

Ally Parenting

A Non-Adversarial Approach to
Transform Conflict Into Cooperation



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The Step-by-Step Solutions Guide

Download this excerpt from *Ally Parenting: A Non-Adversarial Approach to Transform Conflict Into Cooperation*. Use the Step-by-Step Solutions Guide to better understand your parent-child challenges. Then, you will discover what effective parenting strategies to use and how to do them so you can create a more harmonious and happy family.

The Step-by-Step Solutions Guide

This guide is from Cynthia Klein's book, *Ally Parenting: A Non-Adversarial Approach to Transform Conflict Into Cooperation*. You are encouraged to copy this guide and use it along with the reference material in the book to discover how to transform your challenges.

This action process is a step-by-step guide about how to think about your current challenges, evaluate them accurately, and then find an effective solution to try using my book, *Ally Parenting: A Non-Adversarial Approach to Transform Conflict Into Cooperation*. The questions below reflect the process I use when I'm evaluating a parent's situation and giving advice. I encourage you to make copies of this process for your personal use so you can reuse it for each challenge you encounter. Complete the seven steps to reveal your contributions to the problem so you can make specific changes that will transform your conflicts into cooperation.

Don't give up if the situation seems to get worse before getting better. Since your child is used to negative behavior patterns, it can take a while before they see the benefit of positive behavior patterns.

I suggest reading Section 1, *The Ally Parenting Approach* and Section 2, *Creating Open Communication*, before using this process.

Write down the challenge you want to solve. Be as specific as possible, such as, "My child dawdles in the morning, so we leave late." I'll use this problem as an example throughout this process sheet.

My challenge to solve is...

1 Determine what parenting role or roles you will use to solve this problem.

Refer to Chapter 8, *Choose Your Parental Role: Director, Collaborator, or Supporter*, found in Section 1. In the example above, you would use two roles. First, you'll act as a Collaborator to discuss and plan a solution together, and then most likely you will need to use Director strategies to ensure follow-through from your children.

**The parenting role(s) I will use to solve this problem is/are:
Circle those that apply to this particular challenge.**

Director Role (parent decides)

Collaborator Role (parent and child decide together)

Supporter/Confidant Role (child decides)

2 Determine what goal(s) your child is trying to achieve through a negative approach.

Refer to Chapter 16, *Why Children Do What They Do - It's Not About You*.

Write down the negative behavior your child is doing next to the appropriate goal(s). For example: Belonging – My child dawdles so I have to keep reminding him, which gives him attention and a sense of belonging. Power – My child is dawdling so he can feel powerful by rebelling and not doing what I ask him to do.

1. Belonging

2. Power

3. Protection

4. Withdrawal

5. Challenge

3 Determine your current beliefs and thoughts that are keeping you from acting effectively.

Refer to the chapters in Section 1, *Are You an Ally or an Adversary?* and *Self-Knowledge is the First Step Toward Change*. Then read *Problem Solving Together Requires Flexible Thinking*, in Section 3.

Part A:

Which of these adversarial beliefs do you have?

Adversarial Beliefs That Break Connection

- a. Parents are right all the time because they are adults, and children need to learn how to obey. Whether parents and children feel connected isn't important.
- b. The adult has the final word, and it doesn't matter whether the child feels misunderstood, unheard, or unloved.
- c. When my child misbehaves, their behavior reflects on me and means that I'm not a good parent. (This usually leads to me feeling angry at my child for embarrassing me.)
- d. I need to repeatedly point out imperfections in my children so that they can change for the better.
- e. Children act badly because they're trying to get back at or manipulate their parents.

- f. I know what's best for my child to become successful in the future.
- g. It's helpful to get angry at children so they learn that their behavior is wrong. They learn from feeling bad about themselves. Being nice won't make them regret their behavior and change.
- h. "Time out" makes children think about what they've done wrong.
- i. My children need to live up to my expectations of them without questioning or disagreeing with me. I know what's best for them.
- j. When children start to get out of control, I need to put more controls on them.

