



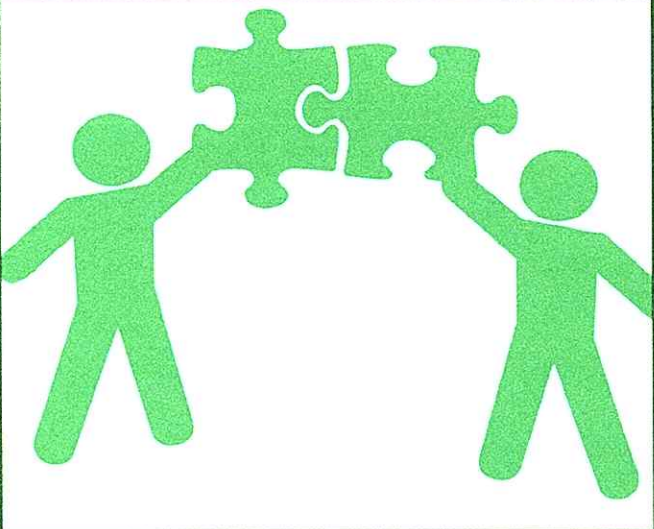
Parenting Mindfulness Moment 5

“Well Wishes for Difficult People”

(Adapted from Greenland and Harris, 2017)

This is a personal mindfulness technique that incorporates self awareness, reframing thoughts and feelings, and connection to others.

1. Start by getting yourself into a comfortable position and close your eyes.
2. Next bring to mind a person with whom you may have had difficult experiences or who you find challenging to be around, and you would like to wish well.
3. Now imagine that you are feeling happy and at peace. (you do not actually have to feel this way right now). Imagine doing something you really enjoy, spending time with friends, laughing, or smiling.
4. Now affirm yourself with one or more statements like the following: “I would like to feel a lot of peace within myself, I want to feel healthy and strong, I have hope for a deep happiness and abundant joy for my life.”
5. Next imagine that the positive feelings are warm and begin to grow and expand as you pay attention to them. Imagine that they have a color to them and that this warm growing color begins to cover you starting with the top of your head, down your shoulders, through arms and fingers, into your core, then through your legs, down to the tips of your toes.
6. Now imagine extending this warm, growing color of good feeling onto the person you find difficult. Imagine the peace, happiness, health, strength, and joy covering that person from the top of the head to the toes on their feet.
7. Say silently to yourself, “I wish you well.” Say it three times as a positive, peaceful declaration over that person.
8. Open your eyes and let your attention come back into the room. Notice how you are feeling at this exact moment. Do you notice anything different from when you started? What do you notice about your body sensation at this moment? Do you notice any shifting or changing of your own emotional state right now?



CONCEPT 5

**Collaborate to Connect
and Solve Problems**

Developing a consistent road map to build missing skills, get expectations met, and strengthen the relationship in the process.

A DIFFERENT WAY TO THINK

“Kids Do Well if They Can”

Dr. Ross Greene first presented this revolutionary statement in his book *The Explosive Child* (Greene, 2014). Through his experience treating and researching children who are easily frustrated and chronically inflexible he determined that most, if they had the ability, would love to get along with parents, receive positive attention, and get through a day without racking up all those consequences for their behaviors. Dr. Greene suggested that it is possible that we may have been looking at many of these behaviors the wrong way. Instead of willful, spiteful, acts of defiance, what if what we were experiencing were children who were missing significant thinking and relating skills necessary to successfully navigate the challenges and stresses of daily life? If this is the case then we have a great opportunity to

assist our children in developing these skills.

Why skills may be missing.

When children have experienced trauma and major life disruptions it is quite possible to miss out on learning some of the most fundamental thinking and relational skills. The paradigm of surviving versus thriving is a good one to consider. When many other children may have been learning positive skills for living, children in the midst of trauma often are concerned with the skills of making it safely through a day. It is also important to consider the impacts of prenatal exposure to drugs and alcohol when considering missing skills. It is possible that some skills may be organically damaged due to these factors, in which case children may need extra attention and coping strategies.

About the process

The Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (CPS) model offers parents a means to assess current lagging skills in order to help understand problematic behaviors more completely. It also teaches parents a step-by-step process for solving household problems with the child rather than for the child. The process holds children ultimately accountable for their actions by involving them in finding a fix for the situation. The steps of the problem solving process are designed to slow down the world and help teach skills at the child’s current level of functioning. In doing so the child feels understood, valued, and validated. Adults often also feel a sense of confidence, competence, and value.

For these reasons, the CPS model aligns extremely well with the needs of children who have experienced trauma. Instead of blame or judgment, children receive empathy and understanding. Behavioral issues and family problems are addressed, but done so in such a way that is compassionate and understanding of children who may be missing skills for some very good reasons that they did not ask for.

For many years parenting has relied on basic behavioral science to attempt to solve all problems. Unfortunately this neglects the amazing complexity and social aspects of human capacity for growth and learning. Many experts are now looking deeper and finding that rewards and consequences, though good at some things, utterly fail at many critically important parts of parenting and relationship. When these tools miss the mark, what is another possible way to teach, guide, and mentor our children into the ways we want them to grow?

