

Explosive Kids: Affect Dysregulation and How to Assess & Manage It

Colin E. Stewart, MD

MedStar Georgetown University Hospital

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Objectives

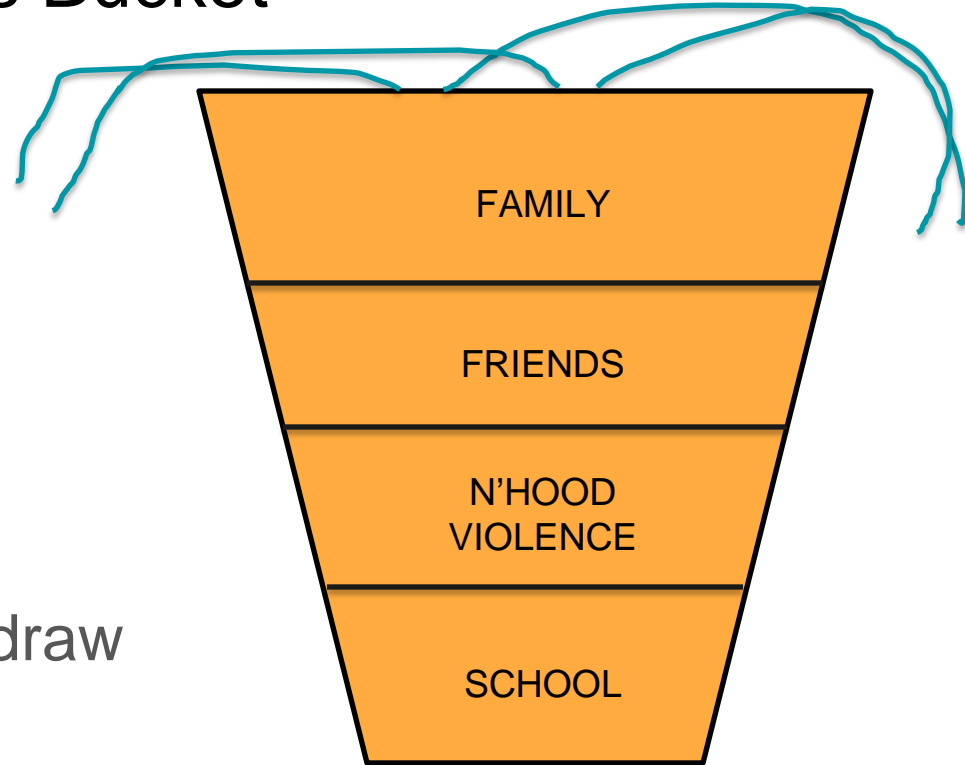
- Describe affect dysregulation
- Identify common signs and symptoms of affect dysregulation
- List common contributing factors: including psychiatric, psychological, sociological, and cultural
- Learn the basic premise of Collaborative Problem-Solving
- Practice the basic steps of the “Plan B” method

You know it when you see it...

- Tantrums
- Explosions
- Blow ups
- Meltdowns
- Frozen
- Shuts down

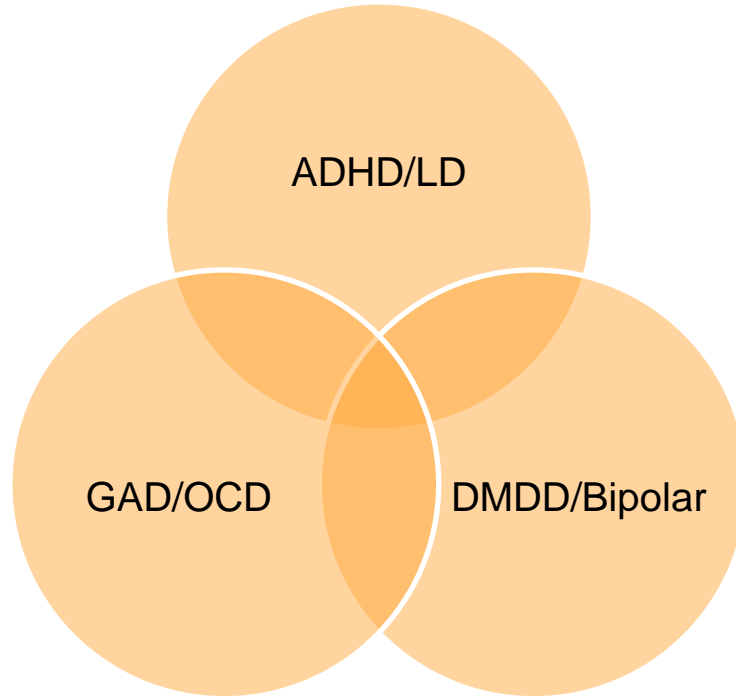
Stress Bucket

- 3 Typical Outcomes
 - Explode/blow up
 - Melt down/overflow
 - Shut down/freeze/withdraw



