

Empowering principles TBRI®

Trust based relational intervention

Empowering principles

Goal of empowering principles: To prepare “bodies and brains” for success by meeting the physical and environmental needs of the child. There are two empowering strategies (plans):

Physiological strategies (physical body)

Focus is on the child’s internal physical needs, such as:

- A. Hydration
- B. Blood sugar
- C. Sensory needs/physical activity

Ecological Strategies (environmental)

Focus is on the child’s external environment. This guides children for learning self-regulation skills, such as:

- Predictability with transitions
- Daily rituals
- Scaffolding (supporting) self-regulation

Felt-safety

Felt-Safety means feeling safe. Just because children are safe doesn’t mean they feel safe. TBRI empowering principles aim to increase children’s felt-safety.

Physiological strategies

Concentrates on empowering children internally. This includes:

- Hydration: Keeping child hydrated.
- Blood sugar: Keeping at correct level.
- Sensory input: Understanding how children may have trouble processing different sensations.

Hydration (drinking)

Even at low levels, dehydration causes changes in thinking, behavior, and mood. This can lead to:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Trouble with memory
- Anxiety
- Angry mood



Ways to help my child stay hydrated:

- I can lead by example
- I can keep water bottles available

Blood sugar (eating)

For children with a trauma history, there may be issues with blood sugar management. Even minor shifts in blood sugar can lead to behavioral issues and affect their thinking.

Children who are hungry don’t learn as well as children who are not. When the brain does not get proper nutrients and blood sugar takes a

dip, children become dysregulated. The following are linked with hunger and low blood sugar:

- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Withdrawal
- Fighting with peers
- Aggression
- Depression
- Cognitive and academic problems
- Difficulty concentrating/listening



You can help maintain your child's blood sugar by ensuring they eat every two hours.

At home, we can together:

- Create a meal chart to hang on refrigerator.
- Make a grocery list with healthy snacks.
- Make weekly grocery trips.

At school:

- I can explain my child's special needs with the teacher, nurse, and principal.
- Send healthy snacks to school.
- If snacks not allowed in the classroom, create a plan with the teacher.

Sensory processing input

Children's sensory needs and likings also affect their behavior. Some children are at risk for sensory issues.

Sensory-wary behaviors: May include wishes to make contact rather than receive it from others. Other behaviors may include:

Refuses

- To wear certain items of clothing.
- To wear clothing with tags.
- To eat certain foods.

- To get hands dirty.

Dislikes

- Loud noises. Will cover ears.
- Bright lights. Will cover eyes.
- Hugs and kisses.
- Strong smells or odors.

Sensory-seeking behaviors may include:

Frequently:

- Spins, jumps, swings
- Wants bear hugs
- Bangs, hits, drags toys
- Fidgets, has trouble sitting still

Likes:

- Loud environments
- Being tossed in air/being off the ground
- Getting hands dirty
- Wrestling/tickling/roughhousing



Simple ways I can use physical/internal strategies to empower my child.

Provide:

- Healthy snacks every 2 hours.
- A water bottle.
- Objects for chewing.
- Weighted items such as blankets.
- Comfortable chairs.
- Time for physical play.

Have ready:

- Noise cancelling headphones
- Fidgets

Beware of different scents in room.

Ecological strategies

Ecological strategies help caregivers use the surroundings to teach children self-regulation skills. Just like their bodies, a child's environment, what's going on around them, can influence the way they behave. This includes:

- A. Predictability with transitions
- B. Daily rituals
- C. Scaffolding (supporting) self-regulation

Transitions

Transitions can be difficult for some children. This may include:

Life transitions

- Moving to a new home/town
- Divorce/separation of caregivers
- Birth of a sibling

Daily transitions:

- Getting ready in the morning
- Switching tasks at school
- Going to after-school activities
- Starting homework
- Going to bed



Transition solutions: Let your child Tell their own story. This helps them understand things more fully from their own perspective. You may use:

- Journals
- Artwork
- Scrapbooks/Life book

Daily transitions: Create a daily schedule and use one or more of these ideas:

1. Transitions notecards: Help child create a set of notecards with daily activities.
 - One per card.
 - Ask child to draw picture of activity on card.
 - Also, include 2 to 3 "wild" cards you can use in case of a schedule change.
2. Frequent reminders:
 - Give child frequent reminders of upcoming transitions.
 - For example, "It's 3 minutes until it's time to brush your teeth!"
3. Co-regulate: Join child during difficult transitions

Daily rituals

Daily rituals can do wonders to help children learn skills.

Routines and Rituals are different

- Routines: Practices that allow families and children *to be prepared* and know what to expect.
- Rituals: Allow families to *strengthen their relationships* with one another through small, special daily practices.

Examples:

- Bedtime *routine*: Take a bath, read a book, and turn out the lights.
- Bedtime *ritual*: Caregiver and child make eye contact and each say their favorite part of the day.

Some examples of skills strengthened with rituals:

- Attunement with others
- Memory
- Emotional regulation
- Self-esteem
- Concentration
- Reading social cues
- Sensory awareness through sound/touch

Using Rituals to strengthen skills and learning. Together we can:

- Make up and sing a special song.
- Create a special handshake.
- Have a special greeting that we do upon waking each morning.

Scaffolding (supporting) self-regulation

Self-Regulation is the ability to calm yourself, by yourself. **Scaffolding** includes other forms of regulation that provide the level of help your child needs to regulate, or calm themselves. Scaffolding is needed as the child grows until they learn self-regulation. Other types of regulation include:

Other-regulation: Occurs during first year of life. Loving caregivers (“the others”) regulate both the physical and emotional needs of infant. For example, when infants are hungry, adults feed them. When infants are upset, adults give comfort.

Co-regulation: Occurs during toddler and preschool years. Adults still provide much

support, but child learns basic self-regulation skills and to ask for needs. For example, “I’m hungry,” “I’m cold,” “I’m afraid”. Child and caregivers work together to meet needs.

Self-regulation: Develops in childhood and beyond. By this age, caregivers are still in charge of children and their environment. But, children have learned to regulate their needs like making a simple snack when they are hungry or putting on a sweater when they are cold.

Additionally, if it has been modeled by their caregivers, children will begin to regulate their own emotions and emotional responses

Scaffolding self-regulation solutions

There are many tools for teaching and supporting self-regulation. When caregivers *scaffold*, or provide the level of help that children need, learning is smoother and more successful. This includes:

Sight

- Engine Plates
- Safety Plan (Three things I can do when I’m upset are…)”)
- Transition Plan - Include drawings/photos of daily events (waking up, eating breakfast.

Sound

- Calming music: Help child create a playlist
- Metronome/steady rhythm: Steady, predictable rhythms are calming

Nose and mouth

- Deep Breathing: Blowing bowl of soup, deep breaths, magic moustache
- Calming Scents: Lavender, vanilla, chamomile
- Alerting scents: Peppermint, sandalwood

Touch and proprioceptive senses

- Fidgets: Stress balls, tangles, Bendeez
- Sensory buckets: Fill with beans,
- Stretching/yoga
- Wall pushes
- Weighted items/blankets: Weight and proprioceptive input is calming

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.

Behavioral health

For contacts and locations visit

cookchildrens.org/services/behavioral-health/contact-us/ or



