

How to Translate Tricky Behaviors and Connect

Mirror neurons in our brain “read” what others are thinking and feeling. They help us understand those around us and were developed for connection and survival.

When I Am

Attention Seeking
 Running
 Stealing, Hoarding, or Gorging
 Bored
 Self-Injuring

I Need

To Feel Connected, Accepted, & Loved
 To Feel Safe & Secure
 To Have Some Say or Control in My Life
 To Have Purpose in Life
 To Feel Less Isolated or Trapped

Children need the attention of caring adults. If this is not available, they develop a belief that “negative attention is better than no attention”.

Everyone needs to feel they have a voice in what goes on in their lives.

Having a sense of belonging and purpose releases **dopamine**, a hormone for connection and pleasure. This helps to heal the effect of past traumas.

Boredom gives time for the “worry network” to kick in.

Self-injury occurs when the person is unable to recognize connection with others and the world around them.

Reflections:

The following are questions to consider when a student is exhibiting challenging behavior:

1. “What is the underlying need?” “What are they asking for?”
2. “Where can they make decisions in their life that are meaningful to them?”
3. “In what areas of their life do they have control?”
4. Ask yourself, “How do I connect with each student in my classroom?”

Finally, consider the quote by Bruce Perry, “There is no more effective neurobiological intervention than a safe relationship”



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Resources

Videos:

- How to translate tricky behaviors and connect by Mary Vicario
- Baltimore students get meditation, not detention- CBS

Books:

- *Beyond Consequences, Logic, and Control: A love-based approach to helping children with severe behaviors.* By Heather T. Forbes, LCSW and B. Bryan Post
- *Wired to Connect: The surprising link between brain science and strong, healthy relationships* by Amy Banks, M. D.

Special thanks to our funders and partners who helped create this video series and accompanying materials:

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