

PLAN B FAQs

Below are responses to some of the issues/concerns OTHER PARENTS have raised about the Plan B model. If you have any other questions or reservations about the Plan B approach, please don't hesitate to raise them with your facilitator.

Plan B takes too much time:

- Don't have time NOT to do Plan B; explosive episodes always take longer!

Plan B approach is not working:

- Review the steps, and make sure you aren't missing one. First attempts aren't always final solutions. Practice and time with any new skill will help parents and children to feel more confident and be more competent.
- Remember, thousands of Plan A repetitions haven't changed anything (i.e., didn't solve problems) so it can't hurt to try Plan B!

Parents and children "not getting" each other's point of view:

- It is essential to get down to CONCERNS instead of SOLUTIONS. It is much easier to reconcile two concerns than two solutions.

Plan C means "I'm just giving in!"

- With Plan C adults are NOT GIVING IN on an issue; they are choosing to LET IT SLIDE, at least for now.
- GIVING IN is really defined as starting in Plan A, but then changing to Plan C because of the NEGATIVE REACTION of the child.
- Even if they never pursue the issue again, it is the adult who has made the decision to not to pursue it (vs. the child making that decision).

My child doesn't verbally engage

- If reluctance to communicate or language skills are an issue, the adult can MAKE A GUESS at what the problem is (Top 6 beaker filler charts can be a real help here) or fish for further information using [P2 H6 Fishing Tips].

My child's verbal communication is deteriorating and distasteful

- Swearing can be a skill deficit in language, where children can't find the right words to express how they are feeling. One strategy might be to suggest alternative words to swearing when the child is really frustrated. Try to get agreement upon a word or phrase for use in difficult moments (e.g. "I am so bummed out right now", or "brain freeze!"). Each child will have their own creative ideas for swearing substitutes. Each family will have their own preferences.

When face-to-face problem solving going nowhere

- Some parents and children have been more successful when they have written out their own concerns and possible solutions separately from each other (i.e., at a different time and/or location). This can be less intimidating when relationships are fairly strained or hostile. The hope is that eventually both parents and children will be able to do the face-to-face Plan B.

COMMON PLAN B ERRORS

Unilateral compromises: the compromise solution is “decided” by parent without input from child

Neglecting Plan B: Knee-jerking into Plan A or Plan C on issues that would be more lastingly resolved with Plan B

Plan B as a last resort: Emergency Plan B will be necessary at times, but Proactive Plan B (sensitive timing = when beakers are nice and low) is much more likely to be effective

Giving in: Starting in Plan A then switching to Plan C; i.e., allowing child’s response to determine plan choice

Rushing the solution: Agreeing to compromises the child can’t actually execute

“Talking the Plan B talk” but “walking the Plan A walk”: using coercive, rather than collaborative, tactics when using Plan B

FISHING FOR THE REAL CONCERN

- ④ How come?
- ④ How so?
- ④ Why?
- ④ What's going on?
- ④ I don't quite understand?
- ④ I'm confused
- ④ Can you help me understand?
- ④ Is there something I do not understand?
- ④ Can you tell me more about this?
- ④ Mind if I take a guess?
- ④ Let me know if I'm getting warm
- ④ Some other kids I know.....
- ④ Play '20 questions'
- ④ Am I right that.....?
- ④ What I hear you saying is.....
- ④ Let's see if I've got this straight.....
- ④ Sounds like you are saying.....
- ④ I'm not saying no.....
- ④ I'm not saying you have to.....
- ④ I'm not saying you can't.....
- ④ You are not in trouble
- ④ I just want to understand.....
- ④ I know there must be an important reason
- ④ I know you are trying hard
- ④ I really want your opinion, not just what you think I want to hear



How so?



How Come?



What's going on?



Why?



I don't quite understand



I'm confused



Can you help me understand?



Is there something I'm not understanding?



Can you tell me more about this?



Mind if I take a guess?



Let me know if I'm getting warm.



Some other kids I know.....



