

Trust Based Relational Intervention

Unpacking The IDEAL Response

Leveled at the Behavior, Not the Child

TBRI was developed by Dr. David Cross and Dr. Karyn Purvis,
Texas Christian University, Karyn Purvis Institute for Child Development

Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) is a therapeutic model that trains caregivers to provide effective support and treatment for at-risk children.



The Ideal Response for Parents: In Practice

Note: Dr. Purvis often uses biblical references and stories of her faith to illustrate a principle of Trust Based Relational Intervention. TBRI is NOT a faith based approach but one that is solidly grounded in neuro-science and brain based research.

“Stay CALM and Think FAST”

If a child feels threatened, hungry, or tired, her primitive brain jumps in and takes over. Physically located in areas of the brain such as the amygdala, this primitive brain constantly monitors basic survival needs and behaves like a guard on patrol. When the primitive brain is on duty, more advanced areas of the brain - particularly those that handle higher learning, reasoning, and logic - get shut down. Helping a child feel safe relaxes and disarms the primitive part of her brain. We purposefully soothe and disengage the primitive brain so it won't bully the child into poor behavior.



This should be your first line of defense when you are facing or looking to prevent a behavioral meltdown. Hunger, thirst, and fatigue can trigger a fear response in the brain. Remember, meet practical needs FIRST!

Unpacking The IDEAL Response:

Immediate

Direct

Efficient

Action Based: *Do the right thing, the right way!*

Leveled at the behavior, not the child.



"Leveled at the Behavior, Not the Child"

" It is an absolute human certainty that no one can know his own beauty or per a sense of his own worth until his has been reflected back to him in the mirror of another loving, caring human being;
John Joseph Power: *The Secret of Staying in Love.*



[View the Still Face Experiment Here](#)

Children from hard places often have never experienced the shared joy and delight of an attentive, responsive parent. As you may remember, the message of abuse is "I don't like you" and the message of neglect is "you don't exist". As you can see in the video clip above, babies are very sensitive to the emotional state of their parent. Due to their early experiences children from hard places operate from a different belief system than their securely attached counterparts. They have never had their inherent value and worth reflected back to them through the eyes of an adoring parent.

It is the difference between;
I made a mistake and I AM a mistake
I failed and I AM a failure
I did something bad and I AM bad.

It is about identity and self-worth. Children from hard places never learned they are precious and loved despite their worst behaviors. Their behavior is a reflection of their core belief that they are unlovable, defective and their voice does not matter. In this context, many of their behaviors make perfect sense. Additionally, if they have experienced foster care drift, their experience with stability and family has been conditional at best.

"Behavior is the mirror in which everyone shows their image"

Johan Von Goethe



Dr. Purvis shared a story of a parent who told her *my son is little 'poo'* though she used a different word. In her gracious and wise way, she gently reminded the mom, "no he is not a little *poo*, but he is covered in it." Dr. Purvis challenged the mom to see beyond the yuck of her son's behavior and connect to the precious child underneath the mess.

This a great reminder that at one point, *every one* of us was helpless, covered in our own poo and dependent on another to clean us up.

Leveled at the behavior, not the child means even when the behavior is stinky and repulsive , the child's value and preciousness is never in question.



Final Thought: A TBRI Parenting Valentine

When your kiddo is a yucky, hot mess
Your sanity and patience are put to the test
Stop, breathe and remember that beneath all that poo
Is a precious child who desperately needs YOU!

TBRI Tips are developed by Brenda Ursel, TBRI Educator

TBRI Tips are provided as part of ACRF Adoption Support Services and made possible through a grant from the State of Alaska, Office of Children's Services.