

Universal
LifeStiles

**Enhancing
Family - Provider
Relationships**

by
Tom Pomeranz, Ed.D.



Universal Enhancement

Session Goals

Participants of Enhancing Provider-Family Relationships will be able to:

- **Adhere to the three core beliefs and principles in working with families.**
- **Explain the concept of unconditional positive regard and demonstrate a concerted effort in applying it.**
- **Be aware of and avoid “Family Profiling”.**
- **Explain why and how staff attitude and behavior are the most significant of all influences on families.**
- **Delineate eight characteristics of exemplary staff and demonstrate them.**
- **Identify four sources of conflict.**

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Session Goals (cont'd...)

Participants of Enhancing Provider-Family Relationships will be able to:

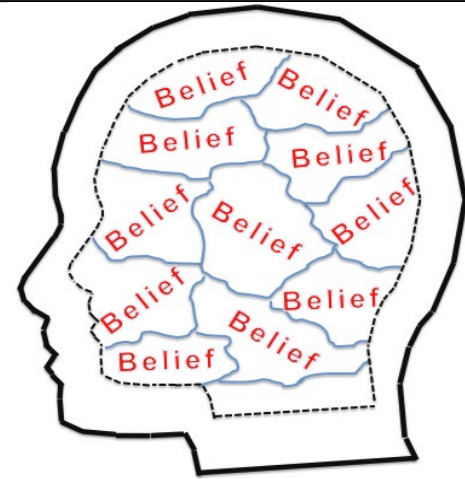
- State the “Listener’s Code” and demonstrate it.
- Discuss the various components of “Connecting Emotionally” with families and demonstrate it.
- Identify the six potential causes of the appearance of defensiveness, hostility and rejection of agency staff by families.
- Demonstrate introspection regarding their relationship with families.
- Explain to families the difference in the roles of a parent to their adult child, a parent conservator to their adult child and a parent to their minor child.
- Detail four strategies for resolving differences of opinion with families and demonstrate them.

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Core Beliefs

It is crucial that professionals adhere to the following beliefs in working with families:

-It is not easy for any of us to be a parent; if you have a child (younger or adult) with a disability the task is much more challenging.



“It feels as though I have been thrown off a cliff into deep water and I don’t know how to swim. All around me there are people who can help me, or teach me to swim. But I can’t get to them and they don’t help me, and I know that eventually I will go under”

- Family carer

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Scary Place

**Being part of the
community can
be a scary place-
filled with hurt!**

**Why would one
want to be
there?**

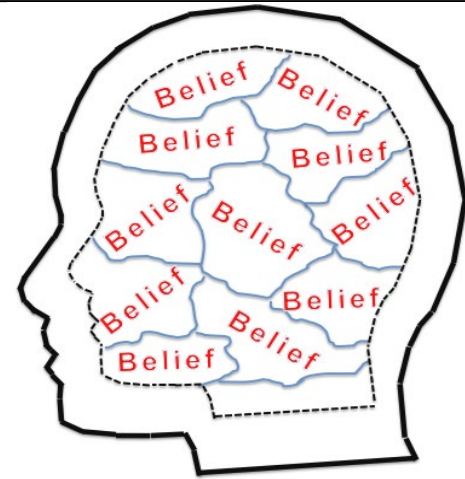
John O'Brien, Ph.D.

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It is crucial that professionals adhere to the following beliefs in working with families:



- It is not easy for any of us to be a parent; if you have a child (younger or adult) with a disability the task is much more challenging.
- Conflict between professionals and families is not necessarily a bad thing. Interpersonal disputes between families and professionals are an inevitable fact of life – and usually can be successfully resolved if professionals respond appropriately.

Interpersonal Conflict



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Parent/Guardian Conflict

When parents/guardians:

- Refuse to authorize medications
- Refuse to follow BSP protocols
- Reinforce/incite interfering behavior in their ward
- Verbally deride staff efforts

It evokes frustration and exasperation in staff!

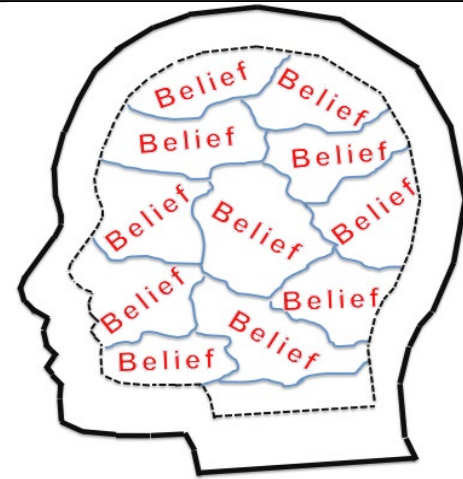
Management must address the issue!



