



ROSS W. GREENE, PhD

LOST & FOUND

UNLOCKING
COLLABORATION
AND COMPASSION
TO HELP OUR MOST
VULNERABLE,
MISUNDERSTOOD
STUDENTS

(and All the Rest)

SECOND EDITION

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PRAISE FOR *LOST & FOUND*

“Dealing with challenging behaviors? The first goal is to alter your lenses, to understand that challenging behavior is the result of lagging skills. The second is to start solving problems together and teach those skills. *Lost and Found* is a must read.”

—MICHELLE GARCIA WINNER, MA-CCC, SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST; FOUNDER, SOCIAL THINKING

“*Lost and Found* gives readers lots of examples for how Dr. Ross Greene's Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) process works—and how to avoid pitfalls—at every step of the way. The process he describes is the best way to engage kids and adults in mutual problem solving that, at its core, removes blame and replaces it with respect.”

—PEG DAWSON, EdD, NCSP, CO-AUTHOR, *SMART BUT SCATTERED* AND *SMART BUT SCATTERED TEENS*

“For those perplexed by how to positively support students with challenging behavior, *Lost and Found* is a game changer. Greene brings a fresh perspective on the subject and clearly articulates the essentials to get everyone on the upswing,”

—LEAH KUYPERS, MA, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST; AUTHOR, *THE ZONES OF REGULATION: A CURRICULUM DESIGNED TO FOSTER SELF-REGULATION AND EMOTIONAL CONTROL*

“Greene's CPS model encourages school staff to look at behaviorally challenging students from a new frame of reference: kids are very capable of providing information about why they're having difficulty meeting certain expectations; they're eager to partner with adults in solving the problems that are affecting their lives; and they're capable of developing new skills. *Lost and Found* provides the tools to help schools abandon old, toxic ways of responding to challenging behavior.”

—DEBRA THIBODEAU, MEd, CAS, SCHOOL
COUNSELOR, GEORGETOWN, ME

“Throughout *Lost and Found*, the voices of educators are a testament to how this simple, research-based process, done with rigor, results in changing beliefs, practices, and school cultures. Ross Greene should be considered a living, international treasure.”

—PEGGY BLAIR, SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION,
AVON MAITLAND DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD,
ONTARIO, CANADA

Lost & Found

***Unlocking Collaboration and
Compassion to Help Our Most
Vulnerable, Misunderstood Students
(and All the Rest)***

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SECOND EDITION

PREVIOUS BOOKS BY ROSS W. GREENE, PHD

The Explosive Child (1998)

Treating Explosive Kids (2005)

Lost at School (2008)

Raising Human Beings (2016)

*Dedicated to my mom, Cynthia Greene, who taught me a
thing or two about empathy, compassion, and resilience*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ross W. Greene, PhD, is the originator of the innovative, evidence-based approach known as Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS), as described in this book and his prior books *The Explosive Child*, *Lost at School*, and *Raising Human Beings*. Dr. Greene served on the faculty at Harvard Medical School for over twenty years, and is currently adjunct professor in the Department of Psychology at Virginia Tech and adjunct professor in the Faculty of Science at University of Technology Sydney in Australia. He is also the founding director of the nonprofit Lives in the Balance (www.livesinthebalance.org), which provides a vast array of free, web-based resources on his model, and advocates on behalf of kids with concerning behaviors and their parents, teachers, and other caregivers. He also developed and executive produced the award-winning documentary film, *The Kids We Lose*. Dr. Greene is the author of numerous articles, chapters, and scientific papers on the effectiveness of the CPS model; the classification of and outcomes in youth with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges; and student-teacher compatibility. He consults to families, schools, inpatient psychiatry units, and residential and juvenile detention facilities throughout the world and lives in Freeport, Maine.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many theories and models that influenced the approach to helping kids with concerning behaviors—called *Collaborative & Proactive Solutions* (CPS)—described in this book, including social learning theory, family systems theory, transactional/reciprocal models of development, goodness-of-fit theory, personal construct theory, neuropsychology, and developmental psychopathology. I am indebted to the countless people who exposed me to and taught me about those theories and models, including Dr. Elizabeth Altmaier (then at the University of Florida); Drs. Tom Ollendick and George Clum (at the Department of Psychology at Virginia Tech); and Dr. Mary Ann McCabe and Lorraine Lougee, then at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, DC. Of course, my children—Talia and Jacob (now twenty-three and twenty years old)—have taught me plenty. And the influence of my original teachers—my father, Irving (who is no longer with us), and my mother, Cynthia, to whom this book is dedicated—is inestimable.

