

Using Problem Solving

This is a simple example of how to use a problem solving approach on issues in the home. It starts with an underlying view that the child is experiencing impairments that cause difficulties with regulating their actions and expressing their emotions. This mother also uses this as an opportunity to teach Dan about his ADHD.

For more detailed information on the CPS, Collaborative and Proactive Solution method please access Dr. Ross Greene's web site [Lives in the Balance](#)

The discussion begins with Mom sharing her feelings and concerns about an incident that occurred yesterday. Notice that she tries to keep blame out of the discussion.

MOM: When I called you for dinner yesterday my feelings were hurt when you yelled at me especially after putting in all that work at making you a nice dinner. When I call you for dinner, why do you get mad at me?

DAN: Well, YOU were the one yelling at me right when I was just about to beat my video game.

MOM: Ah, I see. You were concentrating on your game when I disturbed you and you were having lots of fun. And you were upset because I yelled at you? Is that right? My intention was not to yell at you. I had already called you once and I thought you didn't hear me so I yelled louder.

DAN: I never heard you call me.

MOM: OK, I think I know what might have happened. When you are doing something that really interests you, ADHD lets you hyperfocus (naming the ADHD trait). That means that you shut everything else out of your mind so that you can focus on that one thing. (defining the ADHD trait) That's why you didn't hear me when I called you. And when you are enjoying something you are really engaged and find it hard to stop. Would you agree? Can you think of other things that make you hyperfocus? (identifying when this may occur in another setting)

DAN: Yah, when I'm working on a project that I'm really interested in.

MOM: That's a perfect example of how ADHD can help you with your school work and how it might help you in whatever career you choose. But you also need to learn how to control it or it can cause you some problems.

(Using this approach, not only teaches Dan about his ADHD traits so that can use them as strengths but he also learns that they can become problematic. It also teaches him how to talk about his ADHD traits so that he can advocate (ask for) what he needs. And it takes the blame out of the situation so that you can get past the defensiveness and on to solutions.)

Developing a Plan

Now that both of you know what the problem you need to develop a plan. Depending on the age and maturity of your child, you should try to develop the plan together.

MOM: OK, when you are hyperfocusing, you need help to change your focus gradually. It's very difficult for you quickly change from one thing to the next. This is called 'Transitioning'. (naming the situation)

MOM: Transitioning may be causing some of your problems at school too. Like when you're working on math and then the teacher says, 'OK, now we're going to do spelling.' it's hard for you to switch off your 'math brain' and put on your 'spelling brain'. Or when you come in from recess and you've had your 'running around brain' on and now you have to put your 'thinking brain' on. What do you think would help you with transitioning for dinner time?

DAN: You need to make sure that I heard you and you need to give me time to switch what I am doing.

MOM: So how about from now on, I give you a five minute advance warning when you need to start changing gears.

DAN: Five minutes is not long enough to finish what I am doing on the game.

MOM: How long do you need, would ten minutes work to allow you to finish up your game?

DAN: Can we try fifteen minutes to start with just to be sure that I have enough time? I promise I won't start another game if I finish early.

MOM: Ok we'll try that and see how it works. We can talk about it again in a few days. And because when you're hyperfocusing, I know that you shut out other noises, I'm going to come into the family room to tell you instead of yelling from the kitchen. But, you are going to need to let me know that you've heard me and come to dinner when I call you without giving me a hard time about it. OK? So that I know that we both understand the plan, tell me what the plan is.

DAN: You're going to tell me when dinner is fifteen minutes away by coming into the family room and

I'm going to let you know if I've heard you and I'm going to come to dinner without getting angry when you call me.

MOM: We'll take it slow at first because it may take some practice for both of us.

When Dan does respond at the first warning, acknowledge it and when he comes to the table without a fuss, you should make a fuss - a positive fuss - and the both of you should celebrate with a hug or a kind word.