



The
TBRI[®] Playbook

**The What, Why, & How
of Trust-Based
Relational Intervention**



The TBRI Playbook

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The TBRI Playbook

The TBRI Playbook was developed for caregivers and professionals who provide care to children and youth.

This resource can be used in multiple ways:

- as an introduction to TBRI Principles and Strategies for individuals without previous TBRI exposure
- as a review or refresh of TBRI for individuals who have received TBRI training
- as a reminder of TBRI to return to when individuals feel "stuck" as they provide care to children and youth

The TBRI Playbook provides basic descriptions of **what** each TBRI strategy is, **why** each strategy is important, and **how** to implement the strategy with children and youth. At the end of the Playbook, there is a section on "Putting It All Together" that serves to connect each of the main TBRI concepts into one cohesive, proactive plan or responsive solution when providing care to children and youth.

Feel free to use the TBRI Playbook in whatever manner it best supports your use of TBRI with children and youth in your care. We hope this Playbook can provide clarity on TBRI Strategies, connection between TBRI Principles, and a concrete tool for TBRI use as you do the most important work for the world's children and youth.

TBRI®

Trust-Based Relational Intervention®

Connecting

Mindfulness:

- Self-care
- Self-regulation
- Awareness
- Co-regulation

Engagement:

- Healthy touch
- Eye contact
- Voice tone
- Playful interaction
- Behavior matching

Empowering

Ecological:

- Transition warnings
- Routines and rituals
- Artifacts
- Predictable schedules
- Regulation checks

Physiological:

- Hydration & nutrition
- Sensory needs
- Calming techniques
- Adequate sleep
- Regular physical activity

Correcting

Proactive:

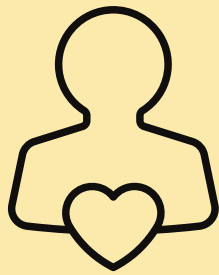
- Life Value Terms
- Behavioral scripts
 - Choices
 - Compromises
 - Redos

Responsive:

- IDEAL Response®
 - Immediate
 - Direct
 - Efficient
 - Action-Based
 - Leveled at Behavior
- Levels of Response™
 - 1) Playful Engagement
 - 2) Structured Engagement (choices, compromises, redos)
 - 3) Calming Engagement (use plan)
 - 4) Protective Engagement

Connecting Principles: Mindfulness Strategies

The mindfulness strategies are designed to increase awareness in caregivers. When caregivers are aware of their current state, past events/triggers, and the children and youth's current state and history, they can be more attuned. This attunement allows caregivers to connect and meet the needs of children and youth more effectively.



Self-Care



Self-Regulation



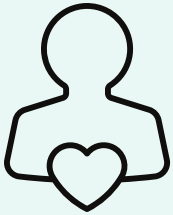
Awareness



Co-Regulation

Connecting Principles: Mindfulness Strategies

Self-Care



What: Intentional practice to meet your own physical and emotional needs

Why: In order to care well for others, you also have to meet your own needs. While this may feel hard, it is critical for caregivers, especially as they may experience secondary trauma, burnout, or compassion fatigue while meeting the emotional demands of children and youth.

How: Find an activity that gives you rest and an activity that gives you energy. Build these into your life - it may be 5 minutes at a time or a few hours on the weekend. Problem-solve how to add this time into your schedule, knowing it will give you more space to meet the needs of your child or youth.

Self-Regulation



What: Ability to use effective strategies to stay regulated in stressful situations

Why: In order to give consistent, responsive, and empathetic care to children and youth, you must be regulated and be able to remain regulated in interactions.

How: Take time to determine what triggers you (What often frustrates you or makes you flip your lid?). Try different calming techniques to see what helps you regulate yourself (e.g., deep breathing, self-talk). Be intentional to use the techniques when you feel yourself becoming dysregulated.