Play '20 questions'



**Am I right
that.....?**



**What I hear you
saying is.....?**



**Let's see if I've got
this straight.....**



**Sounds like you
are saying.....**



**I'm not saying
no.....**



**I'm not saying you
have to.**



**I'm not saying you
can't.....**



**You are not in
trouble**



**I just want to
understand.....**



**I know there must
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**I know you are
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**I really want your
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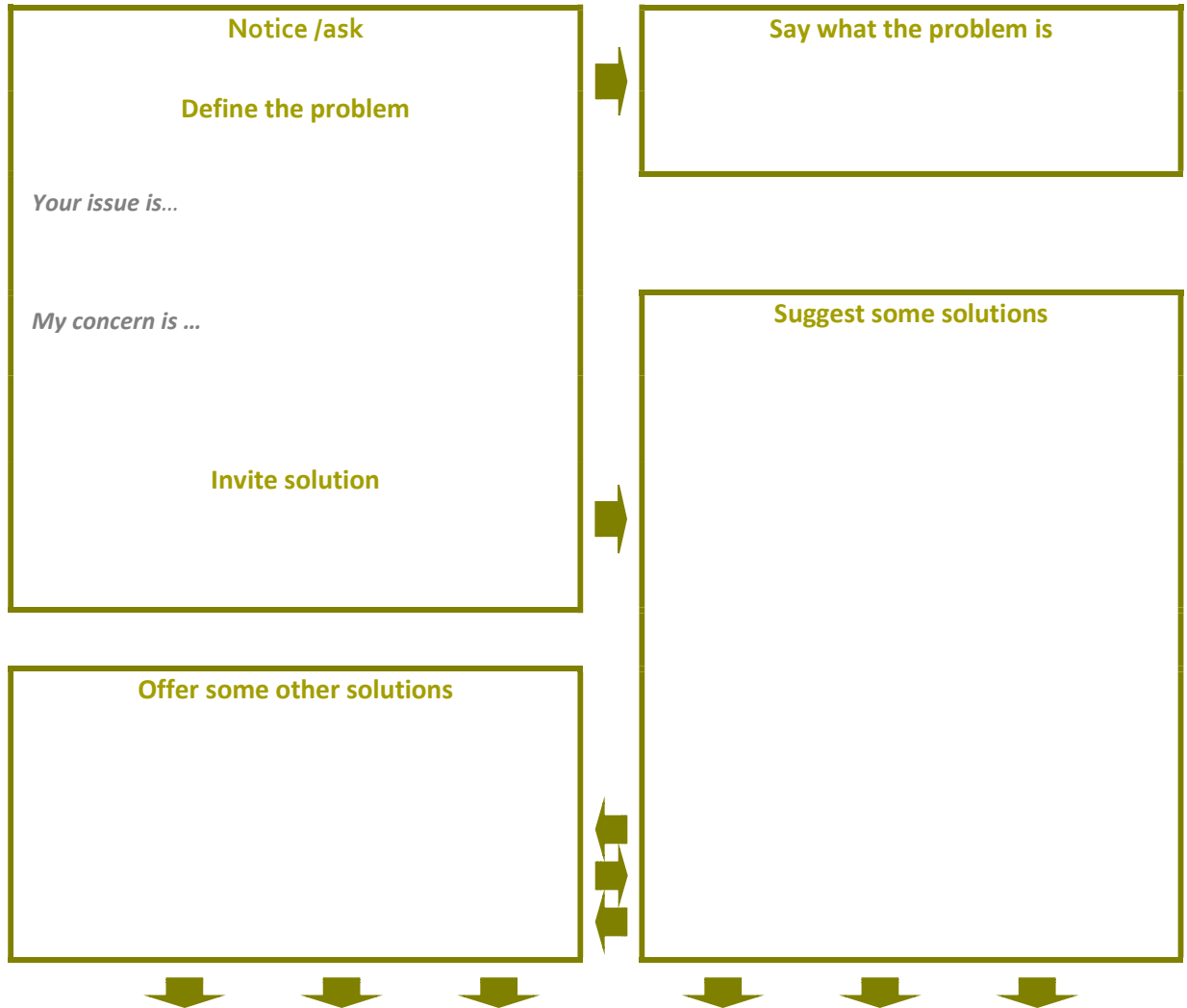




PLAN B WORKSHEET

ADULT 'S PLAN B

CHILD'S PLAN B



Together pick a win/win solution and write it down

Is the winning solution achievable, doable?

Is the winning solution satisfying to both of you?

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.

