



# STRATEGY AREA #4: DEFICIT NOT DEFIANCE

Strategy Area #4 is going to help you tackle those “icky” behaviors, words and choices that you deal with every day. And we are going to deal with them in a way that helps them to dissipate because they are no longer needed.

Every day our children get tripped up by the impacts of the trauma they’ve endured. Yes, they experience a trigger or 2 or 3 or 4 or more and along the way those impacts of trauma keep them from being able to get back to baseline – feel safe.

What does that look like, you ask? Well, it is different for every child but this is where we see tantrums, foul language, breaking things, physically going after others, spitting, running around the house or even out the door, and on and on and on. Typically, the behaviors are the same day after day too. And the clincher here is that this is where we spend most of our time and attention trying to combat this negativity in our relationship with our child. The hard reality is that...nothing changes.

Here’s a REALLY important secret. That behavior in front of you is not defiance...don’t get stuck there. Look behind it to figure out what the emotional need is and what impact of trauma is that’s tripping your child up. Then you can name that behavior DEFICIT NOT DEFIANCE and you can help fix the real problem by dealing with the real issue.

In Strategy Area #4 your action plan now has to include:

1. Practicing looking beyond the armor your child creates to take care of the vulnerability there.
2. Knowing your child’s whole story.

## ACTION STEP:

### To meet your child’s emotional needs:

1. Don’t get caught in the behavior right in front of you. Don’t put your energy in trying to control it. Use that energy to manage your own emotions. Breathe deeply. Slow your heart rate down. Talk yourself through it. Remind yourself that this is Deficit Not Defiance. Make sure your stance is not scary. Unfrown your brow. Get calm and neutral.
2. Now ask yourself this question...**What is my child sad about and/or scared of?** Dig deep. Look at his or her whole story. Past experiences. Relationships. Losses. Consider the last 24-48 hours or the upcoming 24-48 hours – What happened? What’s coming up? Is it close to meal time? Is the routine or schedule off? Is their sleep off? Could they be getting sick?  
>>Don’t ask them. You are the Safety Net...so you know<<
3. What action can you take that will meet that need. You don’t have to be sure. They don’t really know either. They deserve to be taken care of. Some ideas could include; feed them, create physical comfort, Tylenol, back rub, fixing something, finding something, relaxation tools, acknowledging fear or sadness. This is where tweaking it for your child matters.

This is now the lens you must look through when being the best Parent you can be to YOUR CHILD. You know their hurdles. The behavior in front of you is to keep you from seeing the vulnerability behind it but focusing your energy there is how new brain wiring happens.