

Do You Have an INTENSE Child?

The Intense Child defined

If you parent or teach an intense child you most likely have found that **traditional training and discipline techniques simply do not work to change this child's behavior.** In fact, when trying to curtail an out-of-bounds situation, it quickly becomes obvious that repeating yourself, making your voice louder, adding emotions to your interactions, grounding, and restricting freedoms, actually makes things much worse. Quite simply, every time you try a new approach, this child matches or exceeds your level of intensity with his own.

Where does intense behavior come from?

The brain of an intense child is equally intense. In fact, a PET scan of his brain would reveal activity which is less organized, faster, and more intense than the average brain. For these reasons, it responds differently to the environment and as a result we must learn its reactivity and assist in helping it reorganize.

Essentially, God designed the brain to find a match. **The brain must have the exterior environment that matches the interior brain's level of intensity in order to stay regulated.** For example, if you are a calm person you seek out a calm exterior environment to match your calm interior environment. You might be one to "recharge" by sitting with a book at the beach. Conversely, if your brain runs on high energy, you most likely are a thrill seeker- energized by lots of activity or people, which keeps you regulated and *feeling* regulated. **However, an intense brain is not only high energy- but also disorganized. Consequently the match it seeks doesn't always differentiate between positive and negative intensity.** That is why it can appear that the child seeks negative attention, when actually his brain is just looking for an intensity match. The brain seeks to stir things up, creating emotional explosions all around it to match its intensity, starved for a way to self-regulate but not succeeding.

Positively matching the brain's intensity IS possible!

Knowing that the brain's matching urge is NOT something the child is consciously sensing sets us completely free from blaming the child for negative behavior. (*You might need to read that first sentence again several more times and let its content thoroughly soak in.*) Grasping this vital paradigm shift, the focus now becomes learning to create situations where intensity connection produces calm, instead of chaos.

The key is to carefully plan for the intensity match to occur when things are going well, rather than when misbehavior has occurred. The strategy changes from giving a "reward" of emotional energy (too often- intensity demonstrated by wide eyes, loud voices, and big gestures) for unwanted behavior, to delivering emotional rewards for desired behavior. **Whenever something goes right, add intensity to your positive comment by making it very specific and adding the emotion it brings up in you.** For example, "Carl, I'm appreciating your choice to get along with your sister. Thanks for being **SO considerate!**" This becomes a much more emotionally charged message than "thanks" or "good job." **When authentically delivered with passion, it becomes just the emotionally charged match needed for the intense brain.** And when reward occurs, the behavior is likely to be repeated!

Need more pieces to solve your child's intensity? Take courage, there is help and hope. Unlocking the mystery of your child's INTENSITY could be a piece to your Parenting Puzzle!

To learn about parent coaching or for more training on this topic, contact Erin Blain at erin@solvingparentingpuzzles.com