

# FAMILY MATTERS

ENHANCING FAMILY/PROVIDER RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH TRAUMA INFORMED CARE PRACTICES

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# THE JOURNEY

YourBeautifulLife

“Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy—the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light.”

-Brene Brown



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## WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

- Reflect on your current and past experiences of working with parents/caregivers and families/support systems
  - Have they been
    - positive?
    - negative?
    - Successful?
    - Stressful?
  - What do you experience?
    - Body sensations
    - Emotions
    - Thoughts/belief?



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## LEARNING GOALS

- Learn to build authentic relationships and rapport to engage parents/caretakers as partners using a trauma informed approach
- Learn framework to facilitate comprehensive family assessment/conceptualizations
- Learn relational interventions to support relationship development and repair when working with families/care systems



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## WHAT TRAUMA INFORMED CARE HAS TAUGHT US ABOUT DEVELOPMENT

- Relationships and the experiences we have shape the development of a person's brain, perception of self, others, and the world around them
- Brain development, perceptions, and belief systems create patterns of interactions.
- Adverse experiences and toxic stress negatively impact brain development and future cognitive, social and emotional functioning
- Impacts of trauma can be seen through generations of a family system
- Resilience can be built across the lifespan
- Authentic relationships rooted in acceptance, restorative practices, and social emotional development are a powerful tool in building resilience



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## WHAT TRAUMA INFORMED CARE HAS TAUGHT US ABOUT YOUTH

- There is no such thing as a bad kid
- Kids will do well if they can
- All behavior communicates something
- A child can overcome the impacts of adverse events, toxic stress, and trauma when they have authentic, positive relationships with healthy adults.



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## WHAT WE CAN LEARN ABOUT PARENTS/CARETAKERS

- All parents want to be the best parents they can be
- All parents have past relationships and experiences that have shaped their beliefs, perceptions and understanding of themselves, what it means to be a parent, and how others see them
- All behavior communicates something
- The impacts of adverse life experiences, toxic stress, and trauma have a significant impact on a person's parenting
- Parents can learn, grow, and repair harm in their families when they have authentic, positive relationships with healthy adults and providers.



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## BELIEFS TO CHALLENGE

Each of us are human and vulnerable to bias and judgment. Creating a safe space for relationships with parents, you must recognize these first

- A kind parent is \_\_\_\_\_
- A bad parent is \_\_\_\_\_
- A parent that has caused harm to their child must be \_\_\_\_\_
- Parents whose children end up in residential care are \_\_\_\_\_
- A parent that is homeless \_\_\_\_\_
- A parent that is addicted to drugs/alcohol \_\_\_\_\_



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## TAKE A MOMENT

- Reflect for a moment on some of the lives of past or current families you have worked with
- Imagine if you were the parents of the youth in your care
  - What thoughts and feelings would you have about yourself and your parenting?
  - What fears/insecurities would you have when you first enter the program and meet with staff?
  - What defenses might you use?
- Imagine all of the moments of stress, conflict, fear, sadness, and pain have occurred in the parent/child relationship
- Imagine the experience of fearing for your child's life, or your life as a result of severe mental health symptoms



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## BELIEFS TO BUILD UPON

At first meeting, in future interactions, and throughout treatment we must remember these things!

### Everyone in the room is...

- Experiencing a struggle
- Doing the best they can in the moment
- Have tried everything they know & all the skills they have
- Feels a level of pressure
- Feels hopeless
- Feels inadequate
- Feels scared that "it" is going to be their fault
- Has had past experiences with other people in your role

### Our Role is...

- To not judge
- To not identify, assign, or assume fault or blame
- To provide support
- To provide unconditional acceptance
- To be a champion for resilience
- To provide a "safe" environment
- To model healthy relational characteristics



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## GETTING STARTED

- Parents/caregivers should be an active participant in the treatment program from referral through aftercare.
  - Birth Parents
  - Foster Parents
  - Adoptive Parents
  - Guardians
  - Extended family members that are caretakers
- Provide warm introductions and clear information regarding what to expect and how to reach out with questions.
- Everyone's story matters, provide sufficient opportunities and time for them to share!



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## CONCEPTUALIZING THE WHOLE FAMILY

### Family ANATOMY

- Genogram

### Family DEVELOPMENT

- Family Life Cycle

### Family FUNCTIONING

- Family Map (Ecomap)
- Lifeline
- Adlerian Lifestyle Conceptualization
- SCREEM (Social, cultural, religion, economic, education, medical)
- APGAR (Adaption, partnership, growth, affection, resolve)
- MIM (Marschak Interaction Method)
- Early Childhood Experiences(Wesselman)



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## ASSESSMENT: A TIME TO CULTIVATE HOPE!

