step 3- solutions

REFERENCES

- o Sources Support Your Relationship Workshop
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- o Autism divorce rates
- o <http://www.isonline.com/news/health/100266159.html>
- o <http://drgreivich.wordpress.com/2011/04/12/special-needs-and-divorce-what-does-the-data-say/>
- o <http://www.examiner.com/article/quality-or-quantity-divorce-rates-higher-when-a-couple-has-a-child-with-special-needs>
- o <http://specialhappens.com/2013/04/04/divorce-special-needs-families-17>
- o <http://www.kennedykrieger.org/overview/news/80-percent-autism-divorce-rate-debunked-first-of-its-kind-scientific-study>

RESOURCES FOR DR. STACY

www.ParentingTips2go.com
www.LittleHandsServices.com
info@littlehandsagency.com

- o Radio: Tuesday 10am WNJRradio.com until Jan then WIARadio.com Tuesdays 10:30am Parenting Tips 2 Go w/ Dr. Stacy
- o Amazon.com Powerful, Peaceful Parenting: Guiding Children, Changing Lives
- o Performcare In Home Services - For Assistance - 24 Hours a Day - 7 Days a Week; Please contact us at 1-877-652-7624-877-652-7624



Collaborative & Proactive Solutions

The Next Generation of Solving Problems Collaboratively

A more compassionate, productive, effective approach to understanding and helping behaviorally challenging kids

Dr. Ross Greene is the originator of the research-based approach to understanding and helping behaviorally challenging kids -- as described in his books *The Explosive Child* and *Lost at School* -- that has been implemented in countless families, schools, inpatient psychiatry units, therapeutic groups homes, and residential and juvenile detention facilities. The approach sets forth two major tenets. First, challenging behavior in kids is best understood as the result of lagging cognitive skills (in the general domains of flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, and problem solving) rather than as the result of passive, permissive, inconsistent, noncontingent parenting. And second, the best way to reduce challenging episodes is by working together with the child -- collaborating -- to solve the problems setting them in motion in the first place (rather than by imposing adult will and intensive use of reward and punishment procedures). Here are some of the important questions answered by the model:

Question: *Why are challenging kids challenging?*

Answer: Because they're lacking the skills not to be challenging. If they had the skills, they wouldn't be challenging. That's because -- and this is perhaps the key theme of the model -- *Kids do well if they can*. And because (here's another key theme) *Doing well is always preferable to not doing well (if a kid has the skills to do well in the first place)*. This, of course, is a dramatic departure from the view of challenging kids as attention-seeking, manipulative, coercive, limit-testing, and poorly motivated. It's a completely different set of lenses, supported by research in the neurosciences over the past 30-40 years, and it has dramatic implications for how caregivers go about helping such kids.

Question: *When are challenging kids challenging?*

Answer: When the demands or expectations being placed upon them exceed the skills that they have to respond adaptively. Of course, that's when we all respond maladaptively: when we're lacking the skills to respond adaptively. Thus, an important goal for helpers is to identify the skills a challenging kid is lacking. An even more important goal is to identify the *specific expectations* a kid is having difficulty meeting (the conditions in which challenging behavior is occurring), referred to as *unsolved problems*...and to help kids solve those problems. Because unsolved problems tend to be highly predictable, the problem-solving should be proactive most of the time. Identifying lagging skills and unsolved problems is accomplished through use of an instrument called the *Assessment of Lagging Skills and Unsolved Problems (ALSUP)*. You can find the ALSUP in The Paperwork section of the website of *Lives in the Balance*, the non-profit Dr. Greene founded to help disseminate his approach (www.livesinthebalance.org).

Question: *What behaviors do challenging kids exhibit when they don't have the skills to respond adaptively to certain demands?*

Answer: Challenging kids communicate that they're struggling to meet demands and expectations in some fairly common ways: whining, pouting, sulking, withdrawing, crying, screaming, swearing, hitting, spitting, kicking, throwing, breaking, lying, stealing, and so forth. But what a kid *does* when he's having trouble meeting demands and expectations isn't the most important part (though it may feel that way)... *why* and *when* he's doing these things are much more important.

Question: *What should we be doing differently to help these kids better than we're helping them now?*


Answer: If challenging behavior is set in motion by lagging skills and not lagging motivation, then it's easy to understand why rewarding and punishing a kid may not make things better. Since challenging behavior occurs in response to highly predictable unsolved problems, then challenging kids -- and the rest of us -- are a whole lot better off when adults help them solve those problems. But if we solve them unilaterally, through imposition of adult will (referred to in the model as "Plan A"), then we'll only increase the likelihood of challenging episodes and we won't solve any problems durably. Better to solve those problems collaboratively ("Plan B") so the kid is a fully invested participant, solutions are more durable, and (over time) the kid -- and often the adults as well -- learn the skills they were lacking all along. *Plan B* is comprised of three basic ingredients. The first ingredient -- called the *Empathy* step -- involves gathering information from the child so as to achieve the clearest understanding of his or her concern or perspective on a given unsolved problem. The second ingredient (called the *Define Adult Concerns* step) involves entering into consideration the adult concern or perspective on the same unsolved problem. The third ingredient (called the *Invitation* step) involves having the adult and kid brainstorm solutions so as to arrive at a plan of action that is both realistic and mutually satisfactory...in other words, a solution that addresses the concerns of both parties and that both parties can actually perform.

