

# REACH

*Resource • Education • Advocacy • Crisis Intervention • Hope*

*Aspiranet and State of California Post-Adoption Support*



Hello Families,

The theme of our Summer newsletter focuses on the topic of correcting behavior and discipline. The word discipline itself means “to teach.” Discipline teaches children new skills, such as how to manage their behavior, solve problems, and deal with uncomfortable emotions. Discipline also helps children learn from their mistakes and teaches them socially appropriate ways to deal with emotions, such as anger and disappointment. Teaching our children new skills will take time. Repetition can begin to truly change the body’s response to stressors and provide the motor memory for new skills. Practicing skills (role playing) in moments of calm will help children recall skills in moments of dysregulation, and will increase their ability to manage and regulate their emotions and response to stress.

Play is the language of safety for a child. Keeping correction on a playful level can quickly turn around a potential situation before it rises to the next level. Oftentimes, just by watching our own tone of voice and body language, we can turn a situation in a positive direction. Try a playful moment with your child when they start to become dysregulated- and watch their face glow with delight. This will help their confidence grow and become more willing to learn. Of course, playfulness won’t always work out, because sometimes children progress quickly to a higher level of dysregulation- but keep trying! Our goal as parents, in these moments, is to get back into connection with our children. When they are calm and connected, we have reached the goal! This is how true relationship, healing, and growth will happen for our children.

We hope you find the information in this newsletter to be helpful and educational for your parenting journey. If you would like additional resources on the topics of correcting behavior or discipline, please contact a REACH social worker and one of us will be happy to assist you.

Best,

The REACH team



## State Summer 2023

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## Your REACH Support Team

**Sandra Genova, LCSW**  
Core Program Director  
[sgenova@aspiranet.org](mailto:sgenova@aspiranet.org)

**Tara Soria**  
Social Worker  
[tsoria@aspiranet.org](mailto:tsoria@aspiranet.org)

**Griselda Santillan Mejia**  
Social Worker  
[gsantillanmejia@aspiranet.org](mailto:gsantillanmejia@aspiranet.org)

151 E. Canal Dr.  
Turlock, CA 95380  
Ph: 209.669.2577  
Fax: 209.669.2593  
[aspiranet.org](http://aspiranet.org)

[reachadoptionhelp.org](http://reachadoptionhelp.org)



## Disciplining a Child Who Has Experienced Trauma

By Tara Soria, MA

**“The more healthy relationships a child has, the more likely he will be to recover from trauma and thrive. Relationships are the agents of change and the most powerful therapy is human love.”**

**—Bruce D. Perry**

### Connection Before Correction

When parenting a child who has experienced trauma or neglect, discipline can feel a bit like walking through a landmine. You don't know where to step safely to avoid a blow-up, but you know you have to take a step somewhere, right? All children need correction at one point or another as they grow. The key to disciplining a child who has experienced trauma is to keep your focus on building a healthy relationship that is deeply connected so the child feels safe receiving your correction.

When you shift your focus to shoring up a connection with that child before implementing a correction, you are communicating that the whole person of your child matters to you: that their behavior is a communication of a need and you are interested in meeting that underlying need.

### The Bank Account Metaphor

Think of your child's heart and brain as a bank. Building a secure connection with your child is like depositing cash into your child's relationship account. Make enough positive deposits into your child's relationship account to cover withdrawals made by painful memories of past trauma, by rough days at school, or by bad word choices your child makes at the dinner table. Recognize that, daily, the world around your child makes withdrawals that feel out of his control, and he needs to have a “nest egg” in that relationship account to cushion the blows.

### What Are The Positive Deposits I Should Make?

**Share power** – The idea behind “sharing power” with your child is that you are confident enough in your authority and role as the parent that you can share some of that power with your child who may be feeling powerless or out of control.

An easy way to share power right away is to begin offering choices. Keep the options limited and provide alternatives that are reasonable, actionable, and that you can live with, regardless of which option he chooses. For example, Johnny typically refuses the turkey and cheese sandwich you make, and it turns into a battle almost daily to get him to eat lunch. Tomorrow, before lunchtime arrives, offer Johnny a choice between turkey with cheese or peanut butter with his favorite jelly. Both options are easy, manageable, and pretty easy to accommodate.

**Balance the structure and the nurture** – It is likely that by this point in your parenting, you've learned the importance of a predictable routine and structured home. But, if you are parenting a child who has experienced trauma, you also need to provide plenty of soft, safe nurture in your relationship.

Each child experiences nurture differently, so observe what loving gestures and words your child responds well to and increase the incidences of that type of care. If your child is particularly wounded or having a difficult season, it's acceptable to tweak the balance more heavily toward the nurture for that time and swing the balance back when you sense he is rebounding. Similarly, if your child is struggling with changing schedules or the chaos that sometimes happens in a busy home, it might be time to tighten up some of the structure again.

