I'm Not A Social Worker!
Why Am I Expected To Be One?

Early On, Clinton ISD
November 10, 2015
Barbara Corbin & Janice Fialka

... an act of courage

... the attitude of facing and dealing with anything recognized as difficult, instead of withdrawing from it...

Courage does not always roar.
Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, 'I will try again tomorrow.'

-Mary Ann Radmacher
"Usually we feel that (if) there’s a large problem . . . we have to fix it. The instruction is to stop. Do something unfamiliar. Do anything besides rushing off in the same old direction, up to the same old tricks."

-Pema Chodron
Group Introduction

HELLO!
My name is

Agenda
Format: Information, Interaction, Discussion

9:00 ~ 12:00
- Coaching role with families
- Reflecting on my work
- Emotional labor
- Reframing & Perspective Taking
- Multi-Risk Families

12:00 ~ 1:00 Break

1:00 ~ 3:30
- Learning about feelings
- Essential steps
- Reflecting on my work
- Self care
- Closing Activity

Guidelines for our conversations
- Listen
- Be curious
- Invite diversity of ideas
- Go for honest & depth, but don't go on & on.
- Step Up—Step Back
- Pass
- Seek clarification
- Enjoy
Why are you expected to be a social worker?
What does it mean to YOU to be a "social worker"?
What do social workers do or are they "supposed to do" that feels challenging to you or does not fit?

But I'm Not a Social Worker!

Most professionals chose to work with children and rightly feel that their primary partner is the child. Yet people soon learn that along with the child comes another set of partners—the parents.

Fialka, Feldman, Mikus 2012

Coaching

A major goal of Early Intervention is to strengthen the families capacity to support their child's development.

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, 2008
Misperceptions about Coaching…
Coaching does not work with families who are challenged by addiction, poverty, mental health issues, low cognition, or the families who do not care.
Dunst & Trivette, 1996

Coaching is an evidence based, help-giving approach to promote the competence and confidence of families to support the growth and development of their children.
Dunst, Hamby and Trivette 2000

1. Setting the Stage:
Parent and provider develop and/or nurture their relationship...
Friedman & Woods, 2012
2. Application Opportunities and Feedback:
Family practices with support from provider to help promote understanding...
Friedman & Woods, 2012

3. Mastery:
Family generalizes and problem solves the use of strategies that promote child learning and development...
Friedman & Woods, 2012

The process of helping families is much messier than it may seem at first glance.
Early Interventionists often struggle with the dynamic complexities of the relationships they strive to develop with families.

Forming trusting relationships is seen as the key to providing effective interventions for infants and toddlers...

Watson & Gatti 2012

The most challenging part of coaching...RELATIONSHIP...

“Let's begin this dance. I am ready! I have so much information to share with you.”

Fialka, Feldman, Mikus 2012
Parent's DANCE

"I need you in my life, but I don't always want you in my life."

The Dance of Ambivalence

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Failure to thrive

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Reflecting on my work

... it's about discovery

SMALL GROUPS: Listening and Reflecting

Guidelines for discussion:
1) Each person will have about 4 minutes.
2) Primarily LISTEN WITH FULL heart.
3) Resist problem solving.
Reframe “in denial”

- Buying time to cope.
- Slowing down the process so you can think about what inner & outer resources you have to support you during this unexpected crisis. (Ken Moses)
- Pushing the “pause button” on the remote control of life.
- Trying to negotiate the pace of how we learn about unexpected news.

A place called “Denile”

I am well aware of where I am and I made a conscious decision to be here.

-Niquel Thurber-
But what is my labor?

Many careers & jobs involve this kind of labor
Emotional Labor
-Research by Arlie Hochschild: “Managing the Heart” (1983)

Managing strong emotions while staying connected to the client/family.

Emotional Labor in Early Intervention
by Valeri Lane

- Your outward appearance may be radically different from how you feel on the inside.
- To manage these differences and to appear "pleasant" or engaged takes work . . .

That kind of work is called: emotional labor
Two ways to managing emotions

1. Surface work
2. Deep work

An example
I want to hear what you hear?

Words of Dave Luterman, 50 years of clinical experience

...lesson plan mentality
...listening forces the client to be active in the relationship

I had to learn to cultivate the art of NOT DOING... and at the same time being present for the client.

WAIT
I just want to take this baby home with me. It's so dirty in here—I just want to go home and take a shower! She hates me—What am I doing here? Why doesn't she just leave him—he is never going to change? She smells like alcohol and looks drunk—I wonder if I should stay or go?

Thoughts going through my head...

What are your hidden thoughts?