Question: *Where can I learn more about this model?*

Answer: The *Lives in the Balance* website is a very good place to start. It has a ton of free resources to help you learn about and apply Dr. Greene's approach, including streaming video, audio programming, commentary, support, and lots more.

Question: *Isn't this the same model as what was previously known as Collaborative Problem Solving?*

Answer: Dr. Greene is the originator of the *Collaborative Problem Solving* approach, and for many years referred to his model by that name in his research papers, scholarly articles, books, and workshops. However, due to legal action taken by Massachusetts General Hospital, he is prohibited from using that name to refer to his model. He now calls his model *Collaborative & Proactive Solutions* (CPS). Be careful! There are others using the name *Collaborative Problem Solving* out there, but they had nothing to do with the origination or development of Dr. Greene's model and are not associated with Dr. Greene or *Lives in the Balance* in any way!

 Lives in the Balance

www.livesinthebalance.org

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Plan B Cheat Sheet

EMPATHY STEP

Ingredient/Goal:

Gather information about and achieve a clear understanding of the kid's concern or perspective on the unsolved problem you're discussing.

Words:

Initial Inquiry (neutral observation): "I've noticed that... (insert unsolved problem)... what's up?"

Drilling for Information:

usually involves reflective listening and clarifying questions, gathering information related to the who, what, where, and when of the unsolved problem, and asking the kids what they're thinking in the midst of the unsolved problems and why the problem occurs under some conditions and not others.

More Help:

- If you're not sure what to say next, want more info, or are confused by something the kid has said, say:
 - "How so?"
 - "I'm confused."
 - "I don't quite understand."
 - "Can you tell me more about that?"
 - "Let me think about that for a second."
- If the kid doesn't talk or says "I don't know", try to figure out why:
 - Maybe the unsolved problem wasn't free of challenging behavior, wasn't specific, wasn't free of adult theories, or was "clumped" (instead of split)
 - Maybe you're using Emergency Plan B (instead of Proactive Plan B)
 - Maybe you're using Plan A
 - Maybe he really doesn't know
 - Maybe he needs the problem broken down into its component parts
 - Maybe he needs time to think

What You're Thinking:

"What don't I yet understand about the kid's concern or perspective? What doesn't make sense to me yet? What do I need to ask to understand it better?"

Don't...

- skip the Empathy step
- assume you already know what the kid's concern is and treat the Empathy step as if it is a formality
- rush through the Empathy step
- leave the Empathy step before you completely understand the kid's concern or perspective
- talk about solutions yet

DEFINE THE PROBLEM STEP

Ingredient/Goal:

Enter the concern of the second party (often the adult) into consideration

Words:

"The thing is (insert adult concern) or..."
 "My concern is (insert adult concern)"

More Help:

- Most adult concerns fall into one of two categories
- How the problem is affecting the kid
- How the problem is affecting others

What You're Thinking:

"Have I been clear about my concern? Does the child understand what I have said?"

Don't...

- start talking about solutions yet
- sermonize, judge, lecture, use sarcasm

INVITATION STEP

Ingredient/Goal:

Brainstorm solutions that are realistic (meaning both parties can do what they are agreeing to) and mutually satisfactory (meaning the solution truly addresses the concerns of both parties)

Words:

Restate the concerns that were identified in the first two steps, usually beginning with "I wonder if there is a way..."

More Help:

- Stick as closely to the concerns that were identified in the first two steps
- While it's a good idea to give the kid the first opportunity to propose a solution, generating solutions is a team effort
- It's a good idea to consider the odds of a given solution actually working ...if you think the odds are below 50-50 percent, consider what it is that's making you skeptical and talk about it
- This step always ends with agreement to return to Plan B if the first solution doesn't stand the test of time

What You're Thinking:

"Have I summarized both concerns accurately? Have we truly considered whether both parties can do what they've agreed to? Does the solution truly address the concerns of both parties? What's my estimate of the odds of this solution working?"

Don't...

- Rush through this step either
- Enter this step with preordained, "ingenious" solutions
- Sign off on solutions that both parties can't actually perform
- Sign off on solutions that don't truly address the concerns of both parties.