



## Being aware of myself, others and my surroundings

The second principle of TBRI (Trust Based Relational Intervention), is the one focused on Connecting. To be able to connect with our children **we need to be mindful of what's happening to us, internally, as individuals as well as externally, also taking in consideration those around us.**

Let's see an example: I get home and the children are jumping on my bed, they haven't done their homework and I immediately get upset and rebuke them. I start to prepare the dinner and I expect them to sit at the table when I say so, so we can eat as a family. But instead, they start complaining I'm boring, cranky, and they start saying: 'I'm not hungry', and they don't like what I prepared. I get really angry now and send them to their room.

What may have happened here?

First of all, I should take a moment to reflect about my own mental state and emotions: **How am I doing when I'm going to interact with my children?** I'm probably feeling tired, some difficult things happened throughout the day at the office, I spent more time than I was planning on traffic and all I was thinking of was getting home quickly so I could rest. I was hoping to find everything ready for our regular routine. But I get home and it's war zone, which makes my expectations collapse and that activates my anger or frustration.

I tend to blame my children for whatever is wrong. I complain they're messy, inconsiderate and disobedient. I get home with my expectation that they're willing to obey, that they have finished their homework and eat when I say so. But, they've also had their different experiences throughout the day. They also have feelings and a state of mind that has been affected or influenced by their experiences earlier that day.

It may be that your children are used to you getting home around 5:00 pm. But that day, you got home at 7:00 pm, and the routine got changed for everyone. They waited to play with you for for 2 hours and now, instead of being able to spend some fun time with mom or dad they receive some scolding, they have to do homework now when no one is in the mood and add to that, they're supposed to eat dinner as a family with a good attitude, and by this time, you lost yours too.

This is what we mean when we say being aware of ourselves and the reality of our children. To be able to recognize and acknowledge there are things happening to me as the adult, that have an influence on how I see what's happening around me and how I respond to it. As well as my child's reality, understanding it also affects him and how he responds.

If we go a little further, let's say we go to a social event, like a birthday party, and it gets to the point when it's time to go. I tell my child and he starts one of those temper tantrums because he doesn't want to leave and his attitude gets on our nerves, but, why?

- 1- He's being disrespectful in public,
- 2- I'm self-conscious of what others may think of me, they'll say I let my child dominate me and I'm a bad parent.
- 3- He cannot talk to me like that, and deep down it also reminds us of when we were little. I used to get a bad spanking when I started a temper tantrum and I was certainly not allowed to talk to my parents like that. I couldn't even tell them how I was feeling.

So, what could be the ideal response?

Acknowledge:

- 1- Yes, he's being disrespectful and as a mother or father I feel humiliated and embarrassed.
- 2- Yes, he should not talk to me like that. Why don't you ask him to say it again with respect? (only if it hasn't escalated to a temper tantrum yet). Did you tell him a couple of minutes in advance that it was almost time to leave? Did you told him about the time you were going to leave before before the birthday party?
- 3- and Yes, when I was young I was not allowed to talk to my parents about my feelings, but I can choose to recognize that used to make me feel sad or sometimes afraid I couldn't connect with my parents. But now I have an opportunity to teach something else to my child.

**Acknowledge your son is having a hard time, he doesn't know how to handle the situation and much less his feelings, and he needs your help to do so.**

Many people would focus in a moment like this to prove his/her authority and seek his child to obey by causing fear. But this would be a mistake. Our main focus is to keep the connection as we teach. That after we correct or discipline them, we all feel content and know we are loved. And take notice, content is not the same as happy.

*Remember, discipline doesn't always mean spanking or punishment, it means in his root to teach, to make a disciple.*

We must seek to understand why he's reacting the way he's doing it. First I observe his physical state, so we can respond with compassion and understanding. Is he tired, angry, feeling lonely or rejected?, is he hungry or thirsty?. Then I check my own physical state, so I'm also aware of my reality and respond the best way

possible. I may have the opportunity to fix it or wait a moment to fulfill my needs, but make sure you do. **It is our responsibility as the adults, to not react with one of our own grown up temper-tantrum.**

We want to help the child regulate, and we must help with that doing some 'co-regulation'. That means, if he cannot do it on his own, I, as the adult, do it with him by validating his feelings, help him calm down and then we do the correcting.

That moment of 'co-regulating' is part of connecting. Being able to stop for a second, acknowledge what's happening internally because of the situation and face it. If you notice there's some behaviors of your child that overwhelms you constantly and intensely, talk to your husband or wife, a counselor, your spiritual leader or someone you trust that is able to guide you, help you with some tools and/or walk with you as you face and heal your own wounds.

We all have been hurt or wounded in the past, whether by our parents, siblings, relatives, colleagues or friends, and these wounds leave marks behind that influence how we see and respond to different circumstances. Sometimes our emotions make us see blurry and we're not able to think or respond in a healthy way. Sometimes as the adults we need a time out to calm and solve.

**We cannot take our children somewhere we haven't been.**

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## What does the Word say?

The word of God tells us to give all our cares and burdens to God, because He cares for us. But in order to do that, we must acknowledge there are some weights, and what are they, and recognize that He's the only one to completely sustain, heal and care for us.

*Give your burdens to the LORD, and he will take care of you.*

*Psalm 55:22*

God sent Jesus to earth, to become a man, and while He was here, he experienced pain, abuse, abandonment, rejection, etc., he came close to us when we couldn't reach him. To restore our relationship with God and give us life.

*God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*

*2 Corinthians 5:21*

*This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.*

*Hebrews 4:15*

As we choose to put our burdens at his feet and keep going. As we acknowledge Him as Savior and King, we have the privilege of having a relationship with our Heavenly Father, through Jesus. And at the same time we can be a reflection of that relationship with our children and/or the children we work with.

We pray that we may all acknowledge those areas that need to be healed, that we may receive that peace that only Jesus gives, and the perseverance and love, wisdom to understand, and perseverance while we connect and teach our children as we walk with them in their journey of healing.

May God bless you.

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