“Kids do well if they can.”:

The Ideas that most challenging behaviors are due to skill deficits rather than willful actions. Given the opportunity and the capability, kids prefer doing well, receiving positive attention, and remaining close to parents whenever possible. Looking at problem behaviors as potential areas of missing skills helps parents take less offense and remain in a place of empathy and curiosity (green zone), rather than distancing self from the child (blue zone) or becoming angry and hostile (red zone).

MISSING SKILLS

Thinking Skills Necessary for Problem

A wide range of skills are necessary to solve problems, act socially, and function well within social or family contexts. The demand for these skills usually highlights their absence. Problematic behaviors or episodes may help determine what thinking skills may be missing. The following are the major areas of thinking skills that could be missing.

Attention, Focus, and Planning Skills

(Executive Skills): Necessary for sustaining attention, controlling impulses, managing time, and thinking ahead in terms of consequences for actions.

Listening and Talking Skills (Language Processing): Ability to both take in and express language. Necessary for processing instructions or necessary information as well as expressing needs, thoughts, or feelings in words.

Go With The Flow Skills (Cognitive Flexibility): Necessary for adapting to change, managing transitions, and tolerating when plans are disrupted.

Dealing With Feelings Skills (Emotional Regulation): Includes the ability to identify and successfully manage a variety of emotional states. Fluctuations of mood are understandable and tolerable enough to moderate acceptable actions.

Relating To Others Skills (Social Skills): Understanding the laws of social interaction, such as being able to read the cues of body language, recognizing impacts of words or actions on others, or ability to accurately interpret the perceptions of others.

Three Plans for Solving Any Problem

Plan A: Imposition of one's will upon another. May include the words "because I said so." If need be, Plan A will include force, coercion, or threats to ensure compliance. Parent's expectation is met for the moment, but at an emotional and possible behavioral price.

Plan C: Skillful ability of a parent to predict a power struggle or otherwise negative reaction based on the knowledge of a child's lagging skill, and avoid the negative outcome by temporarily removing an expectation. Parent's expectations are not met, but a power struggle can be avoided if necessary.

Plan B: The coming together of two individuals for the purpose of solving a problem by means of deepening understanding, perspective taking, and seeking mutually satisfactory solutions. Plan B has three distinctive and necessary ingredients:

STEPS OF PLAN B

Listen (Empathy Step): Adult seeks to see the situation through the eyes of the child using listening skills and reassurance. The goal of this step is to provide a safe and calm environment for the child to explore and discover his or her concern. (Requires an adult who is regulated and well within the "green zone")

Describe (Define the Problem): After the child's concern is identified, the adult presents his or her concern to the child. Effort to identify the adult's concern is done best prior to the discussion if possible when the adult has a calm space to rationally and logically explore why the situation is worth talking about. This step is done best when done quickly and to the point: "

Brainstorm (The Invitation): The child is invited to come up with solutions that meet both concerns. Statements like "that's an idea" encourage creativity and exploration. The child is then guided through the critical thinking and evaluative process to determine if the solutions indeed meet both concerns, are doable, and possibly sustainable. If the child cannot come up with solutions, then the adults can assist in the process, but the idea is to promote the child's personal skill development

ACTIVITIES PART 1

Think about one of your children you are currently concerned about. Work through this checklist to assess his or her current areas of lagging or missing skills. Consider how some of these areas of skills deficit may be contributing to ongoing areas of behavior.

-----Thinking Skills Checklist	
Attention, Planning, Organizing Skills (Executive Skills)	
	Difficulty handling transitions, shifting from one mindset or task to another
	Difficulty doing things in a logical sequence or prescribed order
	Difficulty persisting on challenging or tedious tasks
	Poor sense of time
	Difficulty maintaining focus
	Difficulty considering the likely outcomes or consequences of actions (impulsive)
	Difficulty considering a range of solutions to a problem
Talking & Listening Skills (Language Processing)	
	Difficulty expressing concerns, needs, or thoughts in words
	Understands/ follows conversation
Dealing with Feelings (Emotional Regulation)	
	Difficulty managing emotional response to frustration so as to think rationally
	Chronic irritability and/or anxiety significantly impede capacity for problem-solving or heighten frustration
Go with the Flow Skills (Cognitive Flexibility)	
	Difficulty seeing "grays"/concrete, literal, black & white, thinking
	Difficulty deviating from rules, routine
	Difficulty handling unpredictability, ambiguity, uncertainty, novelty
	Difficulty shifting from original idea, plan, or solution
	Difficulty taking into account situational factors that would suggest the need to adjust a plan of action
	Inflexible, inaccurate interpretations/cognitive distortions or biases (e.g., "Everyone's out to get me," "Nobody likes me," "You always blame me, "It's not fair," "I'm stupid")
Relating to Others Skills (Social Skills)	
	Difficulty attending to or accurately interpreting social cues/poor perception of social nuances
	Difficulty starting conversations, entering groups, connecting with people/lacking other basic social skills
	Difficulty seeking attention in appropriate ways
	Difficulty appreciating how his/her behavior is affecting others
	Difficulty empathizing with others, appreciating another person's perspective or point of view
	Difficulty appreciating how s/he is coming across or being perceived by others

ACTIVITIES PART 2

Preparing for “Plan B” Conversations

The steps of “Plan B” seem simple enough on the surface, yet, the practical application can take some practice and preparation. Before attempting “Plan B” use this activity to help guide your way through the process. This preparation step is especially helpful in the early stages of learning the model. Eventually the process will become more fluid and natural, but for now take some time to prepare and organize your thoughts.