**Establish some basic rules** – Every household needs basic rules to function. When parenting a child who has experienced trauma, it's imperative to keep those rules simple. They should be easy to remember and easy to implement. If your child has trouble remembering the rules, consider posting them in a couple of places around the home. We've all seen those artistic renditions of "In The Home, We..." and those can be helpful tools, especially if they are short, sweet, and to the point. For young children who are not yet reading, a social story or poster with pictures can be a great alternative.

**Be consistent and structured in enforcing those rules** – What rarely appears on those cute "family rules" wall art is the consequences that happen when a child does NOT comply with the rules. This is a big deal for our kids who have had chaotic or traumatic experiences. They need clearly stated consequences, and they need them applied consistently. This is an excellent opportunity to share power with your child! Sit together as a family and discuss what basic rules by which your household should live. Get their input on reasonable and implementable consequences when those rules are broken. In this conversation, remember the balance of structure and nurture. If you have to choose between the two, consider that choosing nurture in the enforcement of rules and consequences can be yet one more positive deposit into your child's relationship account.

**Give room and space for change** – It's hard, in the heat of the moment, to remember this but tell yourself frequently in calm moments that your child's challenging behaviors took time to develop. It will take time – and connection and nurture – to change those behaviors.

By telling yourself this in those good, connecting moments with your child, you are also depositing into your own relationship account. It's also hard, for most parents, to remember that we need cushioning against the withdrawals that get made from our relationship accounts daily.

**Feed and water the child** – Our kids need healthy fueling to function well. This is a preventative action you can take, every 2-3 hours, to be sure that both your child's physical and relationship accounts are getting the deposits they need. The act of feeding our children who have experienced trauma is a nurturing one. Taking the time to meet that need sets them up for success while giving them the energy they need to make it through the day.

### **Try One Deposit at a Time**

The time to discipline your child with this shift of building a connection before implementing correction might feel unwieldy and overwhelming at the start. Take it easy on yourself and consider choosing to "master" just one or two of the ideas offered. Once you feel confident that a new skill is becoming second nature to you, then try out another suggestion and add it to your toolbox. Before long, your methods of disciplining your child will match more naturally with your newly shifted focus, and it won't feel awkward anymore. Your child's relationship account will be in growth mode, and you'll find your new groove together.

If you are interested in more information about parenting a child who has experienced trauma, check out [Creating a Family's "Practical Guide to Parenting a Child Who Has Been Exposed to Trauma."](#)

Source: [www.jockeybeingfamily.com](http://www.jockeybeingfamily.com)



## TBRI®'s Correcting Principle

By Fernando Aquino, MSW

**“When we make mistakes and repair them with our children, our kids often learn more than if we had never made the mistake in the first place. That is good news for this imperfect caregiver!”**

**- Dr. David Cross**

Correcting behavior can be difficult and cause power struggles between a parent and child. TBRI®, Trust Based Relational Intervention, teaches us that correction through connection is a great way to establish expected behaviors. TBRI® incorporates Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) into strategies to enforce desired behaviors by creating a safe environment for the child and parent. Strategies include observing and recognizing behaviors and engagement and proactive strategies.

Observing and being aware of children's strengths and challenges helps establish a foundation of what behaviors need correcting or skill-building. Keeping in mind that behaviors are learned through past experiences and traumas and children's behaviors are the product of adapting to their environment. For children with trauma histories, this often looks like defiance, fear-based reactions, anxiety-based reactions, etc. Recognizing behaviors is a strategy used to

identify needs children may not be able to verbalize, which, therefore, go un-met. With each behavioral incident, a parent can ask, “What is the child really saying? What does this child really need?”

Engagement strategies through nurturing interactions can go a long way. Playing with children while respecting their boundaries adds a sense of increased felt safety. As a parent, you know the child is safe with you, but the child still needs to learn this for themselves. This "felt safety" can be developed by being attentive to a child's interactions and their physical, emotional, and biological needs. This includes building safe rituals for touch, play, and sensory needs. In addition, this creates a base for safe emotional regulation. Modeling these tools as a parent helps a child learn how to incorporate these strategies into their everyday life. However, these tools must be utilized daily and may not work the first time, but through repetition, reinforcement, and reassurance, learning occurs.

