



## **Carer Tip Sheet: Brain-Based Parenting in Crisis Moments**

### ***Staying Calm, Connected, and Effective When Emotions Run High***

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#### **Introduction**

When a teen is in crisis—whether yelling, shutting down, storming off, or lashing out—their thinking brain (prefrontal cortex) has gone offline, and their survival brain (amygdala) is running the show. In these moments, traditional discipline or reasoning won't work, because the brain literally can't process logic under stress. Brain-based parenting means understanding what's happening *neurologically*, and choosing strategies that calm the nervous system, re-establish safety, and preserve connection. You don't need to be perfect—you just need to be regulated. This tip sheet is here to guide you through it.

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#### **Brain-Based Parenting Strategies in Crisis Moments**

##### **1. Regulate Yourself First**

You are the external nervous system for the teen. If you're elevated, they will stay escalated. Breathe deeply, soften your body language, and speak slowly. Calm is contagious.

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##### **2. Drop Your Expectations Temporarily**

The goal is not to “fix” the behaviour right now—it's to restore safety. Don't try to teach, correct, or explain until you've both returned to calm.

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##### **3. Use Short, Safe, Reassuring Language**

Avoid questions or long explanations. Instead, try:

- “I'm here.”
- “You're safe.”
- “We'll get through this.”

These are more powerful than lectures when the survival brain is in charge.

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#### 4. 🚫 Don't Take It Personally

When teens are dysregulated, they might say hurtful things. Remind yourself: *"This is a trauma response, not a personal attack."* It's not about you—it's about their pain.

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#### 5. 🌱 Offer Predictable, Safe Choices

When the brain feels out of control, offering a simple choice helps the teen regain agency.

*"Do you want to cool off in your room or on the back deck?"*

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#### 6. 🌀 Use Nonverbal Co-Regulation

Sometimes words are too much. Try:

- Sitting nearby in silence
  - Keeping your tone low and slow
  - Offering water, a weighted blanket, or a calming object
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#### 7. ⌚ Wait for the Thinking Brain to Return

The prefrontal cortex needs time and calm to come back online. Don't rush the teen. Instead, follow up later with empathy and reflection—not shame or punishment.

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#### 8. 🗨️ Repair the Relationship After the Storm

Even if things got messy, repair is possible.

*"That was a tough moment. I'm still here. We'll keep figuring this out together."*

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#### 💖 Final Reminder

***You don't need to have all the right words. Your calm presence and willingness to stay connected—even when it's hard—are what truly shape healing.***



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## References – Brain-Based Parenting in Crisis Moments

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