Engaging Families in Child Welfare

Recapping the Tailored Dispositional Orders Project

Child Safety and Tailored Dispositional Orders Training

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Timely

Facilitated Discussion

1) Involve IA workers to assist develop conditions for return
2) Reduce the number of conditions, specifically the bullet points
3) Reword the conditions for return to make them more understandable and individualized to parents

Ongoing workers

Follow-up meeting

A workgroup is being convened to work on revising the language of the conditions for return.

Family Engagement Training

Good communication amongst stakeholders so we can engage with families in the courtroom about their 2-3 main priorities

2

Welcome!

Your Trainers:

Judge Jill Falstad and Beth Smetana, MSSW

3

Learning Objectives:

- Realize the impact trauma has on many of our children and parents within the Child Welfare system, including barriers related to behavior change and engagement.
- Demonstrate how to have more meaningful discussions with parents utilizing the six principles of partnership
- Recognize that behavioral change is a process and does not occur overnight.
- Identify solution focused language techniques to use with parents and children inside and outside of the courtroom.
- Apply solution focused techniques in the courtroom and within the child welfare system outside the courtroom.

4



Self- Reflection & Introductions

5

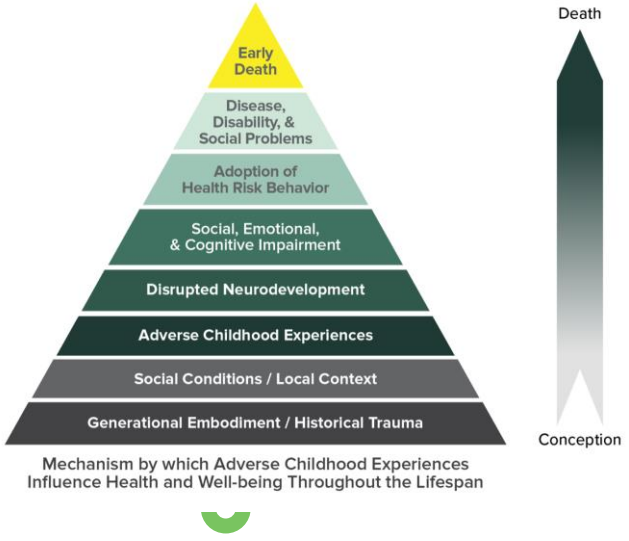
What Is Trauma?

SAMHSA defines **individual trauma** as that which results from an **event, a series of events or set of circumstances** that is **experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening** and having **lasting adverse effects** on the **individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional or spiritual well being.**

*In short, trauma is the sum of the **Event,** the **Experience,** and the **Effect.***

6

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study



Mechanism by which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

- Childhood maltreatment (abuse/neglect/trauma exposure) and how it affects later-life health and well-being
- Such stressors include; illicit drug use, alcohol abuse, fetal death, depression, suicide attempts, adolescent pregnancy, smoking, multiple sexual partners
- Findings; 2/3rd of participants reported at least ONE adverse childhood experience

7

Trauma

Historical Trauma

"It's not just about what happened in the past. It's about what is still happening". Jessica Gourneau, Ph.D., American Indian Family Center

Intergenerational Trauma

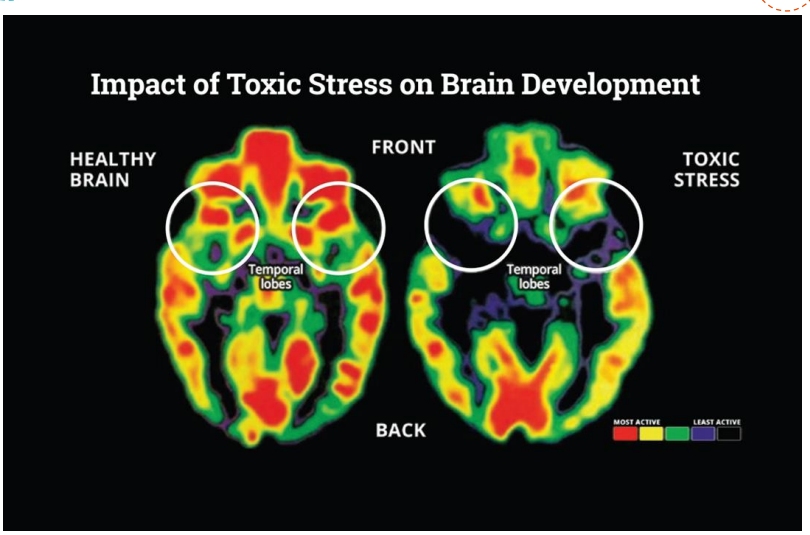
The profound impact (effect) across generations when a group of individuals has been subjected to a threatening event and have a shared experience of the event. SAMSHA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma Informed Approach 2014

Community Trauma:

- Mass shootings
- High Violence Neighborhoods
- Mass incarceration
- Systemic racism and oppression

8

Toxic Stress



9

Childhood Trauma

An event that a child finds overwhelmingly distressing or emotionally painful, often resulting in lasting mental and physical effects.

