

Why Behavior Starts in the Body

Notice the need. Adjust the setting. Return to the skill.

PAUSE: What is the body or environment telling us before I interpret this behavior?

1 NOTICE THE MOMENT

TBRI® CONNECTING + EMPOWERING

Look for changes in energy, attention, movement, voice, and tolerance. Observe without assigning a motive.

Try: “This seems harder right now. What are you noticing?”

2 CHECK A BODY NEED

TBRI® EMPOWERING: PHYSIOLOGICAL

Ask about food, water, sleep, movement, and comfort. Invite the youth and caregiver to name what helps.

Try: “Would water, a snack, or a short reset help you start?”

3 ADJUST THE ENVIRONMENT

TBRI® EMPOWERING: ECOLOGICAL

Consider noise, light, crowding, transitions, and predictability. Offer one realistic adjustment.

Try: “Let’s move somewhere quieter and make a plan.”

4 RETURN TO THE SKILL

TBRI® CONNECTING + CORRECTING

Keep the appropriate expectation. Once ready, coach the next step or practice a redo.

Try: “We still need to finish. What is the first small step?”

YOUNGER CHILD

AFTER SCHOOL

A child erupts when homework begins.

Check: Food, water, and transition time. Try a snack and predictable quiet reset, then begin together.

MORNING ROUTINE

A child stalls while getting dressed.

Check: Sleep, clothing comfort, and too many directions. Simplify the sequence; keep the departure plan.

TEEN

FAMILY CONVERSATION

A teen goes silent or leaves the room.

Check: Overload and privacy. Offer a short break or quieter place, then agree when to return.

TASK REFUSAL

A teen resists starting a chore.

Check: Fatigue, hunger, and timing. Ask what would help; choose a realistic start time and follow through.

COACH THE CAREGIVER

Ask: “When is this hardest? What do you notice about sleep, food, sensory demands, or transitions?” Choose one change together, then revisit what the youth needs to learn.

THIS WEEK’S PRACTICE

Pick one recurring difficult moment. Ask about one body or environmental need, try one small adjustment, and observe whether engagement changes. Share what you learned in huddle.

TBRI® EMPOWERING PRINCIPLES | PREPARE THE BODY AND SETTING

Physiological: food, water, sleep, sensory needs, movement, regulation skills. **Ecological:** routines, transitions, predictability, and a safer setting. **Connecting:** ask and listen. **Correcting:** teach once the youth can engage.

CLINICAL GUARDRAIL

Do not assume every behavior has a physical cause or delay a safety response. Do not withhold food or water as a consequence or force sensory input. New or concerning physical symptoms require appropriate medical assessment; follow FITT safety and crisis procedures when risk rises.

THE BODY IS PART OF THE STORY. ASK BEFORE YOU ASSUME.