

Trust Based Relational Intervention

TBRI in Action

Responding to Aggressive and Violent Behavior

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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.

Responding to Aggressive and Violent Behavior

Remember, a youth who has experienced abuse and/or prenatal exposure may exhibit aggressive behavior. A child with a low tolerance for frustration may also erupt into aggressive behavior. If a child has learned through experience that aggression works more effectively than their words than it is not surprising that it is used to get what they want, when they want it.



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.

TBRI Proactive Strategies

As you have learned from past TBRI tips, there are two sets of strategies to deal with behaviors. One is proactive, the other is reactive. There are many things you can do to prevent or "catch" a violent outburst before it rages out of control. Here are some of the ways you can proactively prevent and or prepare for aggressive outbursts.

1. **Create a safe space for the youth to run to.** This can be a place with pillows, calm lighting or designate a part of their room. Make available a water bottle, nonperishable snack and a weighted or regular blanket. In a calm time prepare this space with the youth and brainstorm some activities that will help him regulate when he retreats to his space such as listening to an iPod or other music. Agree that when he is in his space, he will be left alone but you will check in on him every 10-15 minutes.
 - Create a "calm down kit" and keep it in a central place they can access during meltdown. See the box below for ideas.

TBRI Responsive Strategies:

Note that we are to **respond**, not **react** to aggressive behavior. This indicates a calm, thoughtful, direct response to threatening behavior. You may be asking, "how on earth is a person supposed stay calm when faced with a physical threat.

It is not easy, but before you engage with an enraged youth, you have to do whatever it takes to quiet your screaming **amygdala**, **calm your fear** and **regain your composure**.

Your youth needs you to bring calm and safety to their chaos. Before you engage, parents need to step back, breathe, and get control of yourself, your voice and your emotions. If you escalate, so does the youth, and it will not end well. It is your job as the adult to bring calm and safety to the situation.



Remember Safety is Your First Priority. For you, the youth and others in the family.

These tips incorporate the information found on acrf.org, Parenting 911 page, accessible at the link below.

Parenting
911



1. Remember the Connecting Principles. Your tone, voice, expression and posture will either ignite the safety or fear systems in a youth. These principles are also a powerful calming force for a youth. Help calm the youth. Talk slowly and reassuring, with a measure tone. As a youth escalates, they cannot process a lot of words so keep words short, direct and in a calm tone.

2. Avoid putting your hands on a child or youth to overcome, grab, fight, or restrain him in an aggressive way. When a youth is in Fight, flight, or freeze, they are hyper **vigilant** and sensitive to physical touch. Physical interaction is likely going to escalate the situation.

If you have to use force to prevent a child from hurting another child or himself, use just enough to stop the interaction then release as soon as you are able. "Hands on" usually escalates the situation and increases the chance of physical harm to the child or to you. Avoid if at all possible.

3. Avoid "backing the child into a corner, emotionally or physically. A youth who feels trapped is like to escalate to get away from the situation.

4. Give simple directives and use the youth's name. Avoid threats. EXAMPLES: Put the lamp down, Sammy. Tell me what you need. We can figure this out together.

5. If serious physical threats, impending harm, or weapons are involved, **direct other out of the room** (if needed into a locked room). Call 911 or law enforcement for assistance if necessary. Some hospital emergency rooms also have a psychiatric emergency service that you can contact by phone for guidance. (Keep this number handy.)

IF A YOUTH RUNS AWAY....

Conflict between a caregiver and teen is the most common reason for running away. Running is often a spur of the moment– so emotion is involved. Teens on the street are extremely vulnerable so act as soon as you suspect the youth has run.

If a child runs from your home..

- If the child is in foster care, report the runaway to OCS as soon as possible.
- Contact your local legal enforcement and make a report.
- Call people in the child’s social circle– friends, classmates, teachers, family members– for help, details or possible information of where the child went. Ask them to pass on the message that you care about the youth and want to make sure he is safe.
- Contact your local runaway shelter if you have one or call 1-800-RUNAWAY for support.
- If your child contacts you, show your concern and desire for him or her to come home. STAY CALM--avoid lecture or yelling. Ask straight, short questions, “Where are you? Are you safe? Do you want me to come and take you back home?”

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.