2x more likely to develop **DEPRESSION**

3x more likely to develop **ANXIETY DISORDERS**

Common causes:

- Child abuse (physical, emotional, sexual)
- Witness/victim of violence
- Neglect
- Substance misuse
- Bullying in school
- Grief
- War/Terrorism
- Medical trauma
- Mental illness
- Separation from loved ones

LONG-TERM IMPACTS:

- Affects perception of reality
- Takes away sense of safety
- Wires brain to expect danger
- Increases stress hormones flowing through the body
- Triggers fight, fright or freeze response
- Creates a sense of helplessness
- Creates relationship problems
- Results in serious behaviour problems

> "The initial trauma of a young child may go underground but it will return to haunt us"
> James Garbarino

PREFRONTAL CORTEX (PFC)
"Thinking Centre"
Underactivated
Difficulties concentrating & learning.

A traumatised brain is *"bottom heavy"*

ANTERIOR CINGULATE CORTEX (ACC)
"Emotion Regulation Centre"
Underactivated
Difficulties with managing emotions.

AMYGDALA
"Fear Centre"
Overactivated
Difficulty feeling safe, calming down, sleeping

Complex Trauma: a result of repetitive, prolonged trauma

www.70-30.org.uk
@7030Campaign

Trauma Has Multiple Impacts

Brain Function – Cognition



Physical Health

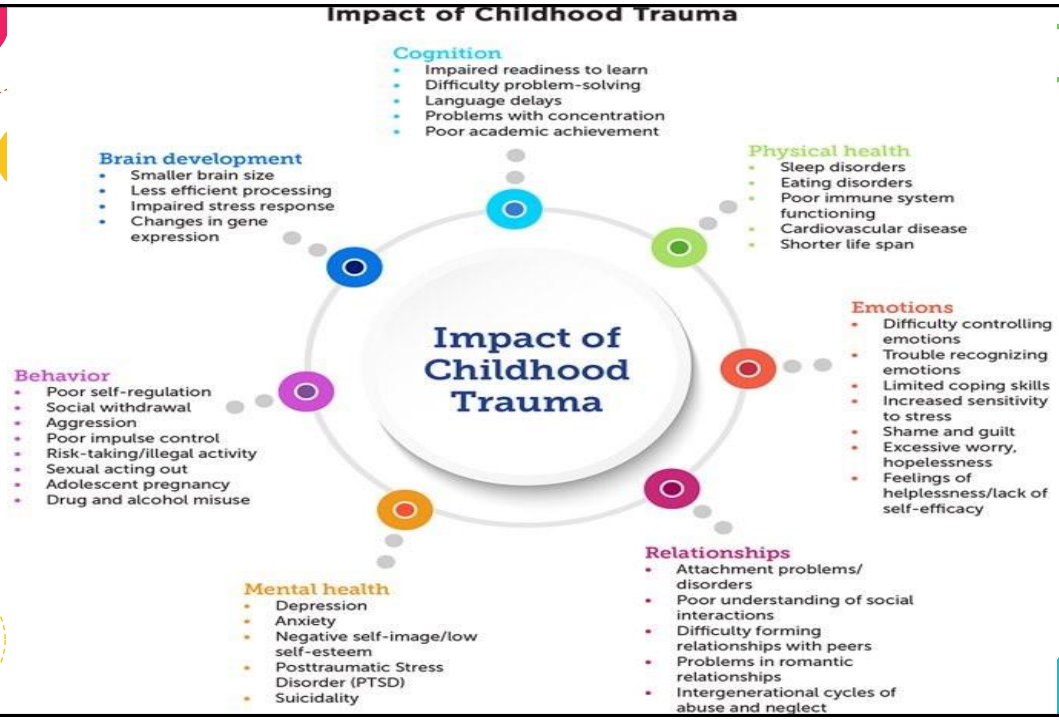


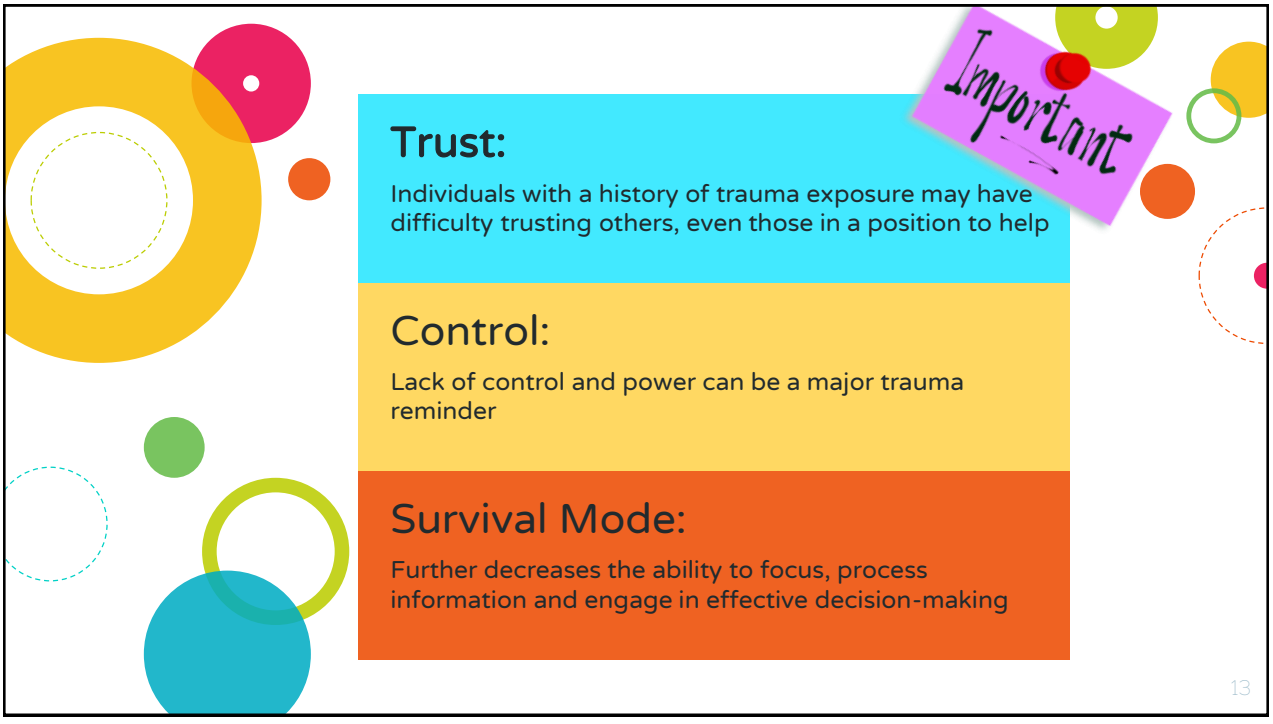
Emotional Regulation

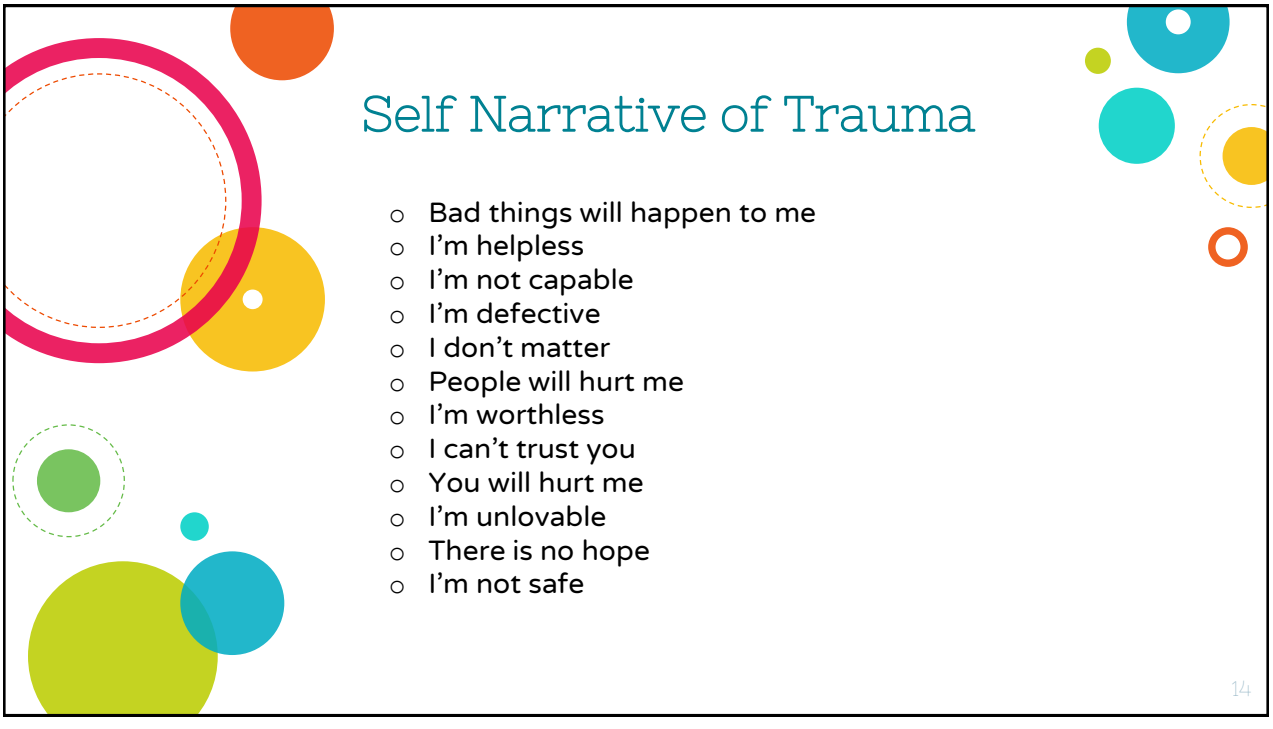


11

Impact of Childhood Trauma




Important
Trust:
Individuals with a history of trauma exposure may have difficulty trusting others, even those in a position to help
Control:
Lack of control and power can be a major trauma reminder
Survival Mode:
Further decreases the ability to focus, process information and engage in effective decision-making
13


Self Narrative of Trauma
Bad things will happen to me
I'm helpless
I'm not capable
I'm defective
I don't matter
People will hurt me
I'm worthless
I can't trust you
You will hurt me
I'm unlovable
There is no hope
I'm not safe
14

Core Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach



Safety
Throughout the organization, patients and staff feel physically and psychologically safe