Awareness



What: Knowledge of your children and youth's history, awareness of their current state, and understanding how their history may be affecting their current state

Why: In order to meet the needs of children and youth, you should learn how to play "detective" - is there an unspoken need, is their behavior telling you something?

How: Keep track of when behavioral issues occur to determine if there is a pattern in behavior. What was happening right before? Was there a sensory need? When was the last time they had eaten? Was there a cue you missed?

Co-Regulation



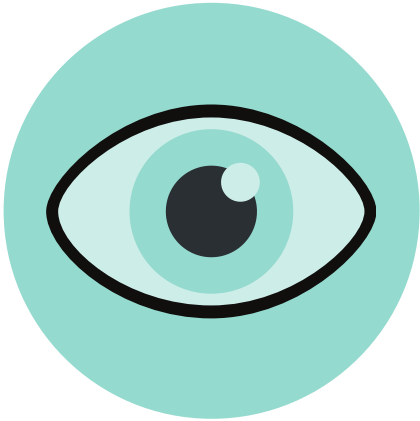
What: Ability to support a child or youth in their regulation

Why: Children and youth who have experienced early-life trauma often struggle to regulate themselves because they have not learned how. Regulatory skills develop through relationship. Sometimes you must come alongside a child or youth and help them regulate when they do not have the skills to do so on their own. This allows them to learn.

How: Try different calming techniques (e.g., deep breathing or sensory input) with your child or youth to see what helps them calm. Also, model identifying and expressing emotions and meeting your needs so your child or youth can learn through observation.

Connecting Principles: Engagement Strategies

The engagement strategies are designed to help foster connection between a caregiver and children and youth. These strategies help build a foundation for a trusting and healing relationship through nonverbal channels of communication.



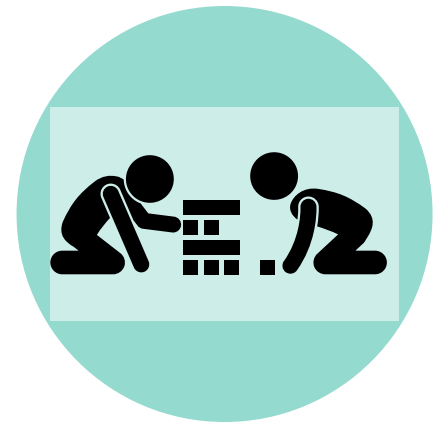
Eye Contact



Healthy Touch



Voice Quality



Playful Interaction



Behavior Matching

Connecting Principles: Engagement Strategies

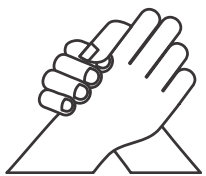


Eye Contact:

What: Intentionally looking directly into children and youth's eyes to connect

Why: Eye contact tells children or youth they are valued and worthy of your time and attention. It also demonstrates active listening and allows children and youth to see and learn facial expressions.

How: Look into your child or youth's eyes when you are speaking to them rather than speaking from across the room. It is important to never force a child or youth to make eye contact, as their histories may make this challenging or threatening.



Healthy Touch:

What: Providing appropriate physical touch in a positive way

Why: Touch is the first sense to develop and is essential for building connection. Many children and youth who have experienced trauma have also experienced a lack of healthy touch, which is associated with aggression and depression.

How: Ask permission and offer choices (high five or hug). If your child or youth is uncomfortable with touch, use symbolic touch until they become more comfortable with physical touch.

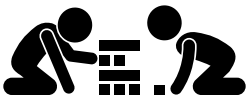


Voice Quality:

What: Paying attention to the tone, volume and cadence of your voice

Why: The tone, volume, and cadence of your voice can communicate felt-safety, but we are often unaware of what we are communicating with our voice quality. While words matter, voice quality communicates much more than words do.

How: When being playful, a higher pitch, higher volume, and faster cadence communicates it is safe to play. Lower the pitch and volume and slow your cadence when correcting a behavior or trying to get a child or youth's attention.

