



## **Survival of the Nurtured: Teaching Students with Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD)**

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Survival of the Nurtured:

Teaching Students with Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD)

The social neuroscience of education has revealed that brains grow best in the context of supportive relationships, low levels of stress and through the creative use of pedagogies. We learn through communication that supports a sense of safety and security, and conveys meaning and relevance. But what if the adults that are meant to keep you safe are the source of your fear and pain? Students who have experienced abuse and neglect often appear to be “bad”, “spoiled” or “attention seeking”. In truth however, they are often deeply hurt, afraid and lonely. Although positive behaviour supports can be beneficial for these students, teaching must first focus on the development of ‘felt safety’ - building trust through structure and limit setting by an empathetic adult who models expectations of student social emotional learning. This is often a difficult challenge for teachers with students with complex needs. The Trauma Informed Positive Behaviour Support (TIPBS) program offers a framework of strategies based on interpersonal neurobiology research on the etiology of developmental trauma and reactive attachment disorder. In the Connect and Validate module of the TIPBS program, a practical, four step intervention provides teachers with strategies to successfully respond to these challenging students in the classroom. The implementation and sustainability of this intervention will be discussed through a whole-school approach that emphasises the roles and responsibilities of all members of the school in building an inclusive, trauma-informed community through compassionate and thoughtful relationships.