But I am especially indebted to the thousands of general and special education classroom teachers, school administrators, paraprofessionals, ed techs, school mental health professionals, and specialists I've had the good fortune to work with and learn from over the past twenty-five years. Despite working under very difficult circumstances, often thanklessly, you've taught me what a huge difference an educator can make in a child's life, most especially those with social, emotional, and behavioral challenges who badly need someone to listen to them, nurture them, and help and care about them. You have my everlasting admiration.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second edition of *Lost and Found*. This book was originally intended as a follow-up to my earlier book *Lost at School*, which was first published in 2008. So why write another book on the same topic? Because many of the very same educators and parents who found *Lost at School* to be helpful told me they wanted more: more instruction on using the assessment instrumentation of the model (called the Assessment of Lagging Skills & Unsolved Problems [ALSUP]), more help in using and guiding others in solving problems collaboratively, and more information on organizing and sustaining the effort to transform discipline practices and implement the Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) model in a school. Those are the ingredients you'll find in the ensuing pages. Even if you haven't previously read *Lost at School*, all of the details of the CPS model are included in this book as well.

And why publish a second edition? Because the CPS model has evolved substantially since the first edition was published in 2016. This edition reflects the most current updates.

But the most exciting aspect of this book is that you'll be hearing from some of the amazing, courageous, visionary educators who have implemented the model in their schools and classrooms and with whom I've had the incredible privilege of collaborating. They are quoted throughout each chapter by their first names; here are their full names:

Tom Ambrose, superintendent in SAU 17 in New Hampshire

Kathy Bousquet, former second-grade teacher, Central School, South Berwick, Maine

M. Scott Brinker, district behavior specialist, Groveport Madison Schools, Groveport, Ohio

Alanna Craffey, second-grade teacher, Central School, South Berwick, Maine

Nina D'Aran, principal at Central School, South Berwick, Maine

Carol Davison, district principal, human resources, Surrey, British Columbia Schools

Susan Forsely, former educational technician, Central School, South Berwick, Maine

Ryan Gleason, principal, Yarmouth, Maine Elementary School, and formerly assistant principal at Durham (Maine) Community School and Falmouth (Maine) Elementary School

Nicole Grant, teacher educator and former classroom teacher

Katie Marshall, former learning center teacher, Central School, South Berwick, Maine

Susan McCuiag, former principal at T. E. Scott Elementary, Surrey, British Columbia, and at Betty Huff Elementary, Surrey

Ryan Quinn, principal, Kennebunk Elementary School, Kennebunk, Maine

Alex Spencer, former Manhattan borough principal, Alternative Learning Centers, New York City Public Schools

Vicki Stewart, former director of communications at MSAD 35 in Maine and former principal at Central School

Brie Thomas, school counselor, Central School, South Berwick, Maine

They represent a small fraction of the many educators who have embraced the CPS model and have helped many thousands of vulnerable, at-risk students in the process.

The mission remains the same: understand and help students with concerning behaviors in ways that are nonpunitive, non-adversarial, non-exclusionary, skill building, relationship enhancing, collaborative, proactive, and—most important—*helpful*. In too many schools, those ingredients are still missing. That's why rates of detention, suspension, and expulsion are still way too high, why schools in nineteen states in the United States still employ corporal punishment, why restraint and seclusion procedures are still employed hundreds of thousands of times in schools every year, and why there are still so many kids who feel disenfranchised, marginalized, disheartened, hopeless, and *lost*. To bring them back into the fold, we need to find our way to new lenses and new practices. And this needs to be a priority for every school.

The task is not made easier by the fact that classroom teachers have been given the very strong message that their job performance and security are judged by how their students perform on high-stakes tests. Although standards can be a good thing, the obsession with tests hasn't been good for classroom teachers or administrators or parents or students with concerning behaviors, or anyone else. But, as you'll be reading, many schools have accomplished the mission despite all the obstacles.

If you're brand-new to the CPS model, many of your existing beliefs and practices may be called into question by what you read in the ensuing pages. That's OK; our knowledge of kids with concerning behaviors has expanded

dramatically over the past forty to fifty years, and it turns out that a lot of what we were thinking about those kids—and doing to them—doesn't square up with what we now know about them. If you're already familiar with the CPS model, this book will take you further.

In an effort to be sensitive to different preferences, the book is written using male, female, and gender-nonspecific pronouns in alternating chapters. I've drawn on a multitude of real kids and educators I've known and worked with in the dialogues in the book, but they are composites; any resemblance to people you may know is purely coincidental (but not necessarily surprising).

I'm looking forward to spending some time with you in the next nine chapters.