Trustworthiness & Transparency
Decisions are made with transparency, and with the goal of building and maintaining trust



Peer Support
Individuals with shared experiences are integrated into the organization and viewed as integral to service delivery



Collaboration
Power differences — between staff and clients and among staff — are leveled to support shared decision-making



Empowerment
Patient and staff strengths are recognized, built on, and validated — this includes a belief in resilience and the ability to heal from trauma



Humility & Responsiveness
Biases and stereotypes and historical trauma are recognized and addressed

15

Why Use A Trauma-Informed Approach?

- Recognized as a best practice
- Universal approach and application
- Builds rapport and strengthens working relationships
- Decreases likelihood of case-interfering behaviors
- Increases willingness to be a collaborative partner increases satisfaction and compliance
- More productive interactions and court appearances

16

Why Use a Trauma Informed Approach

Enduring effects of trauma can lead to **survival mode**, which impacts an individual's ability to engage with the court process.

- Missed appointments for services (especially mental health)
- Mistrust of the system – the need for increased transparency and authentic engagement
- Aggressive reactions when questioned by judge, attorney, case worker, etc.
- Substance use
- Academic failure, poor school attendance
- Difficulty focusing, concentrating, appearing checked out
- Running away from home or placements

17

What Can Court Systems Do?

1. Ask questions that enable you to make trauma-informed, culturally-sensitive decisions

2. Support youth and families in strengthening protective factors and promoting resilience

3. Order trauma-informed and culturally relevant services

4. Take steps to increase youth and family engagement with the court process

5. Increase the capacity of court professionals to serve children and families with histories of trauma

6. Maintain work environments that emphasize staff self-care

