Being with Families: FAN Approach to Family Engagement
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Focus Program

Fussy Baby Network®

- National model prevention program
- FAN Approach to Family Communication
- National Network
  - Program sites
  - Infusion sites
  - Systems sites

The FAN

- Roots in work with fussy babies and parents
- Attunement to parents
- How to read parent’s cues
The FAN

– How to match what we offer to their cues
  • To their feelings
  • To their readiness to think with you
  • To their openness to act
  • To their own insights as parents

– How to attune to ourselves when with parents
  • What is coming up in you

Attunement: Feeling Connected & Understood

Think of a time when someone really understood you—
– How did you feel about yourself?
– How did you feel about the relationship?

• “When someone feels truly understood, “known,” the attunement that occurs creates a space where it is possible to try new ways of interacting.” Siegel & Hartzell, 2003 in Lewis, 2011, p. 446.

• Attunement has been shown to
  – increases safety
  – decreases anxiety
  – releases parental capacity
With attunement, interactions flow.

- When mother is in tune with infant, infant keeps on going, uninterrupted, flowing
- Infant comes to know own affect and sense of self

The FAN

- Support interventionist in their work with families
  - Structure for engagement
  - Help parents in the now moment with their urgent concern
  - In a way that builds parenting strength
  - Holds the practitioner as a calm center for change

The FAN

- Support staff in supervision
  - "Being with" staff & his/her needs in their work with families
  - Support reflective practice
    - Continuous understanding of what one is seeing, feeling, & doing
    - Pausing to consider before jumping to conclusion or action
Parallel Process of Holding

- FAN helps us learn to hold ourselves,
- So we can hold the parent,
- So the parent can hold/contain herself/himself,
- And then hold the baby,
- And the baby can internalize the holding

What does it take to create attunement?

With Families or in Supervision

- What are you seeing?
- What are you feeling?
- What does it make you want to do?
- Where do you choose to go?
FAN as Tool for Attunement

- **Calming**
  - When you are dysregulated/out of balance
- **Feeling**
  - When parents show or express emotion
- **Thinking**
  - When parents are calm and wanting to figure out child/issue
- **Doing**
  - When parents are focused and ready for change
  - When the child is needing help
- **Reflecting**
  - When parents have insights/before they leave

FAN Matching Process

- **Observing Parent’s Cues**
  - What is the parent showing me in the moment?
- **Offering**
  - Which core process matches the parent’s cues?
- **Checking**
  - Is this working? (For the parent, the baby or me?)
  - If in the right FAN wedge, should be “flowing”
- **Re-attune**
  - Move on the FAN based on the parent’s, child’s or own response
Core Process: Mindful Self-Regulation

To bring calm, you need to possess it.

Mindful Self-Regulation

- Reading your own cues
- Available to you at any moment
- "MSR helps pull home visitors back to the present."
Mindful Self-Regulation: Used when the balance tips

Mindful Self-Regulation
Where are you on the continuum of regulation?

Dysregulated Some Dysregulation Mostly Regulated Regulated

Threshold is breeched

What gets you stirred up?
Dysregulation is a Cue and Opportunity

ABCs of Mindful Self-Regulation

• **Awareness**
  – Become aware of your own reactions: thoughts, feelings, body tensions
  – And Accept them

• **Balance**
  – Use your strategies to come back to balance

• **Connection**
  – Connect with new awareness

Adapted from Saakvitne, K. & Pearlman, L. (1996)

MSR Strategies

Breathing

Grounding

Photo credit: http://warriorfitness.org
MSR Strategies

Self-Talk

Imagery

Mindful Self-Regulation: Helps Bring Clarity

Core Process: Empathic Inquiry
Empathic Inquiry

- Safe holding space
- Feelings are focus
- Can be a moment or most of visit
- "If you can stay with Empathic Inquiry, the parent will move themselves on the FAN."