Ross Greene
Freeport, Maine

CHAPTER 1

WHO AND WHY

This book is primarily focused on students whose difficulties meeting academic and social expectations at school is communicated through concerning behaviors. The ones who are flying frequently into the assistant principal's office. The ones who are on the receiving end of countless discipline referrals, detentions, suspensions, expulsions, restraints, seclusions, and (yes, in many places, still in the year 2021) paddlings. That these interventions aren't helping is made clear by the fact that they are being applied so frequently to the same students. In almost every school, 70 to 80 percent of discipline referrals are accounted for by the same fifteen to twenty students.

Those are the kids we are losing. We find them in our statistics on dropping out, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, and incarceration. These are also very expensive kids. Placing a student in a program outside of the mainstream classroom is very costly: more than sixty-five thousand students are placed in alternative education settings every year in the United States, at a cost of an estimated \$5 billion. The annual cost of incarcerating kids is even greater. So the stakes are high, both in human and financial terms.

But they're not the only ones we're losing when we don't effectively help these students. Their reasonably well-behaved classmates lose, too. There's lost learning. And there's the stress and anxiety of feeling unsafe in the presence of a peer who can be scary and may seem out of control. And these classmates also have the sense that the adults aren't exactly sure what to do or how to make things

better. They may also sense that the ways in which peers with concerning behaviors are being treated are unnecessarily ostracizing and inhumane.

Classroom teachers lose as well (and we lose them, too). Those students—and their parents—are cited as a major contributing factor by many of the high number of teachers who leave the profession within the first four years. And the emphasis on high-stakes testing has caused many classroom teachers to feel like test-prep robots, which, many tell me, has taken a lot of the humanity out of the work. Legislators and school boards often aren't focused on humanity; they're focused on test scores and new initiatives and budgets and reducing referrals into special education.

We lose paraprofessionals and ed-techs as well. These staff members spend a good part of the day with kids with concerning behaviors, but frequently don't even get invited to the meetings in which those kids are being discussed. They are therefore relegated to the “winging-it” approach to intervention, along with the other people in the building—specialists such as the art, music, and physical education teachers—who work with lots of different students but often feel like they know very little about them.

“Sometimes, due to time, specialists (music, art, and so forth) and paraprofessionals can get left out of the conversation in schools. Including them in meetings is so valuable. They have so much insight, and I think we forget about that sometimes because they have such a hard schedule. They have such an important voice because they see everybody in the whole school.”

—NINA, PRINCIPAL

Parents of students with concerning behaviors get lost, too. Those parents know a thing or two about feeling ostracized. They often would welcome the opportunity to

collaborate with school staff on making things better, but being blamed for their child's concerning behavior—despite the fact that they have other children in their families who are well behaved—makes them defensive and seldom seen. They want to trust that their child is being well treated at school, but there are many signs to the contrary. Whatever the school is doing isn't working, but the parents feel powerless to do anything about it.

We also risk losing our sense of community as a school when we don't effectively help students with concerning behaviors. Parents of the reasonably well-behaved students—the kids who are showing up ready to learn—may disparage ill-behaved classmates, often demand that those classmates are dealt with harshly and punitively, and may even ostracize the parents of those kids. They understandably want their children to learn and feel safe, but they often lose sight of what is being lost—a child who could be a valued member of the community—when those goals are pursued at the expense of that child.

Administrators, you're in the mix, too. You didn't sign up to be a police officer, but that doesn't mean you don't often feel like one. The classroom teachers who are sending kids to the office expect action and are frequently quite clear about what the action should be: powerful adult-imposed consequences, straight from the school's discipline handbook, that will finally get the message through and ensure that the well-behaved students (and their parents) know that the situation is being taken seriously. The only problem, of course, is that all those consequences aren't working. No one is more acutely aware of that than you. And there are much more effective, compassionate ways to demonstrate that the situation is being taken seriously.

“I remember my first few years as assistant principal before implementing CPS in our school. Students were lined up outside my office for various behavioral issues on a frequent basis. Since I thought of myself as the ‘fix-it’ person, my goal was to resolve the situation as quickly as possible. I wanted to support the teacher and help the student become more successful, but the same students, often sent from the same teachers, seemed to return over and over again. I always felt that there had to be a better way to do this.”

—RYAN, PRINCIPAL

Also in the mix are school psychologists, counselors, and social workers, the people who are officially on the hook for “fixing” students with concerning behaviors. It's often said that those students fall outside the expertise and responsibility of the general education classroom teacher, and therefore they fall (or are sent) into your caseload. And there are lots of 'em. And you may be covering several different buildings. And your testing load is intense. It's hard not to become overwhelmed, jaded, and burned out.