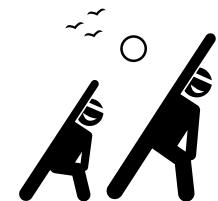


Playful Interaction:

What: Taking opportunities to play and connect with children and youth

Why: Play is the language of safety. Playful interaction promotes connection and is an antidote to fear, anxiety and anger.

How: Create opportunities to play regularly with your child or youth. With infants and toddlers play may look like singing a silly song or building block towers to be knocked over. With children you can allow them to lead as you join in playing make-believe or board games together. For youth, try learning to play their favorite game or do each others' hair and nails.



Behavior Matching:

What: Getting down on a child or youth's level, interacting face-to-face, or reflecting a child or youth's actions or emotional state

Why: Behavior matching develops naturally in a healthy caregiver-child relationship. By intentionally practicing such skills, you are communicating your attunement to the child or youth.

How: When speaking to your child or youth, position yourself at the same level as them so you are face-to-face (e.g., sit with them, get on your knees). When you are playing, take opportunities to match their behavior.

Empowering Principles: Physiological Strategies

The physiological strategies are designed to help empower children and youth's bodies and teach regulation. By providing regular sensory input and meeting children and youth's physical needs, caregivers can focus on scaffolding regulation skills.

Hydration & Nutrition



Sensory Needs



Calming Techniques



Adequate Sleep

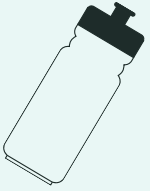


Physical Activity



Empowering Principles: Physiological Strategies

Hydration & Nutrition



What: Water and a protein-rich snack every 2 hours

Why: Ensuring children and youth are properly hydrated and receiving nutrient-rich food increases cognitive abilities, regulates blood sugar, and decreases behavioral issues.

How: Give your child or youth water bottles and build in breaks to hydrate and eat protein-rich snacks, such as nuts or cheese.

Sensory Needs

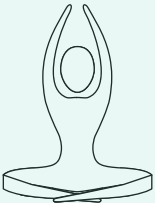


What: Proprioceptive (deep muscle) and vestibular (balance-related) input every 2 hours

Why: Senses can be under- or overdeveloped in children and youth who have experienced early adversity. They need consistent, intentional input to help regulate their senses.

How: Create sensory breaks every 2 hours in the day. Try jumping on a trampoline, taking a walk, or dancing.

Calming Techniques

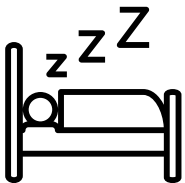


What: Strategies that serve to regulate and calm children and youth

Why: Children and youth who have experienced early adversity may struggle to self-regulate because regulation skills develop in the context of healthy relationships. Teaching calming skills proactively allows caregivers, children, and youth to have known, effective strategies that help regulate their bodies both as part of daily, healthy habits and when dysregulation occurs.

How: Try different calming techniques to see what works and implement them when you see your child or youth needs help calming. Deep breathing, utilizing a fidget or weighted item, and drinking water can all provide calming input.

Adequate Sleep



What: Receiving the recommended amount of sleep each night

Why: Sleep helps to determine how well children and youth can think, act, learn, and regulate their emotions and bodies. Without enough sleep, physical, mental, and emotional struggles increase.

How: Create a ritual and structure around bedtime to provide felt-safety.

Physical Activity



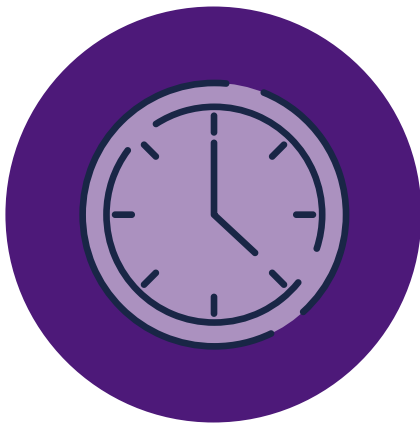
What: Purposeful movement of the body

Why: Physical activity influences the body's ability to balance brain chemistry and increases children and youth's ability to learn.