Groups that tend to have difficulty with Planning and problem solving

- Parents who have experienced trauma
- Teenage parents
- Parents with depression
- Parents with Intellectual Disabilities
- Parents with Mental Illness and substance abuse problems

Landy and Menna 2006
Multi-risk Families

- When parent are chronically depressed or overwhelmed staff may find that helping them problem solve can be very difficult. They may continually fail to follow through.
- For instance a parent may not follow up on an important referral or miss a medical appointment. Knowing how to intervene in these situations is extremely challenging.

Landy and Menna 2006

Multi-Risk Families

- It is important to begin by meeting the parent "where they are"
- The family whose situations are often chaotic, one must first engage them on an affective level
- Establishing an empathetic, caring and understanding relationship is Key

Landy and Menna 2006

"If we learn to open our hearts, anyone including the people who drive us crazy can be our teacher"

Pema Chodron
To do this work with families, you must grow in your ability to identify, acknowledge, and respond to feelings.

Importance of naming feelings

Brain scans show that putting emotions into words actually calms the brain’s emotion center.


More about the benefits of naming feelings?

“Kids who are exposed to this parenting behavior (naming feelings) on a regular basis become better at self-soothing, and are more likely able to focus on task, and have more successful peer relationships”.

-John Medina (2012) Brain Rules for Babies
What does acknowledging feelings sound like?

“Joanne, I can see that you are dreading the next IFSP meeting because of how frustrating your first meeting was with these same team members. Feeling frustrated makes a lot of sense given what you've been through.”

4 Strategies for Acknowledging Feelings

1. Notice and name the feeling
2. Respond to the feeling(s): (State the feeling and the source)
3. Validate the feeling(s)
4. Express care

Strategy #1: Notice and Name the Feeling:

Tune in and identify the feeling.

This requires that you expand your feeling vocabulary and emotional literacy.
Ways to increase your emotional literacy.

- Notice and name feelings in yourself & in others.
  - Happy
  - Sad
  - Angry
  - Confused
  - Scared
  - Okay

Refine your “feeling” vocabulary

Notice the levels of feeling words:

mild to moderate to INTENSE

An example:

Intensity Levels for the word “angry”
An example: Intensity Levels for the word “angry”

- Mild intensity words: annoyed, bothered, irked, irritated
- Moderate intensity words: mad, resentful, upset, put upon
- INTENSE words: furious, enraged, infuriated

Strategy #2: Respond to the feeling.

State the possible feeling.
State the possible source or context of the feeling.

Strategy #2 (cont): Start with an Opening

Start with an opening stem to the sentence

“I hear you are feeling…”
“It sounds like you might be feeling…”
“You are going through a lot right now. I am wondering if you are feeling…”
Strategy #2 (cont): **Reflect Back**

Reflect back the FEELING and the SOURCE of the feeling or situation:

“You have a lot that is worrying (feeling) you right now since your son has been in the hospital and you are still caring for two other children (source).”

Reflect Back (more examples)

“I can see how relieved (feeling) you feel since you finally heard that your husband won’t be laid off from his job (source).”

“You are beaming with pride (feeling) now that your child is pulling herself up to stand (source).”

Strategy #3: **Validate the Feeling**

Verbalize in words that you understand the feeling from the person’s perspective.
An Example – Validating feelings

"Joanne, I can see that you are dreading (feeling) the next IFSP meeting because of how frustrating your first meeting was with these same team members (source). Feeling frustrated makes a lot of sense given what you’ve been through." (validation)

Why is validating feelings helpful?

Validating feelings sends these messages to your partner:

- I am listening to you
- I have heard you
- I am aware of your feelings
- I understand what you are saying from your perspective

What is the provider’s role in dealing with feelings?

“It is important to remember that just because you acknowledge parents’ feelings, doesn’t mean you are responsible for resolving the worries, fears, anger, or sadness they may express.”

-P.J. McWilliam, Talking with Families
Strategy #4: Express Care

Verbalize your concern and care for the person and her/his experience without minimizing the feeling or trying to “fix it.”

An Example – Expressing Care

“I know that losing your job (source) has been frightening (feeling) for you and your family. This puts more demands and uncertainty on all of you (validation). I want to be helpful and support you during this difficult time. You have a lot to deal with.” (expressing care)

Tips for Expressing Care: Do’s

• Use simple phrases, “I care about what you are going through.” “I know this is a lot to handle.”
• Encourage the person to contact you as needed, even just to check in. Make sure the person knows how to reach you.
• Consider a light touch on the shoulder or hands to express your care. You could move a tiny bit closer to the person.
• Acknowledge your concern or care for the other, but don’t act on it immediately.
• LISTEN
Tips for Expressing Care: Don't's

- Don't try to "talk them out" of their immediate emotional experience.
- Resist trying to come up with an immediate solution.
- Avoid minimizing the feeling, such as "I know this is hard, but it could be worse."
- Avoid premature reassurance. "You'll get through this." Premature reassurance can give the unintended message that you don't want to hear any more of what the person is feeling.
- Don't try to "cheer up" the person hastily.