Adapted from Desai, N., Adamson, M., Allwood, M., Baetz, C., Cardeli, E., Issa, O., & Ford, J, Primer for Juvenile Court Judges: A Trauma-Informed Approach to Judicial Decision-Making for Newcomer Immigrant Youth in Juvenile Justice Proceedings (Feb. 2019).

18

We learn about the family's trauma but what do we do with that information?

Share the information in the Dispositional Court report

- Include a separate section on trauma history
- Relate trauma history to the proposed services
- Provide explanations regarding why services are being recommended so judicial and legal partners can better understand the proposed recommendations
- Instead of including general counseling as a service, be specific and recommend grief counseling, domestic violence counseling, AODA counseling, etc.
- Prioritize services in addition to prioritizing conditions so everyone is on the same page about the most pressing concerns.

19

Barriers: What are the challenges and barriers that get in the way of families changing their behavior?

20

Barriers to Families Changing their Behaviors

- Unclear expectation and feelings of disrespect
- Trauma
- Cultural Differences and family system dynamics
- Treatment Issues (mental health, substance use)
- Criminal charges pending
- Mistrust of authority
- Incarcerated parent
- Family disruption



21



22

Motivation = Readiness for Change

23

Stages of Change

Pre-contemplation	*I'm not thinking about change*
Contemplation	*I'm considering change*
Preparation	*I'm planning to change*
Action	*I'm doing things to change*
Maintenance	*I'm working to keep my new behavior*
Recurrence	*I've gone back to my old behavior*

24

Precontemplation Skills Focus

- The individual is not yet considering change
- Raise awareness of behaviors
- Raise doubt about whether behavior is working for them

25

Pre-contemplation Engagement Suggestions

- Establish rapport and trust
- Raise doubt about whether their behavior is working for them
- Explore the circumstances that led to CPS involvement
- Offer information about consequences
- Move the individual to thinking about the need to make changes
- Elicit individual's perception of the risks and problems with current behavior

