

Reframing Children's Behaviors

By Caelan Kuban, LMSW

When children's behaviors are challenging it is helpful to understand how the parent may see it and then provide them with an alternate way to view the behavior. This is often the first step in helping parents respond to behaviors in ways that are more strength-based and trauma informed.

Whining: A parent may see the behavior as, "She is doing it to get my attention. She is being manipulative." Another way to frame this behavior is to say, "She is trying to practice expressing her needs. She is showing great control over frustrations and lack of words to tell you what is really making her upset."

Saying "NO" and testing limits: A parent may see the behavior as, "She is so oppositional and defiant." Another way to frame this behavior is to say, "She is becoming an independent person; she is trying to tell you that she has a mind of her own."

Negative behaviors like pushing, hitting, biting: A parent may see the behavior as, "She thinks if she throws a fit she will get her way; she is mean." Another way to frame this behavior is to say, "She is telling you that she has lost control and needs your help."

Displaying new fears: A parent may see the behavior as, "She is always afraid of something, I can't take her anywhere." Another way to reframe this behavior is to say, "She is starting to think about lots of new things and sometimes that gets scary."

Reference

Hall, N., Dip, C., Kulkami, C. & Seneca, S. (2008). *Your guide to nurturing parent-child relationships: Positive parenting activities for home visitors*. Brookes Publishing: Baltimore, MD.

About The Author

Caelan Kuban, LMSW, is Director of The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children (TLC), a program of the Starr Institute for Training. Caelan provides training across the country to professionals working with traumatized children and families and has been called an excellent teacher and passionate trainer providing workshops where participants leave feeling energized and inspired to work with at-risk and traumatized youth.

As a Certified Trauma Consultant-Supervisor, she provides trauma assessment and short-term trauma intervention for children and adolescents utilizing trauma informed and evidence based practices including TLC's SITCAP® model.

Caelan has coordinated and completed two evidence-based research studies; Children of Today with at-risk school-aged children in Taylor, Michigan and Restoring Hope and Resiliency with adjudicated youth in Ohio and Georgia. Both studies showed outstanding, statistically significant results across trauma subscales and mental health categories. Caelan is the author of *Zero to Three: A Handbook of Trauma Interventions*, *One Minute Trauma Interventions*, *A Time for Resilience*, and numerous other articles, in such journals as the School Social Work Journal, Children and Schools, Residential Treatment for Children and Youth, and Reclaiming Children and Youth.

Caelan is currently pursuing her doctorate in clinical psychology at Cal Southern University. For more information about The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children visit www.starrtraining.org/tlc. To contact Caelan directly, send an email to ckuban@tlcinst.org.