



The **Human Connection**
Improving People to People Interactions
E-T-A™ TRAINING CONCEPTS

Teaching Bravery:

Fostering Autonomy and Resilience
in Children and Teens with Intense Fears and Anxiety

Many children experience a heightened level of fear and anxiety on a daily basis. They feel a constant sense of threat even in the most non-threatening environment or circumstances. Often their reaction to the perceived threat is anger, frustration, or hypersensitivity to the least request or simple demand placed on them. Their behavior can, at times, be seen as oppositional or defiant or certainly highly reactive. The constant anxiety often interferes with their school work and/or relationship with peers.

This training session is designed to help parents and professionals recognize and deal with symptoms of extreme anxiety in children and adolescents. It outlines a step-by-step process to help children recognize and overcome their fears by using skills, strategies and fear reducing techniques. It provides guidelines for adults working or living with these children to help them develop a sense of confidence and bravery where fear and anxiety had once been a constant companion.

Participants will learn how to:

- Recognize the subtle signs of constant fear and anxiety.
- Determine if oppositional/defiant behavior is extreme anxiety versus belligerence.
- Draw a simple map of the brain that helps children recognize what is happening when they are unable to make a good choice.
- Recognize the signs of post-traumatic stress reactions
- Help children discover internal and external safety zones
- Teach children body awareness, positive self-talk and other resiliency skills
- Develop of step-by-step plan to move children from paralyzing fear to normal activities
- Define bravery as an action that is not dependent on a feeling of strength
- Praise and acknowledge small progress in the development of emotional bravery
- Recognize the difference between positive support and over-protectiveness or enabling.

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- I. Behavioral symptoms of intense fear or anxiety
 - a. Hyper-sensitivity
 - b. Oppositional/defiance
 - c. “Immature” behavior
 - d. School aversion
 - e. Super shyness
 - f. Temper tantrums
 - g. Emotionally explosive

- II. The E-T-A process
 - a. The sensitivity of brain development
 - b. Emotional development vs.
 - c. Cognitive development
 - d. Choices versus impulses

- III. Post traumatic reaction vs. over-sensitivity
 - a. Beware of extreme over-reaction
 - b. How the body stores trauma
 - c. What to do when it doesn’t make sense
 - d. When trauma treatment is necessary

- IV. Creating safety
 - a. The effects of hyper-alertness on the body.
 - b. The need for para-sympathetic discharge
 - c. Helping children discover internal and external safety zones
 - d. Helping children articulate fears

- V. Teaching children body awareness and self-observation
 - a. Scanning the body for tension and anger reactions
 - b. Attending to breath and breathing practice
 - c. Present moment awareness
 - d. Self-soothing techniques

- VI. Teaching resiliency skills
 - a. Self-talk is powerful
 - b. Discuss the concept of bravery
 - c. Fear is a feeling---not a fact
 - d. Tolerating the discomfort

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- VII. Finding a substitute behavior
 - a. Changing is easier than stopping
 - b. Give them something to do
 - c. Develop a graduated plan
 - d. Provide incentives

- VIII. The Power of Praise
 - a. Shame increases fear/anxiety
 - b. Acknowledge small progress
 - c. Praise the action not the person
 - d. Affirm “brave”, “tough” “smart”

- IX. Reassurance---When it helps and when it hurts
 - a. Too much reassurance creates fear
 - b. Affirm---“You can handle it.”
 - c. Beware of over-compensating
 - d. A little nudge can be reassuring

- X. Sustaining change
 - a. Setbacks happen
 - b. Factors that precipitate setbacks
 - c. Reassurance review and resiliency
 - d. Patience=progress