26

Conditions that Precipitate Change

Critical Life Event

people change when life circumstances change

External Pressure

some external pressure is ignored or resisted

effective when it comes from a trusted source

Appraisal of Personal Values

behavior doesn't fit values

27

Contemplation Skills Focus

- The individual acknowledges concerns and is considering but is ambivalent and uncertain
- Supporting belief they can change
- Supporting ability to make change

28

Contemplation Engagement Suggestions

- Help the person tip the decisional balance scale towards change
- Provide support that the individual can change their behavior
- Emphasize the individual's ability and choice to make the change
- Strengthen the individual's self-efficacy for change
- Elicit the individual's perception of self-efficacy and remove barriers to change

29

Preparation	Action	Maintenance
Engage them in preparing to change: logistically, physically, emotionally	Help them take steps to implement strategies	Provide support in maintaining change
Help them determine best course for them	Checking in on change progress	Strategize to prevent recurrence
Consider options that build on strengths	Supporting efforts Identify triggers	Evaluate triggers
Help them identify and engage resources		

30

Engagement Suggestions

Preparation

- Help the person determine the best course of action in seeking change
- Offer resources and services for the individual to engage in to make the change
- Discuss a plan while considering barriers
- Ask what has worked in the past
- Assist with what is needed to ensure a successful change

Action

- Help the person take steps to implement the change
- Provide resources and supports
- Acknowledge difficulty and plan for challenges to implement change
- Reinforce positive changes
- Check in on the change process
- Help the person build a support system that supports positive change

Maintenance

- Help the person identify and use strategies to prevent recurrence of old behaviors
- Support making and maintaining lifestyle changes
- Maintain supportive contact
- Identify and plan for challenging circumstances
- Review long-term goals

31

Recurrence Skills Focus

- Manage this as opportunity – address feelings, shame, reactions
- Strengthen support plan
- Re-engage in change process

32

Recurrence Engagement Suggestions

- Help the individual renew the process of change without becoming stuck or demoralized because of the recurrence
- Ask about challenging circumstances, barriers to change, and necessary supports to assist with positive change
- Remain supportive and encouraging

33

Resistance

Resistance is a predictable and natural emotional reaction to feeling forced to change or when facing a difficult situation

Resistance occurs as a response to feeling vulnerable, out of control or threatened by change.

Avoidance	Passivity	Anger/Hostility
• Physical • False compliance • Illness • Substance abuse	• Silence • Excuses • Denial • Blaming • Rationale • Feigning Ignorance	• Threats • Aggressive Posturing • Blaming • Using Authority

34

People don't change their behavior when other people yell at them, shame them, or send them away to be alone.
People change their behavior when they feel heard, understood and loved. Growth and change require connection and compassion.

Katie Hurley, LCSW

35

Discussion

How do we know where parents are at within the stages of change?

How is that information communicated to the court and our legal partners?

36

Partnerships

What is the value in partnering with families?

What is in it for us?

Why partner with each other?

37

Barriers: What are the challenges and barriers that get in the way of successfully partnering with others?

38

Effective Partnership: What are the elements, attitudes/supports that lead to effective partnerships?

39

6 Principles of Partnership

- Everyone Needs to Be Heard
- Everyone Desires Respect
- Everyone Has Strengths
- Judgements Can Wait
- Partners Share Power
- Partnership is a Process



40

Everyone Needs To Be Heard

Tools for this principle:

- Slow down
- Focus on your purpose
- Intend to really listen
- Seek first to understand

Know when to use empathic listening:

- Engagement
- Conflict/resistance
- Goal setting

"Genuine listening means suspending memory, desire, and judgment – and, for a moment at least, existing for the other person.

Michael Nichols

41

Effective listening works well for:

- Engaging and diffusing clients
- Developing relationships
- Crisis intervention
- Assessment, goal setting and service planning
- Teaching and counseling



Two Ways to Listen

Autobiographical

Filtering what we hear through our own frame of reference, personal experiences and our own agenda.

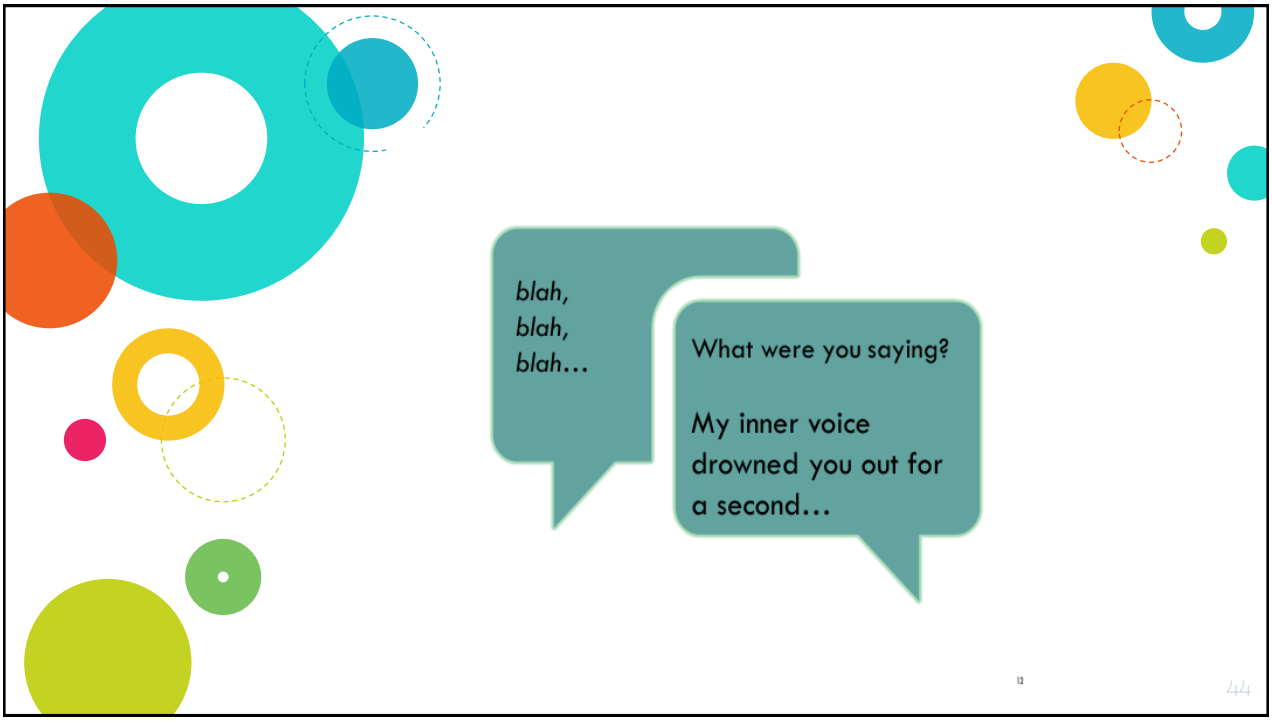
Listening with the intent to reply, rebut, inform, collect information, convince, persuade, control or manipulate.

Empathic

Striving to get inside the other person's frame of reference in order to really understand their point of view.

Listening with the intent of seeing the world through their eyes and understanding how they feel.

43



44

Everyone Needs to Be Heard

- Giving every party an opportunity to speak or contribute
- Making eye contact when a party/parent is speaking
- Listen with intent to understand
- Summarizing what a parent said for validation and to make them feel heard
- Attorneys should tell parents that the judge wants to hear from you so don't be afraid to speak up when asked if you have any questions or anything to add.
- The simplest aspect of feeling heard can go a long way!
- Quality vs quantity

45

Everyone Desires Respect

Tools for this principle:

- Model the respect you would like to receive
- Meet people where they are
- Look for positive intent
- Respect and incorporate ideas
- Move slowly and make small adjustments where possible
- Don't use legal and child welfare jargon.

"I'm not concerned with your liking or disliking me... All I ask is that you respect me as a human being."

- Jackie Robinson

46

Everyone Desires Respect

- Address each parent individually by name instead of referring to them as mom and dad
- Utilizing a sign in sheet or a diagram if there are many parties involved
- Using a calm tone of voice with parents
- Being patient with parents if they have questions about the CHIPS court process
- Acknowledging that the social worker is the expert on the case and has been working with the family the longest
- Asking the social worker directly for clarification instead of through an attorney
- Speaking directly to the parent instead of through their attorney
- Involving the parent in the discussions to ask if they understand what's going on

47

Everyone Has Strengths

"It is not our purpose to become each other; it is to recognize each other, to learn to see the other and honor him for what he is."
- Hermann Hesse

Be intentional and genuine in your search for strengths:

- Observation
- Ask the right questions
- Have a broad definition

Utilize the strengths you find to build solutions.

Identify exceptions to the problem or issue.

Look for the positive intent

Exception-Finding Questions

48

Everyone Has Strengths

- Beginning with the positive instead of what the parents are not doing
- Asking the social worker about each parent's progress
- Acknowledging the parent's progress and what is going well
- Stressing that a few steps is still progress
- Encouraging the parent to keep up the good work!
- Following up with each parent to see if they have anything additional to add that wasn't said.
- Their biggest strength or accomplishment may not have been mentioned
- Mentioning we hope to hear about additional progress and accomplishments at the next court hearing
- Discussing next steps for the parent to work on and what we hope to see at the next court hearing

49

Judgments Can Wait

Tools for this principle:

- Hold judgments lightly
- Seek alternative explanations
- Not knowing stance
- Utilizing scaling questions

"From a worldly point of view, there is no mistake so great as that of being always right."

- Samuel Butler

50

Judgments Can Wait

- If a parent has only attended 2 out of 8 visits – ask the parent: You made 2 of your 8 scheduled visits. What happened on those days to make that possible?
- If a parent has only attended 4 out of 12 UA appointments, ask how were you able to make those 4 appointments?
- Don't jump to conclusions!
- Try not to assume the worst.
- Instead ask what happened? What has been going on?
- Encourage honesty so we can help the parent
- Try to understand what happened or what else the parent is facing
- Acknowledge their struggles and offer solutions such as a bus pass, gas card, service referral, etc.

51

Partners Share Power

Tools for this principle:

- Consider the power, both real and perceived, that you have in a family's life.
- Strive to share that power through your words and actions.
- Power differentials create obstacles to partnership.
- Parents will choose whether to cooperate but that choice is influenced by how we engage.

"Compliance isn't change."
- Richard Gelles

52

Partners Share Power

- All stakeholders should be working together and collaboratively
- There is a shared vision to help parents so children can be reunified
- The judge isn't the only partner in power
- All partners are supporting change and want to hear about the parent's progress
- Court is similar to the dentist, no one is excited to attend a court hearing
- A parent may have been in the same courtroom or in front of the same judge for another proceeding or case before.
- Child welfare proceedings should be a rehabilitative environment similar to a drug court model where it's clear we're trying to help and support you.

53

What are examples of the power the child welfare system has over parents & families?

54

Partnership is a process

Tools for this principle:

Commitment to build partnership can be difficult

Focus on what you can control – you.

Understand stages of change.

55

Partnership is a Process

- Explain the CHIPS court process
- Progress will be monitored at Review Hearings and Permanency Plan Hearings
- Tell parents when the next check-in will be and that they will be asked about their progress
- Asking if parents need anything to get started on their conditions
- Re-iterate the 2-3 main priorities the parent should be working on
- Encourage parent to stay in contact with social worker
- Don't be afraid to ask for help or support
- All stakeholders are here to support you working towards reunification!

56

Engaging Families

Once the tailored conditions for return are ordered by the court, how do we engage families to ask about their progress?

What questions do we ask?

57

Solution Focused Strategies



Questions that can be asked at Post-Disposition Hearings such as Review Hearings or Permanency Plan Hearings

58

Open-ended Questions

- Ask open-ended questions
- Expand the dialogue without leading in one direction
- Giving parents an opportunity to respond beyond a yes or no answer
- Be thoughtful in phrasing the question

59

Open ended questions
(but not too open!)

- What are the 3 main priorities you plan to begin working on?
- Help me understand your progress or struggles with…
- How can we help you with your conditions for return?
- Are there additional services that you need to assist you with your conditions?
- Have you tried to get sober before? What worked well during that time? What was difficult? What might you do differently this time?
- Avoid asking a very broad question. Be specific to allow the parent to answer the question.
- Don't regret or question why you asked a question in a certain way that gives you a very long winded answer.
- Be patient with their responses

60

Exception Finding Questions

- Exceptions are times when problems could have occurred but did not.
  - What occurred so that the problem did not happen?
  - What is different when the problem does not occur?
  - What is happening during those "different" times when things are better?
- Use when someone is stuck and cannot see beyond the problem.
- When is the problem NOT a problem
  - Stating the positive rather than in the negative or in the presence of something rather than the absence of something.
- Use instead to show the problem is not always happening.

61

Exception Finding Questions

- Stressing the positives when someone feels stuck and hopeless
- Reminding someone that not everything is horrible
- For drug/alcohol cases, think about a time when you were sober.
- What is the longest time you were sober?
- How did you start?
- What was it like?
- How can we get you back there?
- You used to (fill in the blank) but you're making a positive change.
- You know what you need to do to change that behavior. How can we help?
- Can you think of a time when you were able to make your appointments?
- How can we plan so you don't run into this problem again?
- Emphasize those times that are "different" or "better".
- Affirm strengths and/or parental protective capacities

62

Scaling Questions

- Can be used to assess the level of change that has occurred
- Focus on working towards the goal
- Define the numbers of the scale
- Smaller increments – 1-2 points at a time
- Be realistic about moving up the scale



63

Scaling Questions

- On a scale from 1-10, where are you today with …(condition, service, overall progress)?
- What's keeping you from going up or down a point?
- What will it take to get you to increase 1 point?
- How can we help you increase up the scale?
- How will you know when you get there?
- Your priority was to make your AODA appointments. You started at 0, where are you today?
- On a scale from 1-10, where are you in your sobriety journey?
- Social workers could include the parent's scale number in the permanency plan so the judge can ask about progress at the next hearing.
- At the last court hearing, you said you were at a 5 and now you're at an 8!

64

Relationship Questions

- Think about oneself and needs from the perspective of another person
- Frame questions referencing individuals who have influence (parent, child, mentor, etc.)
- Put yourself in someone else's shoes to look at the situation
- Think about a global opinion

65

Relationship Questions

- If appropriate, what would your mother/father notice about your change?
- What would you want to say to your parent? (Example: gratitude at a drug court graduation)
- If child is placed with a family member, what do you want to tell your family member that you're working on to have your child returned to the home?
- What will the judge, social worker, and attorney see the next time you're in court?
- What do you want to tell the court about your progress?
- Is there anything you want your social worker to know?

66

Compliments and Affirmations

- Begin with positive affirmations.
- Avoid judgment, “lessons”, or shaming
- Empower parties
- Establish trust and engagement through positivity

67

Compliments and Affirmations Questions

- You did…. Tell me how that went…
- How were you able to make that happen?
- Summarize what the parent said - What I hear you saying is….
- I heard what you said, how can we help?
- I appreciate you telling me your struggles in getting to the drug testing location. How can we help you?
- Emphasizing progress on those 2-3 main priorities

68

Best Hopes / Miracle Questions

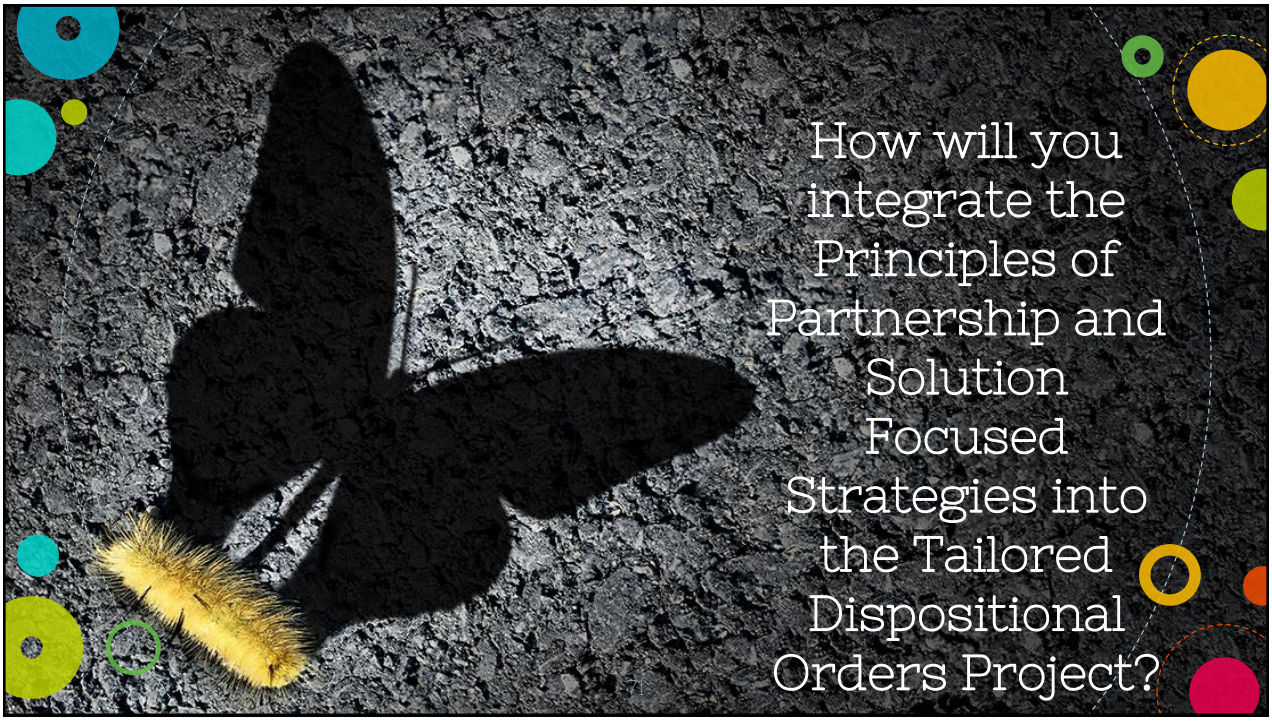
- Think towards the future
- Dream about what you want to happen
- Explore hopes and goals
- Look towards a solution
- Think about the possibilities

69

Best Hope / Miracle Questions

- If you could change one thing in your life, what would it be?
- If CPS was no longer involved, what would that look like?
- What do you hope to see happen?
- What do you plan to do after this court hearing?

70



Next Steps

- How might you engage with families at the Dispositional Hearing?
- How can you engage families at a Review Hearing or a Permanency Hearing to discuss their progress?
- Do you plan to utilize the resources in your practice?

72

Thank You!



Any questions?