

# Trust Based Relational Intervention® TBRI in Action

## Dealing with Sexualized Behavior

TBRI was developed by Dr. David Cross and Dr. Karyn Purvis, Texas Christian University, Karyn Purvis  
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**TBRI® is an attachment-based, evidence-based, and trauma-informed intervention that is designed to meet the complex needs of vulnerable children. TBRI uses Empowering Principles to address physical needs, Connecting Principles for attachment and Correcting Principles to disarm fear-based behaviors.**



### Every 8 Minutes--

#### **Child protective services substantiates, or finds evidence for, a claim of child sexual abuse.**

From RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)

In Alaska, we know the rate of abuse is even higher. Alaska holds the number one spot for sexual abuse in the Nation.

- Perpetrators of this kind of abuse do not discriminate. No child is immune, infants to teenager can be victims. Sexual abuse crosses all racial and economic lines. Statistically speaking, whether it is disclosed or not, there is a high probability that the child you are fostering or have adopted has experienced some form of sexual abuse.
- This TBRI Tip is going to help equip families with some tools to help teach children physical boundaries and create the structure to keep them and other children safe and supervised.



### Take care of your oxygen needs first...

Dealing with sexualized behavior in children is one issue that can evoke all kinds of history and strong emotions from our parents. Maybe you come from a family where such issues were not discussed. Maybe there was a lot of shame and guilt around sexual topics. Maybe you are scared of saying the wrong thing or being caught off guard like Tom Selleck in the video clip included in this Tip. Whatever your reason for your discomfort, you need to work through it in order to be an

effective healing presence for you child.

Our children have been abused in unspeakable ways. I am in no way making light of that fact. However, your ability to thoughtfully respond to unexpected questions and/or behaviors is essential to help your child learn safe boundaries and heal from their hurt.

August 2, 2018

Helping a Child  
with  
Sexualized Behaviors  
EMPOWERED  
*To Connect*

## Helping a Child with Sexualized Behaviors

(video clip)

Note: In this TBRI video Clip Dr. Purvis uses biblical references and stories to illustrate a principle of Trust Based Relational Intervention . TBRI is NOT a faith based approach but one that is solidly grounded in neuroscience and brain based research.



### Do You Have A Penis?

(video clip)

- How would you handle such a question?
- Are you comfortable using the proper words for private parts?
- Can you address sexualized behaviors in a matter of fact manner even if nervous? Are you willing to learn?

## Ten Proactive and Protective Strategies for Parents

1. **Don't over-react. Stay calm and matter of fact.** If saying the words penis, vagina, or masturbation send you into to a panic attack, you may want to start practicing keeping your composure and ask yourself why these words are embarrassing for you. Remember, children will follow your example.

2. **Remember their behavior is about their history,** what was done to them. As hard as it may be for you to talk about it, they **EXPERIENCED IT.**

3. **They need healthy touch.** It is okay to show affection, our kiddos need healthy, safe touch, they just don't know how to get it or what that is like. They may never have experienced gentle, appropriate safe touch. You need to ask permission first to model solid personal boundaries. Teach them how healthy parents and children interact.

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4. **Model respect for personal boundaries.** Our kids need permission to come into your personal space as do you to get into theirs.

5. **Do not force a youth to hug, or kiss** a family member or other person if they don't want too. Provide choices, such as "Do you want to give Aunt Cami a hug or high five?"

6. **If they are behaving in a seductive manner**, grinding into someone's crotch or touching private parts. redirect them in a firm, matter of fact tone. You can respond with "children do not touch adults like that" and "instead you can hug me like this" and show them a safe, healthy hug.

7. **Be clear, direct and matter of fact with rules. Such as:**

- It is not okay for adults to be sexual with children.
- It is okay to say "no" if someone asks to hug/kiss you.
- Bathing and toileting is private. You can ask for help if needed.
- We do not walk around without clothes on in the house.
- It is okay to talk to someone if you don't feel safe.
- We ask permission before hugging or kissing another person.
- It is not okay to take pictures of your or anyone else's private parts.
- Your words have power. NO means NO and STOP means STOP!
- Safe people listen to what you need.
- Children can kiss family members on the cheek with permission.

8. **Words Matter; Teach Correct Anatomical Names.**

It is critical that children are taught the correct anatomical names for their private body parts. Private body parts are those parts covered by bathing suits or underwear. The mouth is also considered a private part.

Boys' private parts are mouth, bottom, penis and testicles.

- Girls' private parts are mouth, breasts, bottom, vulva and vagina.

**Why is this so important?**

- If they are abused, they can disclose the abuse using the correct body names, which helps in assisting prosecutors.
- It is a **deterrent** for perpetrators as it is an indication that the child has received some form of protective education.

From the Book ***Someone Should Have Told Me*** by Holly-Ann Martin

9. **Teach about Good and Bad Secrets.**

•**Good and Safe Secrets** are kept a short time and when they are told, they will make someone happy. They are usually a surprise to someone like a birthday party or special gift they will receive.

•**Bad or Unsafe Secrets:** These secrets make a child feel nervous, scared or uncomfortable. They are told to never tell the secret. A person may threaten to hurt, bully, promise toys or money to keep the secret. Usually only one or two people know this kind of secret. Children should never keep a bad or unsafe secret.

## 10. Structure you home for safety, supervision and success.

- Keep a sexualized child within sight and sound supervision while they are learning boundaries. This includes interactions with pets.
- Establish house rules for safety, such as only one person in the bathroom at a time, no walking around naked or partially clothed, everyone sleeps in his or her own bed.
- Keep a baby monitor in rooms so the child can call out to you if he is scared.
- Children should only play together in common areas or within eye sight of an adult.
- Computers should be kept in common areas where parents can monitor activity .
- Parents should install age appropriate parental **controls** on all internet accessible devices.
- Parents need to educate themselves on the most popular and dangerous apps for kids. Children from hard places are at high risk for internet exploitation.
- Avoid wrestling and tickling matches.
- Children are not allowed to touch each other's private parts.
- If you have a child who has issues with inappropriate touching, consider carefully if he or she should share a bedroom and with whom.
- Avoid putting vulnerable children in difficult situations such as unsupervised sleepovers or viewing violent or highly sexual movies.
- It is okay to tell if someone is touching your private parts. You will not get in trouble.

## Proactively Teach Safe Boundaries! Don't wait -*EDUCATE!*

Here are some great resources to get you started.

- Someone Should Have Told Me- Holly-Ann Martin
- Personal Space Camp- Julia Cook
- I Said No!- Kimberly King
- Your Body Belongs to You - Cornelia Spelman
- Some Secrets Should Never Be Kept- Jayneen Sanders
- No Means No! -Jayneen Sanders
- My Body! What I Say, Goes- Janeen Sanders
- Go To ACRF's Website at [www.acrf.org](http://www.acrf.org) for self study packets, books and other resources on this topic.

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