How: Incorporate movement every 2 hours. Try taking a walk, playing on the playground, or even climbing stairs.

Empowering Principles: Ecological Strategies

The ecological strategies are designed to help create an environment of predictability. A predictable environment helps children and youth experience felt-safety, defined as feelings of emotional security in a relationship regardless of physical safety in the environment. When children and youth feel safe, their ability to connect with others, self-regulate, and learn new skills increases.



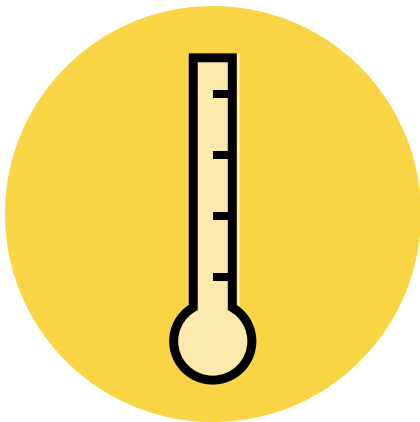
Transition Warnings



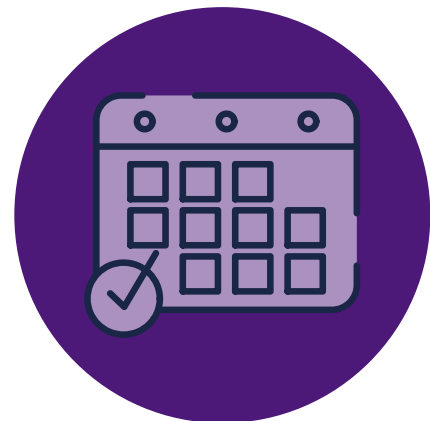
Routines and Rituals



Artifacts



Predictable Schedules



Regulation Checks

Empowering Principles: Ecological Strategies

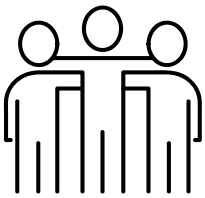


Transition Warnings

What: Verbal reminders of upcoming changes in the environment

Why: Announcing the anticipated change and the time until the change occurs serves to increase predictability and regulation and reduce fear.

How: Alert your child or youth 5, 2 and 1 minutes before a change occurs in activity, location, or caregiver. Depending on your child or youth's need, you may need to provide an earlier transition.

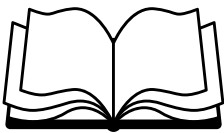


Routines and Rituals

What: Interactions that are structured and repetitive

Why: Routines provide structure and predictability. Rituals deepen connection, enhance memory skills, and provide practice for regulation.

How: Create a known pattern of activity and interaction between you and your child or youth at specific times (e.g., bedtime or before school). Add playfulness and connection.



Artifacts

What: Objects that serve as a tool to ease transition (e.g., calendars, scrapbooks with pictures, or stuffed animals) and/or create cohesion in a child or youth's life story

Why: Physically documenting an event allows children and youth to look back, retain memories, and create a cohesive life story. Artifacts can also provide comfort in the midst of uncertain or difficult transitions.

How: Create artifacts with your child or youth to mark major events and provide artifacts that comfort them in difficult, major transitions.



Predictable Schedules

What: A schedule that is consistent, anticipated, and incorporates routines/rituals

Why: When children and youth can anticipate events, they feel in control, decreasing their fear-based behavior and increasing felt-safety.

How: Create a schedule (e.g., a daily schedule for your child, a weekly calendar of events for your family) and post it where your child or youth can view it. You can use words or pictures based upon their needs.



Regulation Checks

What: An intentional time to check regulation needs

Why: Before a child or youth's regulation needs can be met, they need to be aware of the specific need. Regulation tools provide both parents and children a way to communicate about their regulation needs.

How: Create a "temperature check" and post it in your home. Check-in with your child or youth regularly to ask how their body feels.