Are there any additional problematic beliefs that you have?

Part B:

When your child presents a challenge, which of these inflexible thoughts do you have? These thoughts make your child the problem and therefore disempower your ability to change yourself and thus the situation:

- a. *You're doing this to annoy me.*
- b. *You're trying to manipulate me.*
- c. *If you followed my advice, you wouldn't have these problems.*
- d. *It's no use. I'm giving up. You're on your own.*
- e. *You don't care about what I think or feel.*
- f. *You're trying to test me.*
- g. *This behavior is intolerable.*
- h. *You never listen.*
- i. *How dare you...? (talk to me that way, etc.)*
- j. *You're getting out of control.*
- k. *You're so (stubborn, lazy, inconsiderate, careless, selfish, etc.)*
- l. *You're deliberately being (mean, uncooperative, manipulative, rude, etc.)*

Do you have any other thoughts during the conflict that make you unable to creatively find a solution?

4 What new flexible thoughts could you practice having during the challenge that would enable you to take responsibility to improve the situation?

- a. *Maybe I need to stop and listen closely to my child.*
- b. *My child is trying to meet her needs in the best way she knows how. I can create a new, positive path instead.*
- c. *I need to learn how to support my child's thinking about her problems rather than telling her what to do.*
- d. *I need to stop controlling, then abandoning, and instead become an effective Supporter.*
- e. *My child does care even if she isn't showing it right now. She is taking care of herself.*
- f. *My child is exhibiting developmentally appropriate behavior.*
- g. *My child has needs and goals and is trying to cope.*
- h. *I need to get control of myself and express expectations so they are heard.*
- i. *I'm taking this challenge personally and defensively. Instead, I need to learn what's behind the negative behavior.*
- j. *I need to find a more effective way to build cooperation rather than trying to control my child through anger and threats.*
- k. *The more I label my child, the more discouraged, uncooperative, and hurt they become.*
- l. *My child wants to be cooperative and connected. His emotions are not allowing him to think clearly right now. How can I help him release his emotions so he can think better?*

5 Determine which communication blocks you're using during this challenge.

Refer to the Section 2 chapters, *Awareness of Communication Blocks Is the First Step* and *Why Kids Reject Our Help – and How to Win their Trust*.

What I say that hurts my child and blocks him/her from listening:

I used these communication blocks. Circle those that apply.

• commanding • giving advice • placating • interrogating • distracting • psychologizing • sarcasm • moralizing • being a know-it-all • me-tooism •

6 Determine which empathetic statements you could use to connect with your child during this challenge.

You will still set the expectation if you are in the Director Role. Do not add “but” after your empathy statement. Refer to the Section 2 chapters, *The Emotional Support Process Connects You to Your Child*, *Empathy Improves Connection and Communication*, and *Parent Success Stories Using Empathetic Responses*.

For example, if your child is still dawdling after making a morning plan, you could say, “It looks like you are having fun now. Remember our plan. It’s time to get dressed.”

Which of these empathetic responses could you use? You may need to try several of them to see what words keep your child expressing herself so the tensions release and clearer thinking can follow.

- a. “That sounds like a real problem.”
- b. “You seem (upset, bored, irritated, angry, overwhelmed, frustrated, etc.)”
- c. “It looks like you’d rather do _____ than _____ right now.”
- d. “Hmm, I see. It can be hard (writing a paper, having a friend mad at you, putting your phone away, etc.)”
- e. “I’m sorry to hear that.”
- f. “I’m here for you. You’re safe with me.”

g. "It's hard to know what to do."

h. "That seems challenging."

What are other empathetic statements you could use?

7 Put it all together. Review your answers on the above questions and write them on the lines provided, under the appropriate heading. Use this information to determine what strategies you will try first.

My challenge is:

My parenting role(s) is/are:

The goal(s) my child is meeting negatively is/are:

Depending on this goal, I will direct my child to meet their goal positively by using a strategy that develops: Circle those that apply.