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"It is important to remember that just because you acknowledge parents' feelings, doesn't mean you are responsible for resolving the worries, fears, anger, or sadness they may express."

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In most situations, the reluctance to connect is not about you, the professional, but rather about the life changing circumstances forced onto the family. It's important to remember that most parents didn't choose to be at this dance.

Fialka, Feldman, and Mikus 2012
Essential Steps for Successful Partnerships...

| Prepare yourself before talking to parents. | • Pause • Take a deep breath |
| Reassure parents that it takes time to feel confident and comfortable with the information. | • Remind them you are there to assist them |
| Be prepared for a range of feelings from parents, yourself and others. | • Raising children is complicated ~ Feelings can be strong and unexpected |

Fialka, Feldman, Mikus 2012

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Essential Steps for Successful Partnerships...

| Learning to handle strong emotions in yourself and others is an important skill. | • Seek colleagues who listen and provide support |
| Be aware of your body language and that of the parents. | • Ask yourself~ Am I communicating openness? |
| Be mindful when people appear agitated or “louder” ~ this can be a sign that they do not feel heard or understood. | • Listen • Ask more open ended questions • Write down parent concerns |

Fialka, Feldman, Mikus 2012
Essential Steps for Successful Partnerships ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Refrain from using jargon</th>
<th>Help parents understand terms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strive to learn about the parent as a person</td>
<td>Ask how they are doing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't reassure parents too quickly~ “everything is going to be fine” can feel dismissive and lack understanding</td>
<td>You do not have the power to fix the situation ~ or take away pain</td>
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The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering or loss daily and not be touched by it... is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet.

—Rachel Naomi Remen
“Kitchen Table Wisdom”

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Remember about Self Care

Caring for others effectively requires attention to one’s physical, mental and spiritual self.
~Staying healthy requires intention; and daily practice

~Reflective Consultation helps early interventionists examine the interactions between themselves and members as well as attending to emotions evoked...

Finding/Building Support on Your Team

• Regular, frequent supervision without interruption.

• Collaborative and supportive supervision occurring in a respectful interpersonal climate that encourages open discussion of difficult feelings and frustrations.

Landy and Menna 2006

Giving Team Members the Tools they Need...

• Time built in to team meetings to talk about challenges with families ~ keep it consistent and predictable

• The leader for these discussions is skilled and “safe”

• Staff need to be able to examine their concerns/fears without being judged

• Schedule in-service speakers on topics such as domestic violence, safety, cultural diversity, etc.

• Who is your social work consultant for team?

• Take time for staff retreats

• Match staff with mentors
Resources

• Strengths Finder 2.0, by Tom Rath, Gallop Press 2007
• Strengths Based Leadership, by Tom Rath and Barry Conchie, Gallop Press 2008
• Appreciative Team Building, Positive Questions to bring out the Best of Your Team, by Whitney, Trosten-Bloom, Cherney and Fry, iUniverse Inc. 2004
• www.drweil.com Dr. Weil: Relaxing Breath Exercise: 4-7-8
• www.readysetrelax.com Music and Relaxation Exercises

References

• Parents and Professionals Partnering for Children with Disabilities: A Dance that Matters by Janice Fialka, Arlene Feldman & Karen Mikus (Corwin, 2012)
  www.danceofpartnership.com
• Professional Development through Reflective Consultation in Early Intervention by Watson and Gatti; Infants & Young Children June, 2012
References

• http://www.coachinginearlychildhood.org/cmisperceptions.php
• www.livescience.com/7306-brain-scans-reveal-meditation-works.html

References

• Caregiver Coaching Strategies for Early Intervention Providers by Friedman & Woods; Infants & Young Children March 2012
• The Reflective Supervisor’s Role as a Team Leader and Group Supervisor by Heffron and Murch; Zero to Three November 2012
• Early Intervention with Multi-Risk Families; An Integrative Approach; Landy and Menna 2006
• Seven Key Principles: Looks Like/Doesn’t Look Like 2008 www.ectacenter.org

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Many thanks for your participation!
Everybody’s Different: Understanding and Changing Our Reactions to Disabilities

by Nancy B. Miller and Catherine C. Sammons

Human Brain has evolved from Primitive (react) to Modern (make choices)

The primitive brain REACTS to differences

* unfamiliar
* unexpected
* unsettling

The modern brain can make choices.

• Steps to the 4-D Approach
  • Detect (notice)
  • Decide
  • Do
  • Debrief