- Curiosity + Strengths Based + Relational approaches = opportunities for HOPE
- Acknowledge all attempts and efforts towards improvements parents have made
- Acknowledge and highlight the times when things were going well
- Highlight when parents identify things which are positive, hopeful, resilient, loving, hopeful, growth oriented
  - Metacommunication
  - Reframing



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## ASSESSMENTS: USING CURIOSITY

### Throughout the Assessment:

- Ask questions about parent's perceptions of the problem
- Ask Parent questions about how they have managed thus far
- Give encouragement for their strength to seek services
- Validate the struggle they as parents have had
- Ask how you can support them as parents
- Ask what they would like from you during the therapeutic relationship

### Be curious about...

- Their own parenting experience and experience of being parented
- Their emotions about being a parent
- Their feelings of success and failure
- Their feelings of connection with their child
- The way they experience and manage stress
- The way they share or experience success with their child
- Be just as curious about parents as you are about the child




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## ASSESSMENTS: INFORMATION TO DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING

In order to be truly family driven, we want to ensure we are exploring these areas for not only the identified client, but also the parents/caretakers and family as a whole

Work	School	Family	Marriage/Intimate Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current employment status</li> <li>• Work history</li> <li>• Pressure to work</li> <li>• Disabled</li> <li>• Unable to work due to barriers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent's level of education</li> <li>• Learning ability/disability</li> <li>• Peer acceptance in school</li> <li>• Perception of teachers/school system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family of origin relationships</li> <li>• Family Trauma</li> <li>• Current Family closeness</li> <li>• Family beliefs</li> <li>• Immediate Family               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intact</li> <li>• Loss of members</li> <li>• History of removal or cutoff</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current status</li> <li>• Domestic violence</li> <li>• Loss</li> <li>• Beliefs about relationships</li> </ul>



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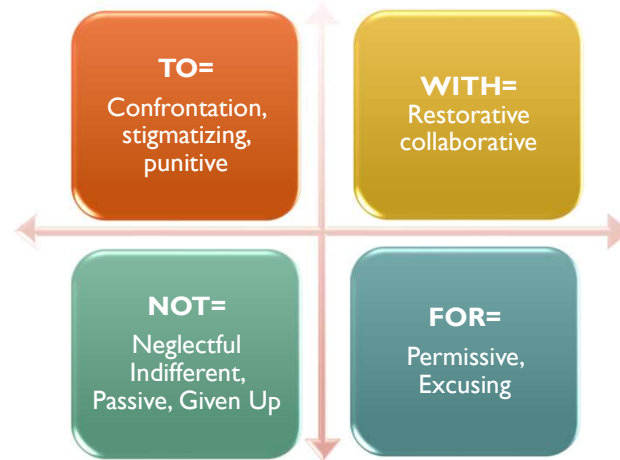
## CURIOSITY STRENGTHENS RELATIONSHIPS

- During assessments, debriefings, updates, staffing's etc, always use curiosity
- Whenever you feel stuck... get more curious
- Remember you are new in the system, they are the experts
- See every conversation as an opportunity to learn from them how they see the world, their child, others, etc as well as how their parenting has shaped the youth in your care
- Responding with acknowledgement, encouragement, and validation will help parent feel accepted and safe

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## USING THE “WITH WINDOW” FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



Wachtel, T. (2016). *Defining Restorative* [White paper]. International Institute for Restorative Practices. [https://www.iirp.edu/images/pdf/Defining-Restorative\\_Nov-2016.pdf](https://www.iirp.edu/images/pdf/Defining-Restorative_Nov-2016.pdf)

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## WHEN INTENSITY HAPPENS



Parents/caregivers may become upset/activated/frustrated by many things throughout the course of treatment

- Youth's actions, behaviors, interactions, responses
- Staff actions, decisions or interactions
- Program policies, decisions, or interactions
- Specific event which has occurred



Use Trauma informed & Brain based responses

1. Supportive presence and nonverbals
2. Stop talking and listen
3. Don't justify, logic, reason, or challenge
4. Reflection, validation, and Empathy
5. Restorative questions & collaborative problem solving

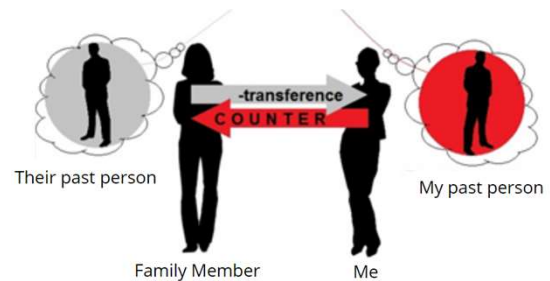
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## EXPECT TRANSFERENCE

Transference & Countertransference potentials exist with each member of the family system. The more people you interact with the more prone you are to experiencing transference

- Stay grounded in your body
- Be curious about your own emotions, sensations, and thoughts when you struggle to be with parents
- Reflect on your past relationships and experiences
- Own them
- Put them aside when with the family
- Continue your own work to process



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## WORKING RELATIONSHIPS TAKE WORK

- When you are focused is on the creating changes in the family relationships but aren't sure what to do, default to observing the family interact with one another in a variety of ways
  - By creating structured opportunities to meet with parents 1:1 you can understand more about the larger system and ways which it can be changed
  - Systems theory believes a change anywhere in the system changes the overall system
    - This means even small changes or recommendations can create relief
- We have all had experience being in a family, use it!
  - When observing interactional patterns, think about what private logic or perceptions member may be having
  - Help members understand reactions of other members and what is being communicated beneath the surface
  - Your role is to provide NEW information to the system

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## RELATIONSHIPS THAT HEAL

- When we approach parents as partners, we can navigate the ups and downs which naturally occur with a youth's treatment episode in residential care settings.
- Using restorative practices as a model for effective relationships will contribute to positive outcomes.
  - Provides a pathway to relational repair, and repair for harm caused
  - Provides shared responsibility and accountability within relationships
  - Provides equal opportunities for all to be heard
  - Provides increased awareness and insight of the greater impact of their actions



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-THANK YOU FOR SPENDING THIS TIME WITH ME.  
 -GROWTH AND LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTION.  
 -WHEN WE KNOW DIFFERENT, WE DO DIFFERENT.

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## RESOURCES

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