Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) - Treating explosive and problem kids

This is the approach that I have been using to help kids and parents/carers bring greater levels of peace and quiet at home. This method is also used in schools and Ross Greene the innovator behind this approach has a number of reading and web-based resources that can get you started. When I use this Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) I work with the young person and the parent in sessions that are between 1 to 1½ hours. The problem-solving basis of CPS fits well when treating a young persons’ emotional problems, for example anger and worries. The following is an extract of sections of Greene’s website that may help you better understand this excellent approach developing our children’s ability to problem-solve.

If you’re new to Collaborative Problem Solving, this is a good place to start. If you’re not new to the model, this is a good place to stay fresh on key concepts.

The model sets forth two major tenets. First, social, emotional, and behavioral challenges in kids are best understood as the byproduct of lagging cognitive skills in the domains of flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance, and problem-solving (rather than as attention-seeking, manipulative, limit-testing, or a sign of poor motivation). In other words, challenging behavior is a form of developmental delay. Second, these challenges are best addressed by collaboratively resolving the problems that are setting the stage for challenging behavior (rather than through reward and punishment programs and intensive imposition of adult will).

Kids Do Well If They Can

This is the most important theme of Collaborative Problem Solving: the belief that if kids could do well they would do well. In other words, if the kid had the skills to exhibit adaptive behavior, he wouldn’t be exhibiting challenging behavior. That’s because doing well is always preferable to not doing well.

What’s Your Explanation?

Your explanation for a kid’s is challenging behavior has major implications for how you’ll try to help. If you believe a kid is challenging because of lagging skills and unsolved problems, then rewarding and punishing may not be the ideal approach. Solving those problems and teaching those skills would make perfect sense.

Being Responsive

The definition of good parenting, good teaching, and good treatment is being responsive to the hand you’ve been dealt. Notice, the definition isn’t “treating every kid exactly the same”.

Check Your Lenses

Challenging behavior occurs when the demands of the environment exceed a kid’s capacity to respond adaptively. In other words, it takes two to tango. But many
popular explanations for challenging behavior place blame on the kid or his parents. Not Collaborative Problem Solving.

Three Options for Solving Problems

There are three ways in which adults try to solve problems with kids: Plan A (which is unilateral problem solving), Plan C (dropping the problem completely), and Plan B (that's the one you want to get really good at).

Plan B

Once you’ve identified the unsolved problems that are precipitating challenging episodes, and determined the two or three high-priority unsolved problems you want to solve, you're ready for Plan B. Don't forget, timing is everything. This one may be worth watching more than once.

Working through Plan B applied to real home, social and school situations in therapy helps to bring clarity to this problem-solving approach as well as the positive results such as a quieter and more content kids and homes.