Proactive strategies are about teaching children social skills during calm times. These strategies help to avoid behavioral dysregulation or power struggles during difficult times. One example is the use

of behavioral scripts, such as "redos." Redos give a child a chance to practice the correct behavior without consequence. Parents can also model redos by reflecting on their own actions and identifying how they can redo an interaction. This sends the message that parents and adults can make mistakes too, and provide real-life examples of how to fix them. Some simple scripts to help a parent incorporate redos with a child are:

- "How about we both give that another try... I'll go first." (modeling expected/desired behavior)
- "Let's redo that because I want to be able to give you a high-five for getting it correct."
- "Whoa, how about you try that again?"

- With teens, attempt using terms like... "Take 2", "Rewind", "Try Again", or "Do over".

Through implementing these strategies, parents can help their children learn felt safety and how to regulate their behaviors. For more information, please visit [www.child.tcu.edu](http://www.child.tcu.edu).

Sources:

<https://www.sac.edu/StudentServices/Counseling/TeacherEd/SiteAssets/Pages/Workshop-Power-points-and-Materials/TBRI%20Principles%20and%20Practices.pdf>

<https://nurturing-change.org/blog/f/correcting-behavior-through-redos>

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## Showing Respect Activity

By Beth Hurlbert, LMFT

Showing respect for ourselves and others is a skill we all need to practice. Role-playing is a great way to practice this skill. Have fun with role-playing and connecting with your child while practicing a great skill.

To demonstrate showing respect for personal space, use a hula hoop. Step inside the hula hoop, holding it about waist high. Explain to your child the hula hoop shows how much personal space we should give people and that we should not enter their personal space without permission. Explain that asking permission to enter someone's personal space shows respect. With the hula hoop in place, demonstrate both not having respect and showing respect. Demonstrating no respect would be entering your child's personal space without permission and hugging them or touching them without their permission. Afterwards say, "Good showing no respect." Then re-do the scenario with respect by asking them "May I give you a hug?" If they say yes, you can hug them, if they say no, you can respond with something like, "Ok, maybe next time." Afterward say, "Good showing respect." Then switch

and have your child practice no respect/respect. Take turns showing no respect/respect with personal space. Always end with showing respect.

Another way to demonstrate no respect/respect is with personal property. Have your child pick an item. With no respect, you will grab the item without asking permission from them. Say "Good showing no respect." Then re-do the scenario by asking if you may have the item. They can respond yes or no. If they say yes, wait for them to hand you the item. If they say no respond with, "Ok, maybe later." Say "Good showing respect." Then switch and have your child practice no respect/respect. Take turns with the role-playing. Always end with showing respect.

Through role-play, you are helping your child to practice a skill in a fun way and their brain is in a state to learn. After doing this activity with your child, when there is a situation when your child does something without respect you can simply ask them to try again with respect and they will know what is expected of them.

## BOOK REVIEW:

**No-Drama Discipline** by Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. and Tina Payne Bryson, PH.D.

By Elizabeth Hanson, MA

In this book, authors Dr. Siegel and Dr. Payne explore discipline. As they introduce the book, they have us think about the word “discipline” and how most people associate this word with punishment or consequences. However, “discipline” comes from the Latin word *disciplina*, which means teaching, learning, and giving instruction. From the inception of the English language, “discipline” has meant “to teach.” Dr. Siegel and Dr. Payne postulate that there are two goals in *No-Drama Discipline*. The first goal is to get our kids to cooperate and do the right thing. The second goal is to focus on instructing our children in ways that develop skills and the capacity to handle challenging situations, frustrations, and emotional storms in a resilient way.

In Chapter 1, Dr. Siegel and Dr. Payne suggest that instead of being reactive in our parenting, we should be intentional. Making conscious decisions based on principles we’ve thought about and agreed on. They suggest that rather than reacting and giving an immediate consequence we should reflect. Rather than get angry and get dramatic we should reduce the drama and strengthen the relationship with our children.