Multiple Determinism & Hickam's Dictum

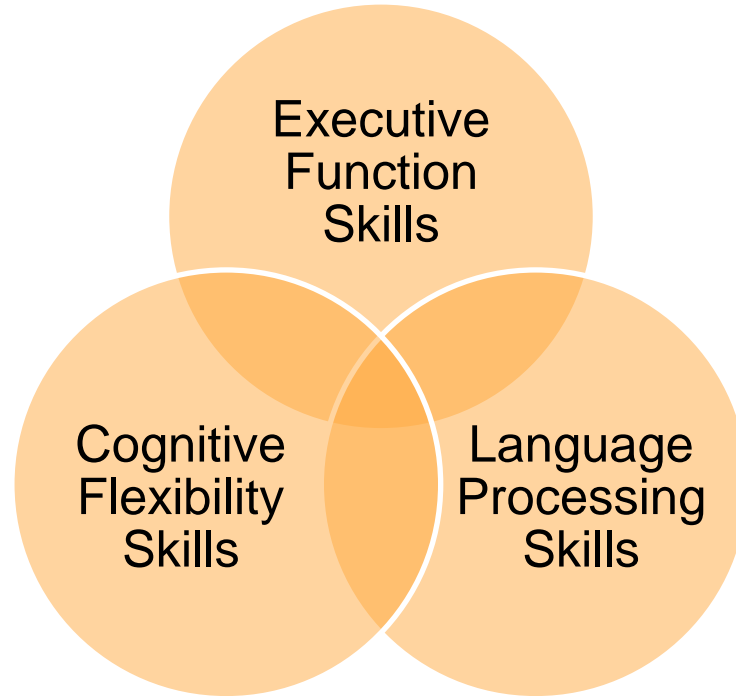
"Patients can have as many diseases as they damn well please."



Collaborative Problem-Solving

**“KIDS AND PARENTS ARE DOING
THE BEST THEY CAN
WITH WHAT THEY’VE GOT”**

Multiple Determinism & Lagging Skills



Collaborative Problem-Solving

**Explosions are predictable and are a
result of LAGGING SKILLS**
(cognitive, social, affective, etc)

Typical Parenting Approaches

- Plan A: Expectations clear, Increases Tantrums, No Skills Building
 - YES: Kid running into the street
 - NO: Kid tapping on glass in car

- Plan C: Expectations not met, Decreases Tantrums, No Skills Building
 - YES: Kid tapping on glass in car
 - NO: Kid hitting sibling

Collaborative Problem-Solving

- Plan B

1. EXPECTATIONS ARE CLEAR

2. DECREASES FREQUENCY OF TANTRUMS

3. **BUILDS UP LAGGING SKILLS**

3 Steps to Plan B

1. Empathy Step
2. Parental Concerns
3. Invitation to Problem-Solve

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 highly specific unsolved problem)... what's up?"

Drilling for

Information: usually focuses on the who, what, where, and when of the unsolved problem, 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 your observation wasn't very neutral
 - Maybe your unsolved problem was too vague
 - Maybe you're using Emergency Plan B instead of Proactive Plan B
 - Maybe you're using Plan A
 - Maybe he really doesn't know
 - he might need time to think
 - he might need problem broken down into its component parts

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 60-70 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.

Empathy Step

1. Non-Judgmental Stance



2. Active Listening

3. Play Dumb



Define The Problem Step

- **Prepare beforehand: How is the problem affecting the child? The family?**
- **“I/my statements” e.g. “My concern is...”**
- **Short and sweet/Clear and direct**

Invitation Step

- “I wonder if there is a way to address both your concerns and ours...”
- “What do you think we should do?”
- Plan has to be:
 1. Feasible
 2. Mutually Agreeable

Role Play: Bedtime Blow-Ups

- 10 year-old boy who tantrums during bedtime routine

Summary

- Slow down, take your time, and call for help; this stuff is complicated!
- Phone a friend, gather information, collateral is key
- Educate, educate, educate
- Model curiosity and non-judgmental stance
- Instill HOPE via skills-building approach

Resources

<http://www.livesinthebalance.org/plan-b-in-action/for-educators> (links to videos of teachers using the model in schools)

<http://www.thinkkids.org/learn/our-collaborative-problem-solving-approach/> (summary of Plans A/B/C, links to videos discussing the model)

<http://www.livesinthebalance.org/> (website for a non-profit focused on CPS)

<http://www.livesinthebalance.org/hot-topics> (list of audio clips that help troubleshoot when Plan B goes wrong)

<http://www.thinkkids.org/> (website for a teaching clinic based out of Harvard's Mass General Hospital that focuses on CPS)

<http://www.ccps.info/> (website for the Center for Collaborative Problem Solving)

<http://www.ccps.info/cpsessentials/index.html> (has links to some Plan B worksheets)

Parents can also go on Amazon and buy the CPS book for parents, The Explosive Child, at <http://www.amazon.com/Explosive-Child-Fifth-Understanding-Chronically/dp/0062270451> (the 3rd edition is also available on Kindle).

Acknowledgments

Treating Explosive Kids: The Collaborative Problem-Solving Approach
1st Edition by Ross W. Green, PhD & J. Stuart Ablon, PhD

QUESTIONS???

colin.e.stewart@gunet.georgetown.edu

202-944-5420