

# TCI – Module Thirteen Approaches

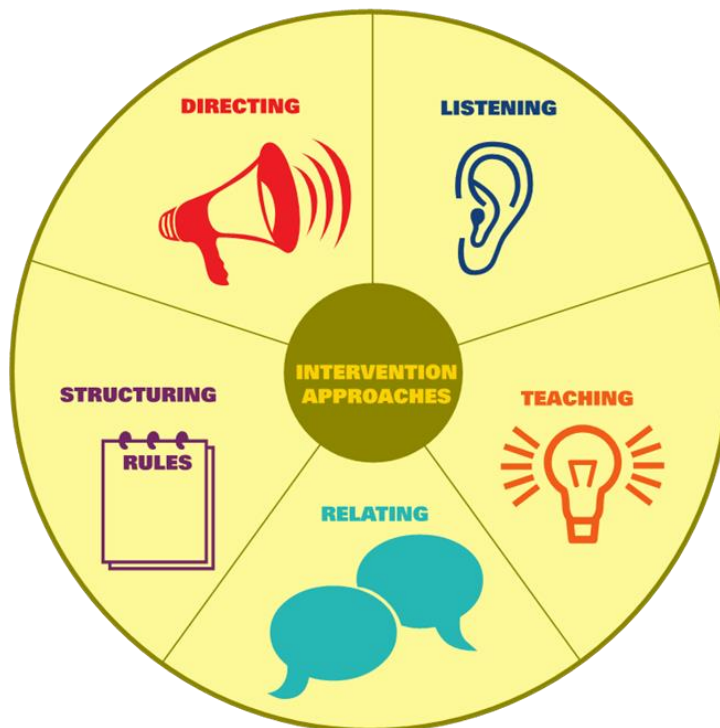


## Intervention Approaches: How do I best respond?

### Personal Beliefs and intervention Strategies

An individual’s philosophy of how to best will influence decision-making in crisis situations. The strategy chosen is often a reflection of personal attitudes and beliefs about how people change their behaviour.

There are many ways to intervene in a given situation. Every one of the strategies that will be mentioned can be effective if it used in the appropriate situation and meets the needs of the child at the moment. No single approach is sufficient in every situation. Different ways of working with children are more or less effective given the child, the adult, and the situation. Being aware of our personal beliefs, what the child needs, when and where the situation is occurring, what the goal is for the child, and what the most important concern at the time is should all be considered when choosing an interventions strategies.



### Structuring



This strategy focuses on providing a safe, secure, predictable environment for the child, which in turn, helps build attachments. This approach is based on maintaining the routines and structure of the home and relying on this structure during difficult times of the day.

Children who need clear and consistent expectations in order to feel safe and cared for respond well to an emphasis on the structure. These children feel secure when they are in setting with predictable and consistent routines and expectations designed to meet their basic needs.

Using structure is a very noninvasive, low-level intervention and is very effective in preventing crisis situation.

### **Listening**

This intervention relies on a trusting relationship, empathy and listening skills. When we take a non-judgmental supportive role, focusing on the feelings that the frustrated and angry child is experiencing, the stress the child feels is often decreased by being listened to and understood.

It is through the nonjudgmental, accepting, uncritical listening approach that the child receives support in handling embarrassing or difficult feelings without fear of reproach or criticism. The goal of using the listening approach is to help children identify and cope with painful feelings and situations, helping them learn to regulate their emotions through this co-regulation strategy.

This is an effective approach for those situations where the child needs support and encouragements in order to realise “I’m ok despite my behaviour or feelings”. This intervention can be used to avoid a power struggle and adding any fuel to the fire. Instead of responding to the child’s works or behaviour, the listening approach responds to the emotions and feelings underlying the behaviour.

### **Directing**



The directing approach is helpful in situations where the child may have difficulty controlling their behaviour. The adult takes charge of the potentially volatile situation and brings a sense of control and order to a world that may sometimes appear chaotic and unpredictable to the child with poor impulse control. This is useful when a behaviour is potentially dangerous or extremely inappropriate and the child has the ability to substitute a more appropriate behaviour.

## Relating

When we are in a caring relationship with the child, the child looks up to us and will be more likely to listen to what we have to say. We become more effective role model, as the child tries out new behaviours or attitudes with our encouragement. We can use this approach for those children who may be more withdrawn or need more encouragement, to take an interest in them.

## Teaching

This approach focuses on helping children learn from their experiences and uses situations in everyday life, as well as crisis situations, as opportunities for children to learn, change and grow. New ways of coping and problem solving are learned through experiences. Children are given the opportunity to explore new behaviours and to try out things on their own and then to come back and discuss them with the adult. This approach also includes mutual-decision making by getting the child involved in their care.

## Negotiating Expectations



Rules = safety

Expectations = reasonable, consistent, developmentally appropriate and clear.

The idea is to understand the concerns about the expectations and negotiate a way to address the concerns to still get the expectation met. This is an example of a teaching approach and may take time– this may be difficult for some children so we do discuss giving time for children to think and process.

