

Episode 11 - RTT Series – Neurological Coregulation

This podcast discusses the importance of coregulation in residential treatment settings for children who are emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally disorganized. Coregulation refers to the process where an adult's nervous system synchronizes with a child's, helping the child learn self-control and emotional regulation.

Coregulation starts from infancy when a baby's nervous system is linked with the mother's. Over time, babies learn to independently regulate their bodily functions, but they still rely on coregulation for emotional stability, and for learning how to organize thoughts, and regulate behaviors.

Human Beings use coregulation before they learn self-regulation. Self-regulation involves controlling the electrical and chemical activity within one's brain. It includes skills like reaction inhibition (thinking before acting) and stress tolerance (tolerating stressful situations).

Residential staff play a crucial role in teaching executive skills like reaction inhibition and stress tolerance to children in their care. They achieve this by actively engaging with the children, whether through play, games, daily chores, and all the other scheduled activities.

Some executive skills directly regulate behaviors, such as self-awareness and metacognition (thinking about one's own thoughts), while other executive skills organize thinking, such as planning and prioritizing. These skills are also developed through coregulation and practice.

Various activities, such as playing games, watching movies, and relaxation exercises, are all opportunities for coregulation. Staff should actively participate in these activities with the children, creating shared experiences that foster emotional and neurological coregulation.

Coregulation, coaching, and cheerleading by residential staff help children develop self-control, emotional stability, and cognitive executive skills. The goal is to gradually transition children from dependence on coregulation to independent self-regulation, ultimately preparing them to leave residential treatment with improved emotional and cognitive abilities.