Correcting Principles: Proactive Strategies

The proactive strategies are designed to teach skills for healthy relationships. They are taught and practiced during a time when children and youth are regulated so that during times of dysregulation both caregivers and children have tools for addressing fear-based behaviors.



Behavioral Scripts

Choices

Compromises

Redos



Life Value Terms

Correcting Principles: Proactive Strategies

Behavioral Scripts



What: Short scripts, such as choices, compromises and redos, that teach and reinforce new behavioral skills. **Redos** involve physically practicing the appropriate behavior the "right" way after doing it the "wrong" way. **Choices** involve giving a child or youth two options to choose from when making a decision to provide structure and share power. **Compromises** involve negotiating needs and offering solutions that "meet in the middle" and satisfy both the caregiver and the child or youth.

Why: When children and youth are dysregulated, it is difficult to process lengthy verbal instructions or reminders. By proactively teaching short behavioral scripts, children and youth are able to hear simple, familiar language and process their response.

How: When your child or youth is calm and regulated, try practicing examples of the behavioral scripts through role-play. Teach them what choices, compromises, and redos are and have them practice with you. Practice redoing a tricky behavior for them. Try asking for a compromise when they need a different solution. Offer choices and have the child or youth practice choosing one of the options.

Life Value Terms



What: Reminders that specifically focus on positive social interactions. Some examples of Life Value Terms Dr. Karyn Purvis used include the following:

"Gentle and Kind" to soften tone, touch, or attitudes

"Use your Words" to express needs through words rather than behavior

"Accepting No" to praise a child for responding well when told "no"

"Listen and Obey" to encourage following directions

"With respect" to encourage respectful tone, attitude, and words

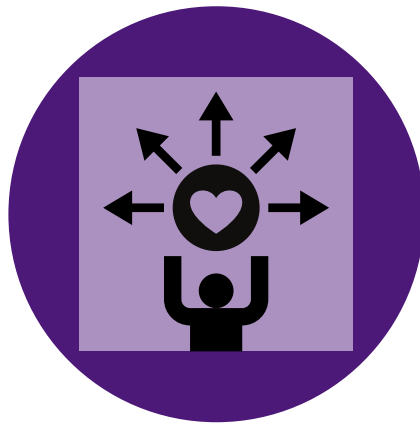
"With permission and supervision" to teach you will keep them safe and meet their needs

Why: When children and youth have experienced early adversity, they often develop relational strategies that are unhealthy for a safe, nurturing environment. Life Value Terms can help teach new relational strategies through simple, short instructions and reminders.

How: Consider behaviors that are particularly difficult for your child or youth. Create a short script of no more than 4 -5 words (e.g., use your words, gentle and kind). Make sure to use scripts you would naturally say and fit your context and culture. Consistently use that term in everyday life to teach and maintain positive behavior.

Correcting Principles: Responsive Strategies

While proactive strategies are effective, there will still be instances when challenging behaviors are exhibited and need to be addressed. The responsive strategies are designed to address behaviors when they arise with the minimum amount of response necessary for the behavior. The goal of responsive strategies is to communicate that while the behavior is not okay, the child or youth's worth and value are not connected to the behavior.