Think of a problem to be solved. This could be something easy that you would like to use for practice, or a consistent problem that you would like to see getting better sooner rather than later.

STEP 1: LISTEN

The **empathy step** involves nonjudgmentally and compassionately setting the stage for the rest of the conversation.

Write down a way you could nonjudgmentally and nonthreateningly describe the problem to be solved. Just make an observation and then ask “what’s up.”

Example: “I’ve noticed that when I asked you to clean your room it seemed really hard for you. I wonder what’s up.”

Your Empathy Step:

STEP 2: DESCRIBE

The **‘define the problem’ step** involves revealing your adult concerns to the child related to the problem. This is a move away from “because I said so” and a move towards helping children develop logic, perspective taking, and building trust that adults truly care.

Write down your concern related to the above problem mentioned. If you cannot find your concern then it may be a good time to reevaluate the expectation. It should be simple, understandable, and concise. In other words, no lectures, just describe the concern.

Examples for cleaning room: safety concerns, health risk, want them to learn responsibility, having people over and want the house to feel nice, etc... although these may all be important, you would pick your top concern for the sake of the conversation.

Your Concern:

STEP 3: BRAINSTORM

The **invitation step** involves asking the child to come up with solutions that meet both concerns, are reasonable, and doable. Often times children may have difficulty coming up with solutions. At this point you are here to help. Offering solutions may help them learn how it is done.

Think of a few creative solutions to this problem. Keep in mind what you think your child’s concern is in order to be true to the process.

Examples for cleaning room: 1) do it together, 2) get some organizing bins to help, 3) work in 10 minute chunks with a break after each one

Your Solutions:

ACTION STEPS

Try your hand at some part of “Plan B” during the next week. It is not always possible to get through all three steps during one conversation. Use the following “Plan B” guide to attempt one or more of the steps with your child. Write down your response to the attempt. What areas felt good? What areas felt difficult?

STEP 1: LISTEN

Make a neutral observation about the problem to be solved. Keep it safe and conversational. Remember your child’s lagging skills and what may be difficult. If an open ended question might be too much consider asking in multiple choice format (I wonder if it’s this or that).

Goal: Find the child’s concern

Script to follow: “So I’ve noticed that _____. What’s up?” or “Seems like _____ has been difficult for you and I really wonder what is hard about that for you.” or “It seems like _____ has been tough for us lately, I wonder what bugs you about that?”

Your Reflection

STEP 2: DESCRIBE

Briefly restate the child’s concern, then state your concern.

Script to follow: “I can tell what’s really important to you is _____, and what’s important to me is _____.”

Goal: Child understands where you are coming from, learns perspective taking, build’s logical thinking, and understands that you care.

Your Reflection

STEP 3: BRAINSTORM

Invite the child to come up with solutions. Always start with the child rather than by giving your solutions. This keeps them engaged and helps to build very necessary problem solving skills. If you never invite, they will never have the opportunity to grow in this area.

Script to follow: “What do you think might fix this for us?” or “Can you think of any way we could work this out?”

Goal: Child feels validated and like a true part of the problem solving process. Child builds missing skills while also building relationship with you. Children are often more likely to follow through with solutions that they have been a part of developing.

Your Reflection

Plan B Action Sheet

Listen

1. Empathy

+

Reassurance

Neutral

Observation

"I've Noticed _____"
"What's Up?"

Child's Concern.

Explain

2. Define the Problem

"So you're concerned about _____."

and I'm concerned that _____."

Adult Concern

Brainstorm

3. The Invitation

Invitation

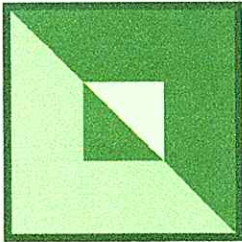
"So what do you think we could do to fix this?"

Solution

**Meets both concerns?
Do-able/ Sustainable?**

Remind yourself to invite the child to come up with solutions first! Give opportunity for his or her brain to grow and stretch!

Don't forget to try out your solutions.



Positive TIPS

Understanding Your
Child

Concept 4:
Trauma and the Developing Child

When you see challenging behaviors remind yourself “kids do well if they can.” Certain skills may have been missed but new skills can be learned.

Rewards, punishments and other motivation-based approaches have their limits. Connection, relationship, and teaching are the heart of effective discipline.

Use plans A and C when needed and use Plan B to find lasting solutions to reoccurring problems based in skill deficits. Prioritize your problems to solve.

Better understanding of a problem leads to more efficient and effective solutions.