Apparently, we're talking about everyone. And that's good, because it's going to take everyone to turn things around. But when we do turn things around, everyone benefits.

So now, the question: Are the ways in which your school is assessing and dealing with students with concerning behaviors truly helping? If not, you need to find a different way.

That starts with taking a look at what you've been thinking about kids with concerning behaviors. The lenses through which you're viewing these kids will have a major influence on the stance you take toward them and the strategies you employ in your efforts to help. It's a classic case of *What you see is what you get*. What we're thinking and seeing

and doing should be a reflection of the mountain of research that has accumulated over the past forty to fifty years on kids with concerning behaviors.

Here's what we've been *thinking*: kids with concerning behaviors are lacking *motivation*. Here's what the research that's accumulated over the past forty to fifty years tells us: they're lacking *skills*. And that is a game-changer.

“When I first learned that concerning behaviors were due to lagging skills, it was like a lightbulb went on. It's what I'd been thinking; I just never really had words for it.”

—KATIE, LEARNING CENTER TEACHER

Here's what we've been *doing*: we've been carefully documenting a student's concerning *behaviors*—through behavior checklists, behavior observations, functional behavior assessments (FBAs)—and we've been trying to *modify* those behaviors through administration of consequences. Here's what we should be doing instead: identifying the *problems* that are causing those behaviors and *solving* them.

And those two seismic shifts are going to change the narrative and the outcomes for a lot of kids.

As you may already know, the Collaborative & Proactive Solutions (CPS) model described in this book operates on a very important key theme:

KIDS DO WELL IF THEY CAN

This is the belief that if the kid *could* respond to problems and frustrations adaptively, he *would*. If he's not responding adaptively, he must be lacking the skills to respond adaptively. That's why he's screaming, swearing, hitting, kicking, spitting, throwing, destroying, or running out of the building. But he's not exhibiting those

concerning behaviors *all* the time; he only exhibits those behaviors when there are expectations he's having difficulty meeting. So the behavior is just the signal, just the means by which the student is communicating that there's an expectation he's having difficulty meeting. If caregivers are focused only on modifying behavior, then all they're modifying is the signal. But they're not solving any of the problems that are causing the signal. So one of the most important things you can do for a student with concerning behaviors is to figure out what *skills* he's lacking. The other important thing you can do is identify the *expectations* the student is having difficulty meeting. In the CPS model, those unmet expectations are referred to as *unsolved problems*.

“Working in a building where behavioral incentives have been a traditional part of the culture, I often have staff members question the philosophy of extrinsic versus intrinsic motivation. Teachers would ask, ‘Shouldn't students want to do well for the sake of doing well, not just to earn something?’ The CPS model answers that question with a resounding *yes* with the fundamental beliefs that *kids do well if they can*, not *kids do well if they want to*. When you start with that shift in thinking, it leads you in different and more productive directions to help and support students in finding success.”

—RYAN, PRINCIPAL

Here's another key theme, and it's related to the first:

DOING WELL IS PREFERABLE

This is the belief that human beings—including kids with concerning behaviors—have a strong preference for doing well (as opposed to doing poorly). In other words, they aren't responding maladaptively to problems and frustrations because they're seeking attention, or

manipulating, or coercing us into capitulating to their wishes, or because they're lazy or unmotivated. Yet, in many schools, these characterizations are alive and well, along with the belief that a student's concerning behaviors are *working* for him.

Working? How? According to conventional notions about the *function* of behavior, concerning behavior helps a student *get* something (for example, attention) and helps him *escape* and *avoid* tasks that are tedious, challenging, uncomfortable, or scary. If those are the lenses you're wearing, then it will be your mission to prove to the student that his concerning behavior *isn't* going to work and to model and reinforce replacement behaviors that you believe will work better, typically through use of rewards and punishments.

But wait. Don't *all* of us get, escape, and avoid? If so, then the question isn't *whether* the student is getting, escaping, and avoiding, but rather *why the student is going about getting, escaping, and avoiding in such a maladaptive manner*. And now you have the answer, thanks to the mountain of research: *because he's lacking the skills to get, escape, and avoid in a more adaptive fashion*.

What skills does the research tell us kids with concerning behaviors are lacking? For the time being, we're going to sacrifice precision for efficiency: *flexibility/adaptability, frustration tolerance/emotion regulation, and problem solving*. Concerning behaviors typically occur when those skills are being demanded. And those skills are being demanded when (you now know this) kids (and the rest of us) are having difficulty meeting certain *expectations*. You'll be learning how to identify those lagging skills and unsolved problems in [chapter 4](#).

You may not have known this, but educators are in one of the helping professions, right there alongside medical