IDEAL Response

Immediate

Direct

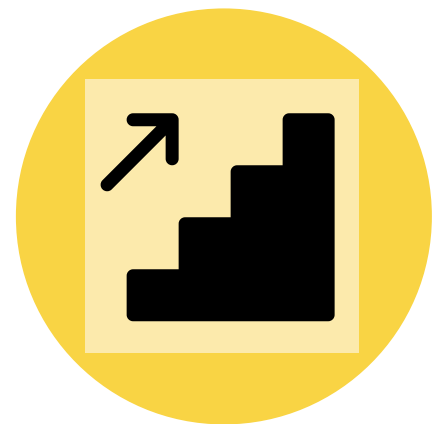
Efficient

Action-Based

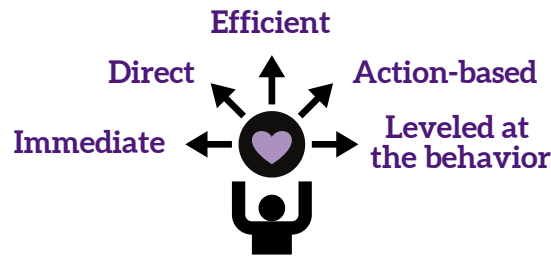
Leveled at Behavior

Levels of Response

- 1. Playful Engagement**
- 2. Structured Engagement**
- 3. Calming Engagement**
- 4. Protective Engagement**



Correcting Principles: Responsive Strategies

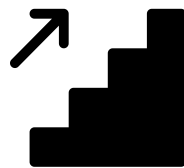


The IDEAL Response

What: An acronym of the five principles that should be used when addressing behaviors

Why: Fear-based behaviors should be addressed **immediately** (within 3-5 seconds) because learning is greatest when the response to the behavior occurs close in time. **Directly** refers to getting on children and youth's level close to them, making eye contact, and giving them undivided attention, as this causes a shift in brain chemistry that increases learning. **Efficient** refers to the least amount of firmness, corrective effort, and verbal directive needed to address behaviors (see the Levels of Response below), which allows for children and youth to gain trust in the caregiver's response. **Action-based** refers to having children and youth physically practice the appropriate behavior (redo). By practicing the positive behavior, they are able to strengthen the wiring in the brain for the positive behavior rather than the maladaptive behavior. Lastly, **leveled at the behavior** means responding to the behavior at hand, not shaming the child or youth. Children and youth's preciousness, value and worth are never in question.

How: When your child or youth exhibits a challenging behavior, use the IDEAL Response to respond. Give yourself grace as you learn and focus on creating new habits in your response.



- Level 1: Playful Engagement
- Level 2: Structured Engagement
- Level 3: Calming Engagement
- Level 4: Protective Engagement

Levels of Response

What: Responsive practices that address fear-based behaviors while striving to maintain connection

Why: Using the least amount of firmness, corrective effort, and verbal directive needed to address behaviors helps children and youth build a trusting relationship with an adult, knowing they will not overreact to a behavior. It also helps to build felt-safety because children and youth learn that the adult will keep them safe.

How:

Level 1: Playful Engagement: A low level challenge may be met with playful interaction and often involves using life value terms to ask children and youth to redo a behavior.

Level 2: Structure Engagement: With a slightly elevated challenge, such as when children and youth don't respond to playful engagement, the caregiver may offer choices and/or compromises.

Level 3: Calming Engagement: If children and youth become dysregulated and are at risk of full escalation, the caregiver should provide calming input in order to help them regulate. During this level, caregivers should use strategies they already know help regulate their child or youth from their calming engagement plan, which is a list of 3-5 calming strategies that have already proven useful for regulation.

Level 4: Protective Engagement: When there is a significant threat of harm by children and youth, caregivers should contain the violence while remaining calm and reassuring. You should seek formal training for an intervention accepted by laws and regulations of your state for this level.

Note: After use of each of these levels, the connection between caregiver and child or youth should be re-affirmed, allowing the child or youth to feel safe and secure before moving on in the day.



TBRI: Putting It All Together

Being Proactive in Providing Care



Empowering

- Are you and your children and youth drinking water regularly, eating nutritious foods daily, and getting enough sleep?
- Are you and your children and youth getting regular physical activity and meeting sensory needs?
- Do you and your children and youth have routines, predictable schedules, and rituals built into daily life?
- Do you prepare for transitions, whether by giving warnings of small changes during the day or processing large changes with your children and youth?