Empathic Inquiry Strategies

- Holding Feelings
  - Taking in/experiencing/tolerating feeling while staying emotionally present and conveying safety, openness, and compassion
- Exploring Feelings
  - What was it like for you…?
  - Can you say more about what you were feeling in the moment when…
- Validating Feelings
  - I can hear how worried you are.
  - That must have been so hard.
- Containing (Moving from) Feelings
  - I hear how concerned you are. I’m wondering if there has been a time when things went differently?
  - We’ve talked about how stressful this is. Do you think you have the space now to move into thinking about what might be helpful?

Core Process: Collaborative Exploration
Collaborative Exploration

• "Let’s think together"
• Belief that the parent is the expert
• Pause before doing
• Thinking together without the pressure to change

• "Giving up control is a relief"
• "Instead of trying to fix it, I now know that I need to stay with them."

Collaborative Exploration Understanding Together

• Theory of problem
• Strategies tried
• Parent’s view: See the baby the parent sees
• Changes desired
• Views of important others
• Readiness to try new way
• Planning first steps
• Anticipating “doing”

Core Process: Capacity Building
Capacity Building

- Requires an invitation
- Stays with the family
- Learning through doing
- “I literally sat on my hands and the mother was able to calm her baby.”

Capacity Building Support During Action

- Watch for and highlight what the parent is doing to help
- Elicit or validate what the parent already knows: What’s your hunch?
- Offer and Explore
- Invite parents to try out something important to them

Capacity Building Moment

- Acknowledge what is happening
- Affirm parental role and intuition
- Offer attuned support
  - “I’m here with you.”
Angel Moments

– Pause and protect
– Glow with them
– Reflect the emotional tone

Core Process: Integration

Integration

• Highlighting parents’ insights—“Ah Ha Moments”
• Making time at the end to slow down and let parent reflect
Integration:
REFLECTION

Create a coherent narrative around stressful experience
– Affirm parent’s insights/see baby/self in new way
– Give parent’s opportunity to reflect before they leave
  • about their view of the baby/child
  • about their own experience of the visit

• If you were to describe your child in three words, what would you say?

• We have talked about a lot together on this visit. Is there anything that you would like to remember or hold onto that would be helpful to you?”

Lessons Learned from Families

• See and hold the parent’s experience
  – Recognition of inner experience
• Stay longer in the hard places
  – Hold uncomfortable feelings
• See the baby the parent sees
  – Deeply understand concerns & fears
• Help parents find their way
  – Think together

Feedback on FAN from Home Visitors and Supervisors

• Stay with the process longer and not rush to fix
• Stay calm and regulated in difficult situations
• See more from parent’s perspective
• Be more comfortable holding and exploring parent’s negative feelings about child
• Elicit more from the parent
• Focus more quickly on the parent/child relationship
• Feel less stressed in their role
Purpose of Each Question

• Beginning
  – To understand parent’s own felt experience
• Middle
  – To share power and collaborate
• End
  – To build the parent’s capacity for reflective functioning

ARC Adaptations

• Beginning:
  – How are things going for you as a mom/dad since we last talked?
  – How have you been feeling as a parent since we last met?
• Middle:
  – Is there something else you want to focus on today?
  – Before we move on, is there anything else you wanted to talk about?
• End:
  – If you had to describe your baby, what words come to mind?
  – What stood out most from our visit today?
ARC of Engagement

- **Security**
  - Provides consistent, predictable structure

- **Focus**
  - Helps you take the pulse and see where parent is
  - Allows you to shift focus to parenting early in the visit

- **Collaboration**
  - Provides concrete way to partner with parent throughout the visit

- **Gives closure to communication circle**
  - Provides a calm end for parent and visitor

Example: ARC of Team Discussion

1. What has been like for you to work with this family?
2. What is your (urgent) concern that you’d like to bring to the group?
3. In Middle: Are we getting to what you most hoped we’d talk about?
4. What would you like to take away from this discussion that will be helpful to you?