



"There are nine varieties of ground. He who has a thorough knowledge of the advantages that result from the nine varieties of ground knows how to handle his troops."

— The Art of War, Chapter 11

PRINCIPLE

Diagnose the ground before choosing the tactic

Your child is always standing on one of nine types of terrain. What works on open ground destroys momentum on death ground. Read the situation first. The move comes second.

REMEMBER

Adolescents in acute crisis require environmental disruption, not incremental support

When your child hits death ground, the research is clear: **immediate, total disruption of their environment** is the only intervention that matches the stakes. Hospitalization, school withdrawal, relocation. These are not overreactions. They are survival tactics. [5]

THIS WEEK

Three moves to run now

- Identify which ground your child is currently on. Write it down: dispersive, facile, contentious, open, desperate, or death. If you cannot name it, you cannot respond correctly.
- Ask yourself: am I using the same tactics I used last month, or have I adapted to the ground shift? If your response has not changed but the situation has, you are fighting the wrong battle.
- If your child is on death ground and you have been treating it like contentious or facile ground, make the disruptive move this week. Do not wait for the next appointment or the next semester. Death ground does not wait.

CORE INSIGHT

Your child exists in one of nine distinct situations at any given time, and each demands a completely different parental response. What works when they are making early progress destroys momentum when they hit serious ground. The parent who cannot distinguish between dispersive ground and death ground will use the wrong tactics at precisely the wrong moment, compounding struggle into crisis.