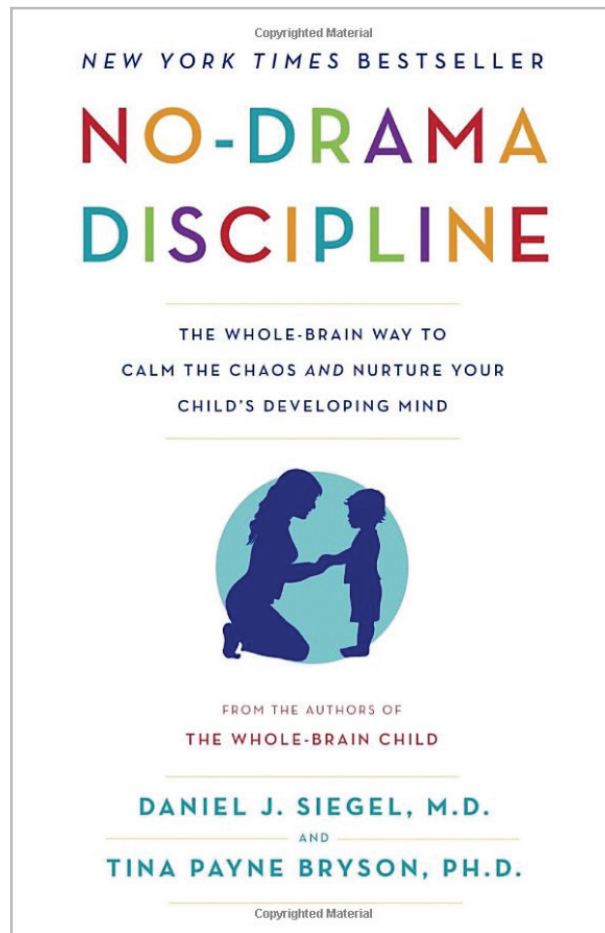
There are three questions we must ask ourselves: Why did my child act this way? What lesson do I want to teach in this moment? How can I best teach this lesson? This, according to the authors, takes us out of automatically reacting with a consequence and moves us toward teaching lifelong lessons that will

build character and prepare our kids for making good decisions in the future.

As we delve further into the book, Chapter 3 infers that connection is the key; connection moves children from reactivity to receptivity. The essential reminder is that children's brains are complex. The brain is broken down into functions, and each part of the brain has a specific role in how children think in their daily lives. The authors state that how particular circuits in the brain are activated determines the nature of our mental activity, ranging from perceiving sights and sounds to abstract thought and reasoning. This is where the connection is made from this book to the book *Whole-Brain Child*, written by these same authors.

As they wrap up the book, the authors state it simply: “R-E-D-I-R-E-C-T” and “Keep Calm and Reconnect.” When we use the heat of the moment behaviors as teaching moments, and stay calm while redirecting, we help our children reconnect. Lastly, there are four messages of hope. First, there is no magic wand. Second, your kids benefit even when you mess up. Third, you can always reconnect. And fourth, it’s never too late to make a positive change.

There is no one size fits all approach to parenting and this book identifies a different approach that can be used. The book provides resources for the whole family to use and even a cheat sheet that can be put up on your refrigerator so that other members can apply these techniques as you change from drama to *No-Drama Discipline*.



# Virtual Parent Education and Support Groups

## Parent Support and Education Group (English):

**Thursday, 7/27/23 • 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

**Thursday, 8/24/23 • 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

**Thursday, 9/28/23 • 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.**

Please RSVP to Tara Soria ([tsoria@aspiranet.org](mailto:tsoria@aspiranet.org)) for location information.

## Parent Support and Education Group (Spanish):

**Wednesday, 7/26/23 • 9:30-11:30a.m.**

**Wednesday, 8/23/23 • 9:30-11:30a.m.**

**Wednesday, 9/27/23 • 9:30-11:30a.m.**

This group is held on Zoom. Please RSVP to Griselda Santillan Mejia ([gsantillanmejia@aspiranet.org](mailto:gsantillanmejia@aspiranet.org)) for the Zoom link.

## Parent Café:

**Thursday, 7/20/23 • 10:00-11:30 a.m.**

**Thursday, 8/17/23 • 10:00-11:30 a.m.**

**Thursday, 9/21/23 • 10:00-11:30 a.m.**

Flyers will be emailed prior to the Parent Cafe. Please RSVP to Tara Soria ([tsoria@aspiranet.org](mailto:tsoria@aspiranet.org)) for the Zoom link.

Some groups are being held via Zoom at this time.

Flyers will be sent out prior to each group with details to join.

If you'd like to be added to the invite list, please contact us!





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**Fresno Regional Office**  
1330C E. Shaw Ave., Fresno, CA 93710  
559.243.8200  
[www.childsworld.ca.gov](http://www.childsworld.ca.gov)



## REACH Post-Adoption Support Services

**REACH offers services in Madera, Mono, Mariposa & San Benito Counties:**

**Monthly Educational/Support Groups** – Monthly meetings where families are able to receive education/training and meet other adoptive families in the community. Please check with each respective site to learn if licensing or certification hours are provided.

**Quarterly REACH Newsletter** – Quarterly newsletters filled with adoption articles, local trainings, book reviews, on-line resources and more.

**Educational Workshops and Trainings** – A variety of workshops and trainings are made available in Madera and San Benito Counties.

**REACH Library** – The REACH library is open and available for book review and check outs during the monthly support groups or by appointment.

**Case Management** – REACH clients are provided with information, resource referral or other assistance as needed. Although Case Management Services are generally provided via telephone, special arrangements for face to face case management can be arranged.

**Crisis Counseling** – Crisis intervention is available. Please contact our REACH staff for this support.