

# Connecting principles TBRI®

## Trust based relational intervention

### Connecting principles

*Connecting Principles* help to strengthen and deepen relationship connections between caregivers and children. They are made up of 2 strategies (plans):

### Mindfulness strategies

Encourages caregivers to:

- Examine their own relationship histories.
- Understand how their histories impact on what they bring to their relationship with children.

### Engagement strategies

Provides caregivers with practical tools for relating to children in simple meaningful ways.

### Infant attachment cycle

Infants need to feel *safe* and know that their caregiver will meet their needs.

To understand and appreciate how children come to trust safe adults around them, it's important to understand the *attachment cycle*.

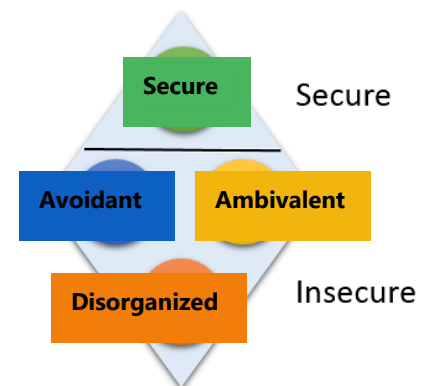
The attachment cycle lays the groundwork for:

- Trust
- Self-worth
- Confidence
- Mental health
- Self-regulation (soothing oneself)

## Infant attachment styles

Caregiver behavior and infant attachment strategies

Attachment style	History with caregiver
Secure	Caregiver consistently responds when infant is upset.
Anxious-avoidant	Caregiver does not respond when infant is upset.
Anxious-ambivalent	Caregiver inconsistently responds when infant is upset.
Disorganized	Caregiver is frightening and traumatic.



## Secure attachment

From birth, the caregiver helps the infant learn to regulate.

Age	What is learned
First year	Caregiver learns to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Read infant's signals.</li><li>• Respond to infant's needs.</li></ul>
Second year	Children learn to do some things on their own. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• They still need caregivers for many things, for example, when they are very upset.</li></ul>
As child grows	The <i>give and take</i> continues. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It will lessen as the child grows and learns to manage the world on their own.</li></ul>



Securely attached children learn that caregivers will always be a secure base they can return to for safety.

## Attachment when things go wrong

When a child's needs are not met, or when they come from a place of fear:

- They are in continuing distress.
- They are placed on a path to behavioral dysregulation. This refers to the difficulty or inability to control one's actions or impulses, leading to behaviors that are maladaptive or harmful.

Their voices have not been heard in a way that makes them confident that their needs will be met. So they use other adaptive tools such as:

- Withdrawal
- Clinging
- Behavior outbursts
- Aggression
- Anger

## Other challenges

- Child inherits mental health issues
- Some things that have happened to the child may be out of caregiver's control
- Inherited mental health issues can affect child's emotional regulation and behavior
- Caregiver stress with limited support
- Caregiver may struggle with parenting due to caregiver's own upbringing.



But, the good news ... connecting strategies can *help* caregivers.

Connecting Strategies is your tool for learning how to interact with your child for developing healthier relationships

## Parenting pyramid

A different way to look at the caregiver child relationship.

**Connecting principles are the base that ideally develops early on through loving, nurturing care.**



### Connecting is the base

The Connecting base is stable, surviving stress. Behavior management is *easier* when relationships are rooted in connection and trust.

## TBRI connecting principles

Connecting Principles nurture children by helping them understand that they are safe with adults who care about them: **Felt Safety**

## Felt-safety means feeling safe.

Just because children are safe doesn't mean they feel safe. TBRI connecting principles help to increase children's felt-safety by helping children to build trust.

## Caregiver mindfulness strategies

You are aware of:

- Your own relationship history.
- What pushes your buttons.
- How your child sees you.

You have learned how to:

- Be flexible in responding-adjusting to your child's needs.
- Stay calm with an attentive presence.

You understand the importance of:

- Bringing your full attention the present moment.
- Knowing what tools will work best for the different interactions with your child

## Notes:

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## Examples of engagement strategies

What you do	How it helps	Notes
Healthy touch	Helps to connect and reduce stress <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gentle chin prompt</li><li>• Hand on shoulder</li><li>• Holding hands</li></ul>	
Eye contact	Changes brain chemistry <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Let me see those wonderful eyes."</li></ul>	
Voice quality	Focus on how to say what you say <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Tone (stricter but not scary)</li><li>• Volume (lower volume)</li></ul>	
Behavior matching	Getting at child's level <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Joining them in what they are doing</li></ul>	
Playful interactions	Play disarms fear <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Playing games</li><li>• Using imaginative play</li></ul>	

## Behavioral health

For contacts and locations visit

[cookchildrens.org/services/behavioral-health/contact-us/](https://cookchildrens.org/services/behavioral-health/contact-us/) or



These instructions are only general guidelines. Your healthcare provider may give you special instructions. If you have questions or concerns, please call your healthcare provider.

## My TBRI Worksheet

### The Connecting Principles

Ways that I can better connect with my child. I can:

- Use more healthy touch.
- Change my volume/tone of voice.
- Change how I approach the situation.
- I can be more playful ... use playful interaction.
- Use behavior matching.
- Be more mindful about why this situation "pushes my buttons".
- Offer a calm presence.
- Encourage creative problem solving.
- Be more flexible in my responses.

My other plans:

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