



Evidence-Based Intervention: Bruce Perry's 3 Rs

Introduction

Developed by Dr. Bruce Perry, this neurodevelopmental framework outlines a **sequential approach** to supporting children and young people affected by trauma. It emphasises that **learning and reasoning are only possible when emotional and physiological regulation are achieved first**.

Purpose of Intervention

To guide adults in **responding to dysregulated behavior** in a way that promotes **emotional safety, connection, and cognitive engagement**. It helps shift from reactive discipline to **attuned, brain-based support**.

Target Audience

Children and young people who have experienced **trauma, adversity, or chronic stress**, particularly those who struggle with emotional regulation, relationships, or learning.

Who Can Deliver the Intervention

Any adult working with children including **teachers, caregivers, therapists, social workers**, preferably who understand the sequence and principles. No specialist qualification is required, but **trauma-informed awareness is essential**.

Session Structure

A **responsive approach based on 3 stages**:

- **Regulate**: Use sensory, attuned or calming strategies to help the child feel safe.
- **Relate**: Build connection through empathy, attunement, and trust.
- **Reason**: Once regulated and connected, engage in reflection, problem-solving, or learning.

Frequency and Duration

Used **flexibly and continuously** in moments of distress, transitions, or daily routines. The sequence may take minutes or weeks depending on the child's needs.

Key Principles

- **Sequential engagement**: Always regulate first.
- **Co-regulation**: Adults must be calm and attuned, co-regulation must come before self-regulation..
- **Relational safety**: Connection is the bridge to cognition.
- **Developmental sensitivity**: Tailor responses to the child's age and trauma history.

Training and Implementation

The 3Rs form the basis of much training in relation to trauma-responsive practice and is included as part of the trauma-informed training we offer in Psychology & Therapeutic Services.

Implementation usually involves:

- Staff reflection and coaching
- Embedding the 3 Rs into behaviour policies and relational practice



Evidence and Outcomes

- Supported by neuroscience and developmental psychology
- Reported to improve **emotional regulation, learning readiness, and relational trust**
- Reported to reduce **behavioural incidents** and **staff burnout**

Feedback

Educators and practitioners report:

- Greater **clarity in responding to distress**
- Improved **relationships with children**
- A shift from “fixing behaviour” to **understanding need**

Further Information and Resources

[The Three R's](#)

[The Neurosequential Network | neurodevelopment](#)