1. Belonging: Contributing and Cooperating
2. Power: Independence
3. Protection: Assertiveness and Forgiveness
4. Withdrawal: Appropriate Avoidance
5. Challenge: Safe Adventures

In the dawdling example, you would pick strategies that develop a feeling of contribution and independence such as problem solving together to improve the morning situation so everyone is happier.

My new flexible thoughts will be:

The communication blocks I will avoid are:

The empathy statements I could use are:

The next step is to review the above information and decide on one, or maybe two, strategies you are going to try first to fix this challenge. Go to the appropriate section, listed below, for the Director Role or the Collaborator and Supporter Roles to research possible solutions. Remember that one small change done properly can have a big positive impact.

To find and decide on Director Role strategies, review Section 4, The Director Role – Setting Limits and Boundaries.

To find and decide on Collaborator or Supporter Role strategies, review Section 5, The Collaborator and Supporter Roles – Solving Problems Effectively.

The strategy or strategies I will try first are:

Parents often write reminders of their new thoughts and words on cards and post them in the house or car until they have successfully replaced their old habits. Perhaps you have a friend or partner who will be making changes along with you and you can compassionately remind each other.

I will remind myself of the changes I want to make by:

Before making changes, share with your child the changes you plan to make. One way or another, children are blamed for the problem and their misbehavior. The parent's underlying belief is often, *If my child changed, we wouldn't have this problem.* As a result, children feel hurt, and then hurt their parents back through words such as, "I hate you," and "you're so mean," or by resisting change and cooperation. When you use the Ally Parenting approach and take responsibility for changing yourself first, your children's hearts open up, their walls come down, and positive progress can be made.

For example, regarding the dawdling child, in the evening, you could say, "I've been yelling at you in the morning, which doesn't make either of us feel good. Instead, we're going to figure out a morning plan together, because it's a challenge for all of us to solve together. Then, I'll calmly make sure everyone follows our agreement in the morning. Everyone can change."

I will share the changes I plan to make with my child this way:

After a few days of trying your new approach, review your results. It's difficult to change because we tend to automatically fall back into old patterns, especially under duress. My approaches are very detailed and specific. Reread them several times and assess honestly what you are thinking, saying, and doing.

My experience has been that sometimes parents put great effort into changing and they still may not get the desired results. Here are a few reasons why your approach might not be working:

a. You haven't been specific enough in following my structure. For example, with the After-Then Strategy, you may resort back to a threat of, "If you don't..." or forget to add an emotionally connecting comment, or repeat the After-Then Strategy two (or even three) times and then give up and give in. With challenging children who are used to getting their way, your calm persistence and confidence (even faked confidence) is essential.

b. You've chosen the wrong role. Parents often direct because they want their children to succeed, when instead they should be solving the problem together or supporting their child's thought process as a Collaborator or a Supporter.

c. You haven't changed your thinking about your child or about the challenge from an adversary to an ally, so you're inconsistent with the Ally approach. Therefore, you won't be successful. For example, if you're still blaming your child in your mind, you won't have honest empathetic thoughts, and you won't be able to connect, which is the basis of influencing your child toward change.

d. Ally Parenting provides tools that can be used for all kinds of children. At the same time, your child may need their own support from a specialist. For example, if your child has a very difficult time focusing and cooperating even after using these tools, you may seek a specialist for testing and additional professional guidance.

My approach isn't working because...

and I determine to...

Special Note from Cynthia: It can often feel like too much effort to change, and it's difficult to remember. It's easier to change when you have support, so ask your partner, friend, or loved one to remind you of your determination and that the pain of change is less than the pain of staying stuck. Focus on one issue at a time, because small steps can have big results.

Congratulate yourself each time you catch yourself making a mistake and recommit to changing the next time. Children are usually forgiving when you apologize and let them know what you'll do differently next time. Your change teaches your children how to change. Don't give up! You are the guiding light within your family.