

**“Blessed be the God of all comfort who comforts us in all afflictions so that we may be able to comfort others who are afflicted with the comfort we have received from God” (2 Cor.1:3-4).**

Are you able to comfort others with God’s comfort?

As I begin the follow up phase with each of the groups I train, it’s interesting to see that the questions that come up are the same. It doesn’t matter if the organization is in Russia, Peru, Colombia, Bolivia, Honduras or the U.S. For the most part, they boil down to how to handle aggression. The question goes something like this, “I love all the principles you teach us. I’m really working at connecting with this child, but what do I do when they \_\_\_\_\_ [some aggressive behavior]?”

The answer to this question requires looking at the various nuances involved, and it does not easily fit into a “one size fits all” answer. However, there are some intriguing universal principles that apply to every situation. I want to highlight one, the principle of regulation or the ability to bring oneself back into balance (physically or emotionally). **This has huge spiritual and relational ramifications.**

The ability to regulate our bodies and emotions is learned, **not** innate. **If you have not been sufficiently regulated by another, you cannot regulate yourself.** Pause here to think about this. Someone else must first regulate things, like your body temperature, food intake, and emotional regulation. Your many distresses as a child must be consistently comforted by an attuned caregiver for your brain and body to be able to do this on your own as an adult. **This is a physiological reality and not something that can be disciplined into or out of a child.** This principle was mind-blowing to me and has taken several years to really understand. I had always assumed that the ability to “control yourself” (especially emotionally) was innate. Therefore, it made sense for me to think, “You are 8, 12, or 15 years old, so quit whining and straighten up!”



**TBRI Training in Medellin, Colombia**

There is a world of difference in realistic expectations between kids who have received this type of consistent care and those who have not. Understanding the neurological and physiological underpinnings of behavior has been a game changer for me. If a child has not received consistent and warm regulation by another, then they are **incapable** of regulating their own bodies and emotions.

You know the kids I serve, those with the all too familiar heartbreaking stories of abuse, abandonment and neglect. The “Ah Ha” moment came as I began to focus on helping them regulate and comforting them, instead of punishing the behavior. Over time, as they began to experience being regulated by another, their brains and bodies responded, and they were able to begin to do this for themselves. It really is extraordinary, but then, God has already told us this.

Fear, anxiety and resulting aggression are things the kids I serve wrestle with, things I personally wrestle with, and things increasingly prevalent in our society. The Lord is highlighting to me how often in His Word He talks about **His** comfort, **His** peace and tells us to “Fear not.” The 2 Cor. 1:3-4 quote at the top of this letter is one of my favorites. As I understand this verse, the Lord is inviting me to come to Him and allow the Holy Spirit to comfort (regulate) me in all my distresses. Then, **I will be able** to comfort others. The corollary is obvious. I cannot comfort others if I am not comforted. Rereading this verse again, I realize that not only am I supposed to receive comfort from Him, but also from those who have been comforted by Him. He always gives us a tangible, physical expression of Himself through people.



Comforting one another and helping each other meet our physical needs literally begins to heal each other (our brains and bodies). This is a very practical way to fulfill the command to love one another. Of course, the Great Neuroscientist knew this as He wove this into our beginning fabric. I want to grow in being this kind of person. I want to increasingly be filled with His comfort and be able to pass it on to others. Providing this training is one way I can do this. One participant was forced by her director to come to our initial training last October. She didn't really want to be there. But the Lord used the training to reveal to her the depth of her own unresolved trauma, as well as necessary steps of healing to take. It was so profound she told her director, ***“Before this training, what I did was just a job. What the Lord has done through this has changed my life. Now I want to take this training and do this for all the kids and others. The Lord has showed me this is no longer a job, it is my calling!”***

I also get to hear many stories of transformation in the kids they serve. As kids are comforted, they become calmer. Their aggressive behaviors become less. It's a win-win for everyone. Thank you for partnering with me in this journey!

For Comforting the Afflicted,

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