Connecting

- Are you mindful of your own emotional/mental state and taking care of yourself so you can best take care of your children and youth?
- Are you attuned to your children and youth and aware of how certain experiences may be affecting them differently?
- Are you spending one-on-one time with your children and youth and spending fun time all together?
- Are you telling your children and youth that they are loved, valued, and precious?
- Do your children and youth feel emotionally safe enough to share their thoughts and feelings openly and honestly with you?



Correcting

- Are your children and youth able to identify how they are feeling and know what strategies can help them feel better?
- Are you using short scripts as reminders of appropriate, healthy behavior?
- Are you using choices, compromises, and redos to respond to your children and youth when they engage in unhealthy or inappropriate behavior?
- Are you using the minimum amount of correction to resolve an issue?
- Are you consistently connecting with your children and youth after correcting?

TBRI: Putting It All Together

Responding to Challenges

What is the challenge?

What is the "why" (the message, root, or reason) behind the challenge?

Am I mindful of how my own mental/emotional state may be affecting the situation?

Am I connecting in a calm state after correcting?

If no, what strategies will I use?

Do I feel connected to them & do they feel connected to me?

Am I providing only enough correction to resolve the issue?

Am I regulated & are they regulated?

Nurture Group:

Nurture Groups are groups designed to teach healthy relational skills and proactive strategies. The flow of this group is designed to help all participants practice skills like giving care, receiving care, negotiating needs, and being autonomous. Through activities, Nurture Groups teach Empowering, Connecting, and Correcting Principles and are a helpful way to put all the pieces of TBRI together.

Rules: Nurture Group begins with reminding everyone of the three rules: Stick Together, No Hurts, and Have Fun.

Check-in: This provides an opportunity for special attention while others “stick together” and listen. It allows everyone the chance to experience what it feels like to treat others with respect and to be respected. During Check-in, pose a question (e.g., “If you could be an animal, what animal would you be and why?”) and let each individual take a turn answering. Often a “magic feather” item (e.g., flashing globe, a ball of twine, or microphone) is held by the person talking, which helps to get and hold attention of others.

Band-Aids[®]: Caring for one another with Band-Aids allows individuals to practice giving and receiving nurturing care for their hurts. Hurts can be external such as bruises or internal such as emotional wounds. Using eye contact and good words, each individual will ask their partners if they can put the Band-Aid the partner selected on one of the partner’s hurts. The partner can either consent, ask for a compromise (such as doing it later), or say, “No, thank you.” When doing a family nurture group, the caregivers should give Band-Aids to each child in the family.

Activity: This portion of Nurture Group is used to teach and reinforce social skills. For example, when teaching ‘self-regulation,’ you might teach a calming technique. Engage children and youth in a dysregulating activity (water guns, silly string, dance party) and then practice regulating with a calming technique. Other activities include role-playing an issue unique to your group, such as compromising on what time bedtime should be.

Feeding: Taking turns feeding one another allows individuals the opportunity to practice giving care to someone else and being cared for themselves. Pass around a bowl of food, and have each person take turns feeding each other. This is a great time to practice asking permission and being gentle and kind when feeding. Children and youth can either consent, ask for a compromise (such as doing it later), or say, “No, thank you.” Again, when doing a family Nurture Group, the caregivers should feed and be fed by each child in the family.

Closing: End Nurture Group by reviewing the three rules and doing something celebratory and playful like a fun dance, a secret family handshake, or a group hug.

TBRI[®] RESOURCE GUIDE

DVDS

The Healing Families Series:

- TBRI Overview
- Trust-Based Parenting
- Attachment: Why It Matters
- Children from Hard Places and the Brain
- A Sensory World
- Playful Interaction
- Healthy Touch

The Lecture Series

- The Attachment Dance
- Facilitating Behavioral Research
- Healing Research
- Sensory Integration
- The Neurochemistry of Fear
- Empowering, Connecting and Correcting Principles

TBRI for Teens

TBRI 101

All DVDs are available for purchase at
child.tcu.edu/store

BOOKS



The Connected Child



The Connected Parent

WEBSITES

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Access Free Resources at
youtube.com/c/karynpurvis
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