Relationships are key to healthy development
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April 2018

NMAIMH competencies addressed

Theoretical Foundations
- Family relationships and dynamics

Reflection
- Contemplation

Most of us attended the recent statewide regional workshop on trauma-informed care and self-care. Our nation also recently gained trauma-informed care awareness presented by Dr. Bruce Perry on a television interview. For those not familiar with Dr. Bruce Perry, he is an internationally recognized authority on children in crisis and one of the leading experts in trauma-informed practice. During his interview, Dr. Bruce Perry discussed numerous behaviors in which trauma can manifest and specifically how relationships are key to healthy child development. Healthy responsive relationships support resilience and can turn toxic stress into tolerable stress that can help us to respond and adapt to adversity (Jack Shonkoff, 2012).

In our relationship-based work, the focus is to highlight the significance of the parent/child relationship and family relationships. We already promote healthy child development when families engage in face to face visits delivered by the home visitors. We also promote healthy relationships when we routinely utilize the CYFD tools and screens, develop family goals, and refer families to community resources. Now let’s think of a few models that endorse and support the parent/child relationship: Circle of Security, Pyramid Model Supporting Social-Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children, Infant Mental Health practices, program curriculum and reflective practice. These are some of the techniques home visitors already uphold that reinforce Dr. Bruce Perry’s statement about relationships are key to healthy child development.

We work hard to ensure families develop and invest in healthy relationships. However, we need to remember to sustain ourselves in our work, we also need to develop and invest in our own relationship with ourselves (self-care). Having a healthy relationship with ourselves keeps us mentally and physically well. By maintaining a healthy relationship with ourselves, we then can build healthy relationships with our work and others. We all have said “I don’t have time for self-care,” just remember you don’t have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step, (Laura Lipsky, 2009).
Questions to encourage discussion and reflection…

• How did the trauma-informed care regional workshop affect your work? If you feel it did affect your work, how do you incorporate some of this into your work?
• How do you preserve the parent/child relationship during home visits?
• How do you foster a healthy relationship between yourself and your work?
• How do you promote and maintain a relationship with community partners?

Additional Resources:

At the regional workshop, Rebecca and Raven provided a list of resources on wellness and resilience. Here are some other resources for your toolbox. Take some time with your program to reflect and discuss.

• Dr. Bruce Perry interview: https://www.cbsnews.com/news/oprah-winfrey-treating-childhood-trauma/
• Harvard Center on the Developing Child: https://developingchild.harvard.edu/

References:
