

Trust-Based Relational Intervention® (TBRI®): Life Value Terms

Life Value Terms are scripts used in developing healthy relationships. Life Value Terms differ from Life Skills, in that they give caregivers and children *language* to use for understanding, communicating, and learning valuable skills. Essentially, Life Value Terms are the *language of a trauma-informed culture*. This language not only helps children develop a “voice” in an appropriate and respectful manner, but it also provides caregivers with tools for engaging children in healthy communication within relationships.

"Gentle and Kind"

Due to sensory issues, violent histories, and fragile brain chemistries, many children from hard places are unaware when they are not being gentle. Using the term, “Gentle and Kind,” “Be kind,” or “Would you try that again more gently?” reminds children to soften their touch, their tones of voice, their facial expressions, and their attitudes.

"Askin' or Tellin'"

When a child needs something from an adult but asks with a demand - even without the intent of disrespect - such as, “Give me that water bottle,” the caregiver can playfully respond to the child with, “Are you askin’ or tellin’?” Playfully responding this way nudges the child toward understanding the differences between respect and disrespect.

"Using Words"

Behavior is the language of children’s unmet needs. While it is important for caregivers to be detectives of the messages behind behaviors, prompting children to “use your words” teaches them to express their needs and feelings in a healthier way than by lashing out or withdrawing.

"With Respect"

Simply saying, “Try that again with respect,” or “Let’s remember to treat our friends with respect” encourages children to be mindful and respectful in their tones of voice, facial expressions, words, and body language.

"With Permission and Supervision"

It is imperative for children to learn that adults are in charge and responsible for keeping them safe. By responding, “With permission and supervision, you may...” when children ask to perform certain activities with supervision helps them learn to trust that adults will keep them safe, respond to their requests, and meet their needs.

"Listen and Obey"

Children need to be encouraged and rewarded for listening and obeying directives from caregivers. If an adult gives a child a directive, and the child hesitates to follow through, the adult may say, “Listen and obey the first time, please.” If a child follows the directive the first time given, the adult may say, “That was great listening and obeying the first time. Great job, buddy!”

"Accepting 'No'"

When some children hear “no,” they believe that their needs will never be met, and that they have no voice or value. Adults are encouraged to try giving more “yeses” than “nos” so children learn that they are heard and valued. When “no” is necessary, however, try praising children for accepting “no” before they realize the denied request. Example: “No, we cannot do that right now...(very quickly) Wow, good job accepting no!”