



Welcome to Holland

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EARLY CHILDHOOD OC

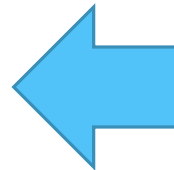
EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH & WELLNESS
PROGRAM

Understanding The Family Perspective: The Dream And The Reality

Coming to terms with reality may mean grieving the dream or the 'hoped for' child

Stages of grief

- Denial
- Anger
- Bargaining
- Depression
- Acceptance



What stage are they in when you are having this conversation?



Parents have a “story”

Starting Where The Family Is . .

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Listen for their story

Place them on the path

Be empathetic: hearing that life may have to change or that their child is different is very difficult

Tolerate non acceptance: parents may be shocked or angry

Tolerate emotional expression

Understand context of the conversation

- Inopportune time
- Incompatible with family beliefs
- Family life cycle disrupted
- Relief, validation



Fears That May Keep Us From Saying Something

Fear of being blamed (killing the messenger)

- Blaming is a reaction and may also point to the parents blaming themselves

Fear of unleashing an emotional reaction

- What if they cry? What if they yell?

Fear of expressing our own emotions

- Finding balance between professional composure and expressing sympathy and other helpful feelings

Fear of not knowing all the answers



Expertise

EDUCATORS

PARENTS

Knowledge of child development

Experience with *many* children

Observation of a particular child over weeks and months

Knowledge about local resources

Know their child best

Know the background and history

Knowledge of the family dynamics

Live the culture with their child

Your Hot Buttons

WHAT ADULT
BEHAVIOR
PUSHES YOUR
BUTTON?

Basic Expectations For People

What
happens
when they
don't behave
the way we
expect?



People look
generally
symmetrical



People will
move in
coordinated
ways



People will
communicate in
ways that
others can
understand



People will
behave
appropriately in
social situations



People will be
able to learn

We React instead of *Respond*

Unfamiliar response

Unexpected response

Unsettling response



Working with Difficult Parents

Listen with understanding

Imagine the conversation with you as a parent

Know your own “hot buttons”

Paraphrase what they say

Be aware of your body language and posture

Acknowledge their reactions

- “I understand this is difficult to hear.”
- “I can tell you are very upset.”

Allow the parent to feel in control

- “How would you like me to handle this situation?”
- “I am here to help. How can I help?”

Sometimes you can only “place them on the path”

Come to an agreement that doesn’t compromise your professionalism and professional judgment

When You Are Concerned About A Child . . .

- Begin observing more closely – *observe the child over time*
- Make notes, describe *what you see* in detail.
- Note when and where behaviors occur and under what circumstances
- Make notes of what you have tried and what happened- see if changing the environment or your approach affects the behavior
- Observe on different days at different times
- Note both positives and areas of concern
- Consult with other professionals, respect privacy
- Schedule a time to meet with the parents

Discussing Your Concerns With Parents

DO

Use clear, cooperative and collaborative language

Share with the family that you support their child's development

Listen to responses and questions & keep an open mind

Provide data about specific behaviors

Recognize feelings of nervousness, fear, upset, frustration etc.

Come up with a plan together

Offer referrals, resources, & **support** throughout the process

DON'T

Label the child

Diagnose

React

Do not guarantee eligibility or services from another agency

Blame, accuse or judge



Remember . . .

People's emotional reactions and anger towards the educator are usually the result of displaced feelings from something going on in their personal lives with no connection to you!

Take Aways

Know your hot buttons; manage your own reactions

Respond, don't react

Use data to tell the story

Realize this is THEIR child, not yours

Be empathic; their “perfect child” may not be perfect

Provide resources



**You can only place Parents on the path...
They have to take the next step.**