Generating clear and reasonable expectations is an important part of caring for children. Even when the expectations are reasonable, consistent, developmentally appropriate and clear children sometimes still have difficulty meeting the expectations. When we try and enforce the expectations and encourage or even demand the child comply with the request, this can trigger a crisis for the child.

It is important to find ways to avoid these confrontations and help children meet expectations. One way to do this is by using active listening skills which we have learn through the program, to try and understand the child’s concerns about the expectations and then negotiate a way to address these concerns and till get the expiation met.

One way to negotiate expectations is to follow the steps:

**Express your concerns**

“I’m worried that this happens...”

“This is what concerns me about what happens...”

**Actively listen to the response**

“Tell me how you see this.”

“What’s this all about?”

**Problem-solve**

“What will make it easy for you to do this?”

“How can I help you with this?”

**Summarize and agree to the solution**



“Tell me again what our plan is.”

“Let’s meet in a week to see how it’s working.”

## Consequences

### Using Consequences

Giving children choices about how they can meet expectations allows them an opportunity to make decisions, try out new behaviours and experience the results of their decisions. This is an opportunity for children to learn that along with the power of making decisions comes the responsibility of handling consequences, good or bad.

We can help children feel in control when we allow them to make choices and decisions. One way to avoid a power struggle is to give children choices about how they can meet expectations. It is important to offer a range of choices that are desirable and realistic. Giving children choices helps them learn that they have power to make decisions and that we respect their decisions.

### The Truth about Consequences

When we become frustrated and upset in situations, we may resort to finding the right reward or punishment that can magically change the child’s behaviour. We seem stuck on the idea that if the reward is attractive enough or the punishment is severe enough, it is possible to get the child or young person to behave as demanded.

In one sense this does work, if the child or young person is afraid enough or motivated enough they will try and comply and do what is asked, nothing more, nothing less. They will do it as long as they see the reward or to avoid the punishment. They will be temporarily obedient and compliant. This in turn will be their motivation. ***The game becomes about: How can I do this and not get caught?***

This type of approach will impede the child’s natural desire to master new skills and develop competencies. When discussing and using consequences it is helpful to look at what it is we want to teach and what the long term goals are for the child.



***Punishing children who have been abused or neglected, have low self-worth and low self-efficacy only devalues them and reinforces their feelings of inadequacy and rejection.***

### Guidelines for Consequences

Consequences happen after the fact. If a child is to learn from consequences (positive or negative) the learning occurs after the event and must be learnt well enough that the child:

- a. Can remember it
- b. Be motivated by it
- c. Use alternative behaviours the next time in the same situation presents itself

**Natural Consequences** to occur whenever possible is always the best way to learn, as these are true the results of one's actions. This is sometimes not possible with children since natural consequences can often be dangerous or slow to come and have no immediate meaning to the child.

Applying natural consequences – no nothing they occur as a result of an action or inaction of the child.

**Logical Consequences** when designing consequences for any particular misbehaviour, there are key issues to consider. The following guidelines are important to consider:

1. **Consequences should relate to the misbehaviour:** The child needs to understand the connection between the behaviour and the consequences.
2. **Consequences should be proportionate to the misbehaviour:** Small transgressions should be met with small consequences. The opportunity for learning is lost when the misbehaviour and consequences are out of balance.
3. **The consequences must be enforceable:** We must be willing and able to follow through with the consequence. Once the child is told of a particular choice, we must follow through with unless it is out of proportion or was started in anger.
4. **The consequence should be presented calmly, without anger or blame:** We are neutral agent administering the consequence for which ever choice the child has made. This is not personal. The child had a choice, made it and here is the consequence.

### Caring Gesture

When a child/ young person is experiencing stress and feeling anxious, our presence can increase or decrease their stress. A caring gesture communicates “I care about you and you are important to me”



and will only work if the child believes that you care about them. Caring gestures can be verbal (“I care about what happens to you”) and non-verbal (a pat on the arm).

### **Hurdle Help**

When a child/young person is struggling to keep their emotions and behaviours in check, it does not take much to trigger a “fight, flight or freeze” response. It is better to assist the child/young person to regulate their emotions, self soothe or meet the expectation in the moment rather than laying down the limits and insisting on certain behaviours. Hurdle help means helping the child/young person with the first steps of an overwhelming task.

### **Redirection and Distractions**

Redirecting or distracting the child/young person or group by changing the activity may be enough to help them return to normal functioning. Using this strategy you are helping the child/ young person regain control of their emotions, switching from the emotional brain to the thinking brain.

### **Proximity**

Means nearness. Sometimes our presence can have a calming effect on the child/young person if they perceive us as caring and supportive.

### **Directive Statements**

If there is a trusting relationship that exists between the adult and child/young person then this strategy could be used to provide them with clear guidance on what to do next. Brain function can impair the child/young person’s ability to respond in a stressful situation or when they are upset.

### **Time Away**

If a child/ young person has good self-regulation skills this technique could be used in order to ask them to go to a quiet area if the environment is too stimulating. If they do not have good self-regulation skills they may need a caring and supportive adult to help them co-regulate in a quiet area.



**Details of this topic are covered in the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Families (TCIF) Student Workbook 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.**