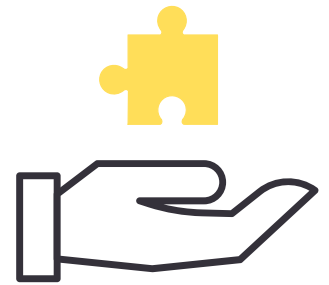


COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING FOR PARENTS/CARERS



A problem behaviour can put a strain on your relationship with your child. Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) is an alternative to reward and punishment and can help you both understand each other better. Challenging behaviours are a form of communication, and indicate your child is struggling with something, it may be a way of avoiding something they don't think they can do or makes them feel anxious. It maybe they haven't learnt the necessary skill such as moving from one activity to another or something they don't understand. Shouting, using rewards and punishments, or telling your child what they should be doing may not work if there is an obstacle in the way - although there may be a place for using natural or logical consequences.

CPS is a way of talking and listening that helps a child/young person build problem solving skills and aids cognitive and social-emotional development. The focus is working together rather than prescribing or imposing solutions. It can take a few conversations to solve the problem together but that will feel much better than shouting and pleading. It can be hard, these conversations are not easy, but with practice they start becoming more natural and more creative. Safety always comes first though.

Try not to think you know what the solution is and you're trying to get your child to just to do what you want.

Have an open mind to finding a solution together. If you are genuinely committed to finding a solution together then your child will be to.

THE THREE STAGES OF CPS

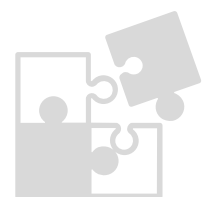
THE EMPATHY STAGE



THE PROBLEM STAGE



THE INVITATION STAGE



THE EMPATHY STAGE



When there has been a behaviour that has been challenging, don't deal with the situation there and then especially if feelings are high. Do what must be done to make the situation safe then wait until you are both calm before you start problem solving.

"You didn't come home at the time we agreed. What happened?" Then listen especially for feelings, ask questions to explore what was happening for your child, why the problem may happen in some situations and not others. Don't assume you know what is going on - use PACE and take your time so you are sure you understand your child's reasons.

THE PROBLEM STAGE



Here you introduce your perspective on the behaviour and why it is a problem either for your child or for others including yourself.

"The thing is, I was very worried where you were. And I was also concerned that if you don't get enough sleep it's going to make school harder the next day." There is no need to lecture, judge or insist what your child does just to state clearly why the problem is the problem.

THE INVITATION STAGE



Now you ask your child if you can work together to find a solution to stop this happening next time. There is no need or benefit in arguing about the past, the focus is on the future.

"I wonder if we could find a way that works for both of us. So that you could get to spend time with your friends but we know when you will be home." Then both of you start to generate ideas together. Give space for your child to give ideas and if they do, don't close them down, instead write or draw them down, along with your ideas until you have some possibilities to consider.

Go through ideas, thinking them through, with both of you estimating the probability of each idea working. Ideally, you can agree a plan – it may be something neither of you would have thought of by yourselves. Give a reasonable idea a chance. You can keep repeating the process until you find a workable solution.

It can take many conversations to find a solution that works for both of you but you will have saved both of you a lot of anger and frustration and possibly helped your child learn some valuable skills as well.

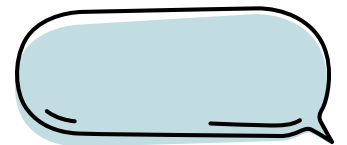
SOME USEFUL QUESTIONS AND SENTENCE STARTERS

- I've noticed that What's up? (Raise the issue when you are both calm)
- That sounds so hard/That must have been scary (acknowledge and validate feelings)
- That's not an easy thing to deal with
- I really want to hear what was happening for you...
- It would be so much easier if you didn't have to... ...(Give wishes in fantasy)
- I think you are saying.....is there anything else?
- I get that but how come you were able to then....?(explore why problem might occur under some conditions and not others)
- Can we think together about what we could do if it happens again? (invitation to problem-solve together)
- I'm not saying 'No' (but not saying 'yes' either)
- If you/I/they did that, what would happen? (thinking through consequences)

Remember it will be rare to sort out a complex problem the first time you talk about it. Your child may find it hard to give ideas and be unsure you genuinely want to work together. Complex problems are going to take a lot of thinking by both of you to find genuine solutions.



You can find out a lot more about this approach on these websites
www.thinkkids.org www.livesinthebalance.org



This document is available in Welsh / Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg