

Engaging with Parents: Building Relationships in an Adversarial System

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About us

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Who is in the room?



GALS? Parent Attorneys? Judges?
Social Workers? Case Workers?



How many years of experience?

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Purpose of the Workshop



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What is the Role of a GAL?

Represent the best interests of a
child

Recommendations to the Court

Multiple sides of situation

Make sure that children are getting
what they need

A “go-between” different parties of
the child welfare case

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Question:

What else is part of your role as a
GAL?



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A shift: Relational Advocacy

Primacy of Relationships: strengths and challenges on relationship between children and their families

Purpose of engaging is to learn about the person and family

Foster care is viewed as the intervention of last resort

Resiliency building

Proximate

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Proximate

Civil rights attorney Bryan Stevenson teaches us there is only one way to change our mindsets. He writes that by being proximate with families — that is, only if we're *“willing to get closer to people who are suffering”* — will we *“find the power to change the world.”*

“Proximity requires us to listen. It necessitates that we are willing to learn. It mandates that we are always open to changing our minds.” Vivek Sankaran, University of Michigan Law

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“Can we view families as sources of strength, rather than collections of deficiencies? Can we view foster care as an intervention that should be sparingly used only in the most serious of cases? Can we view relationships between children and their families as the most precious commodity we know that must be safeguarded whenever possible?” -Vivek Sankaran, University of Michigan Law

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Every professional is there to give parents and youth the space to tell their stories

To be
proximate
means

Understand strengths and challenges they face

Allowing space to acknowledge the structural inequities — including racism, sexism and disablism — that have contributed to the family’s predicament.

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Reframe of the Role of the GAL

To build bridges

To proximate,
consider the primacy
of relationships and
connections

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Barrers to Relational Advocacy with Parents

Opposing counsel

Differing views

Parent understanding the role of the GAL

Noncooperation

Suspicion

Mental Health

Anger/Defensiveness

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Comments/questions?

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Relational Advocacy

Guiding Principals

Trauma informed

Transparent

Compassionate

Relationships are crucial

Direct Skills

 Pay attention

 Suspend judgement

 Empathetic statements

 Resiliency building questions

 Reflective listening

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Guiding Principles

Trauma Informed

Transparency

Compassionate Engagement

Relationships are paramount

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What is Trauma? a: The 3 E's

Individual trauma results from an **event, events, or circumstance**

Experienced as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening

Lasting adverse **effects**



SAMHSA
Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

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Trauma Responses



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Trauma informed care means...

Realize Impact

Recognize Signs of Trauma

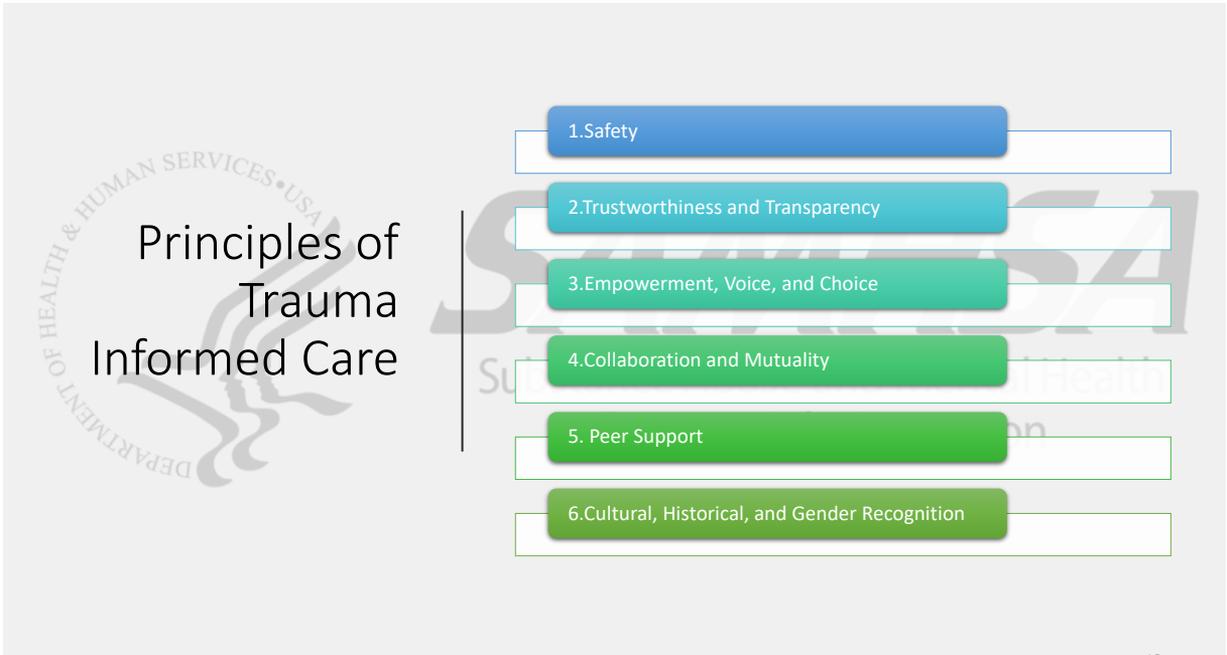
Respond

Resist re-traumatization



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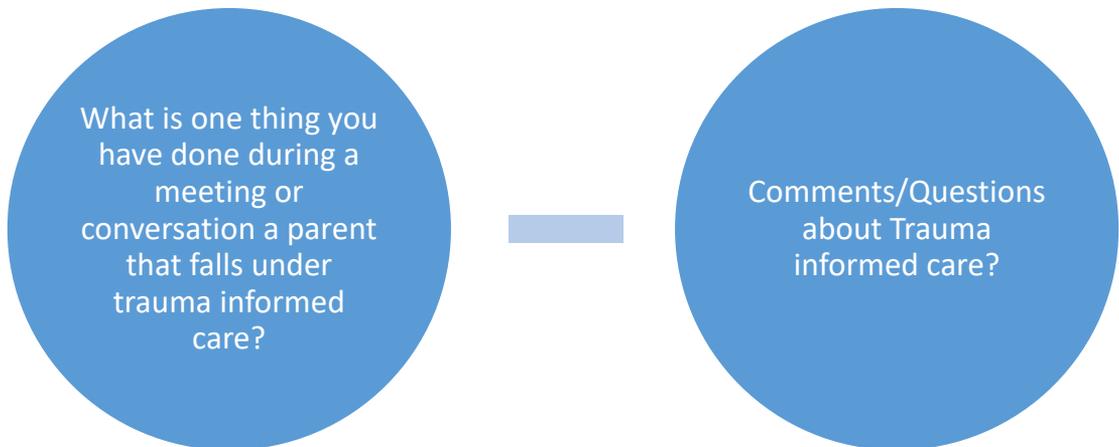


The slide features a large, faint watermark of the Department of Health & Human Services USA logo on the left. The title "Principles of Trauma Informed Care" is centered in a large, black, sans-serif font. To the right of the title is a vertical line. Further right is a list of six principles, each in a colored rounded rectangle with a corresponding empty white box to its right:

- 1. Safety
- 2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
- 3. Empowerment, Voice, and Choice
- 4. Collaboration and Mutuality
- 5. Peer Support
- 6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Recognition

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Transparency:

Making your purpose and position clear

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BENEFITS?

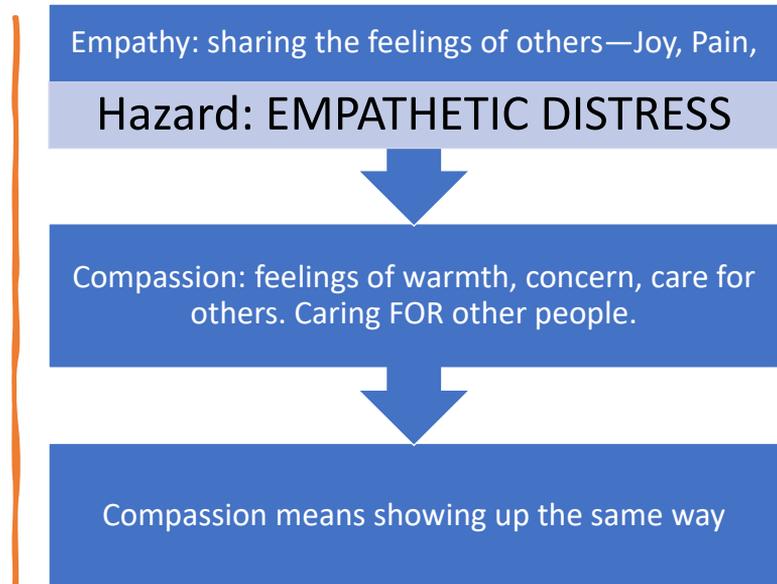


LIMITATIONS?

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Compassionate Engagement



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Relationships are paramount

- Form a relationship
- Consider relationships between parents, children, system, larger structures
- Preserve bond between parents and children

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Direct Skills



Pay attention



Suspend judgement



Empathetic statements



Resiliency building questions



Reflective listening

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PAY ATTENTION



Allow time and create space



Set your intention

Listener and learner
Connect to understand

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Pay Attention to



WORDS YOU USE



EYE CONTACT

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SUSPENDING
JUDGEMENT

Hear	Hear ideas
Accept	Accept perspectives
Avoid	Avoid arguing or selling your point of view

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Empathic Statements

- That sounds really hard
- I can't imagine what it's like to be in your shoes
- I can see how difficult this has been
- The whole thing sounds so discouraging
- I can totally see why you would be upset
- I can't believe how well you're holding up, considering how much stress you're under

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Resiliency Building

“Building resilience – the **ability to adapt well to adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress** – can help manage stress and feelings of anxiety and uncertainty,” according to the American Psychological Association (APA)

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Resiliency Building Questions with Parents*

*Brad Ward Lundahl, University of Utah

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Before all of this happened

- What did a perfect day look like for you and your kids?

I believe that you love your child:

- Tell me what you love about _____

I believe you want the best for your child

- Tell me about times you feel like you were a good parent to _____?
- What have you given up to make sure _____ has what they need?

I believe you are important to this child

- What is a special thing only you can give them?

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Resiliency Building Questions: Relationships and Connections *

*Brad Ward Lundahl, University of Utah

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When you need something,
who do you look to for help?

Who is the person besides you
that knows your kids best?

Who can you count on, no
matter what?

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Resiliency Building Questions: Strengths *

*Brad Ward Lundahl, University of Utah

What part of being a parent do you enjoy the most?

When are you at your best as a parent?

What would _____ say is the best part of having you as a parent?

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Resiliency Building: efficacy and mastery *

*Brad Ward Lundahl, University of Utah

What would you like to improve on as a parent?

What's one thing you want help with to be a better parent for _____?

What part of being a parent would you like to copy from a friend or family member?

What would a friend or neighbor say you are good at?

What are you proudest of?

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Question

Which of those questions resonated the most?

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Additional
Comments/Questions?

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Reflective Listening

Be a mirror

Use paraphrasing—a brief, periodic recap of the other person’s key points—to confirm your understanding

A way to show that you hear and may understand

Don’t assume that you understand correctly

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Examples of Reflecting

“What I’m hearing is...”

“Let me make sure I understand what you’re saying...”

You seem to think that...

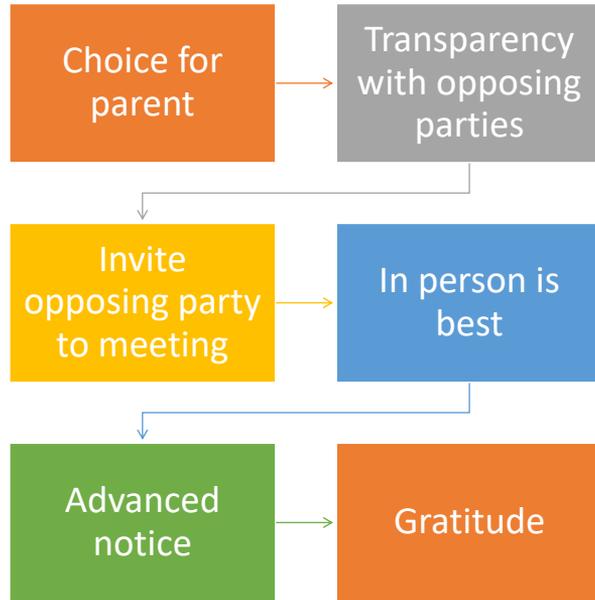
It seems to me that you are ...

It sounds as if you’re feeling...

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Tips for parent visit



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Build in self care

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Relational Advocacy

Guiding Principals

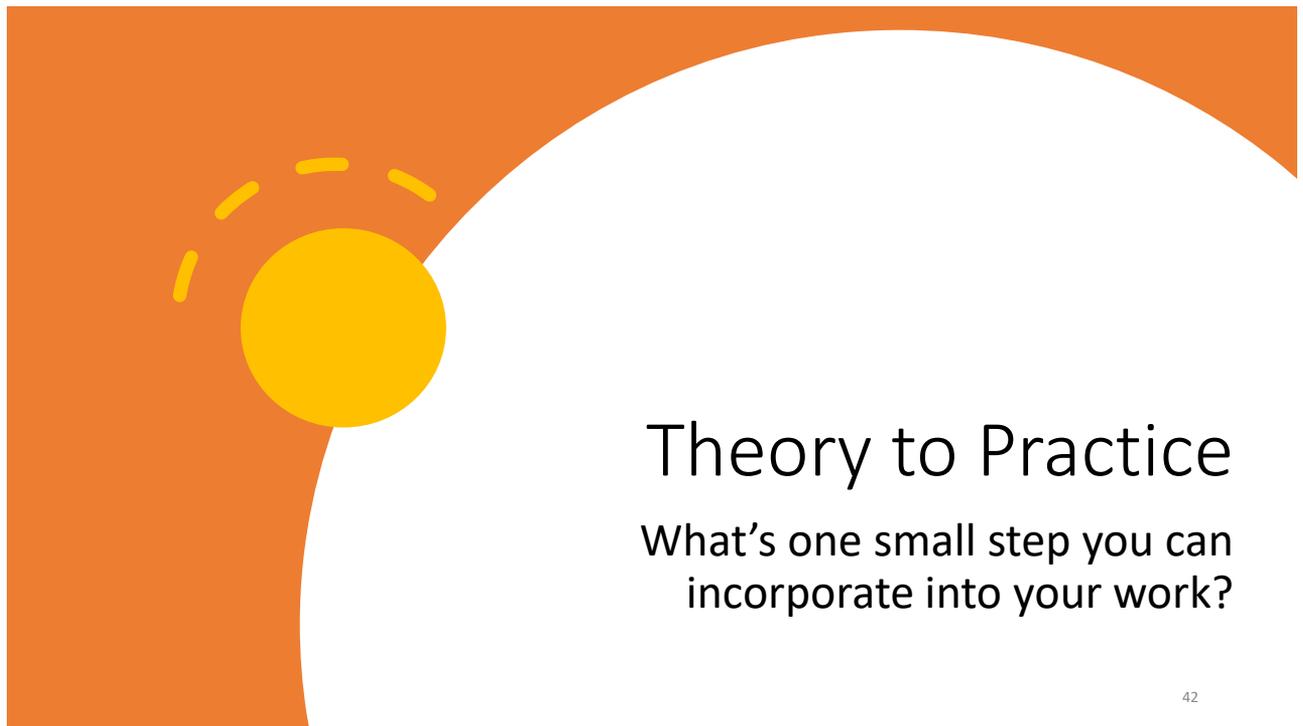
- Trauma informed
- Transparency
- Compassionate
- Relationships are crucial

Direct Skills

-  Pay attention
-  Suspend judgement
-  Empathetic statements
-  Resiliency building questions
-  Reflective listening

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Theory to Practice

What's one small step you can incorporate into your work?

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