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- Conflict between professionals and families is not necessarily a bad thing. Interpersonal disputes between families and professionals are an inevitable fact of life – and usually can be successfully resolved if professionals respond appropriately.
- In the long run, families seem to hold a special respect and never forget the professionals who have hung in there with them faithfully, when the family was really struggling or particularly disagreeable.

J. Dale Munro, MSW, RSW, FAAIDD, Regional Support Associates Working with Families: Essential Skills Every Professional and Manager Should Know!; NADD Bulletin Volume XII Number 3 Article 1

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Unconditional Positive Regard

This is an attitude of grace, an attitude that values families even knowing their failings. There is profound relief for a family to drop their pretenses, confess their worst feelings and discover that they are still accepted. In a good marriage, a close family or an intimate friendship, one is free to be spontaneous without fearing the loss of others' esteem. The Psychology Dictionary

To be fully embraced regardless of your demons, faults or failings !



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Say, Do, Feel

**People will forget
what you said.**

**People will forget
what you did.**

**People will never
forget how you
made them feel!**

Maya Angelou



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Different Yet The Same

Conflicted and troubled families of children (young and adult) with I/DD are equally distributed among all groups of people unrelated to:

Nationality

Religion

Age

Gender

Race

Socio-economic status

Education



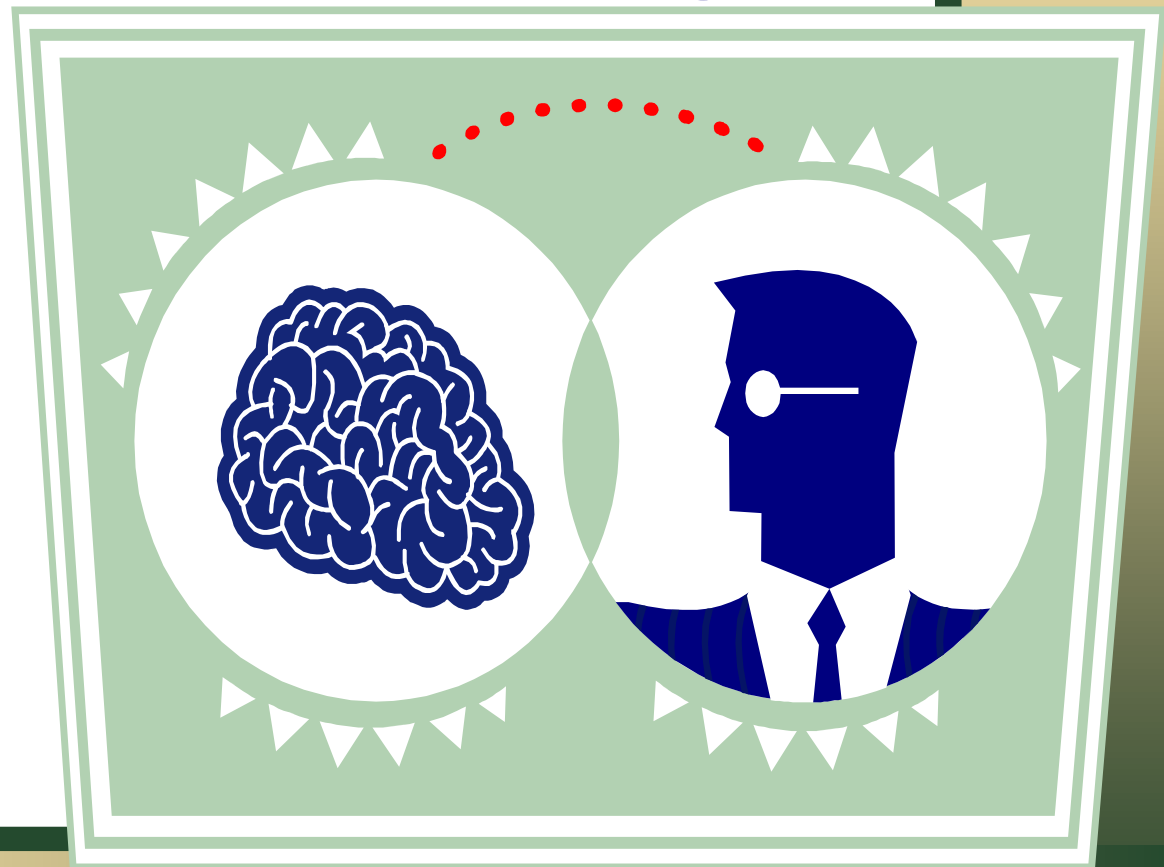
What do they have in common?

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Family Profiling

Predetermining a family's abilities, interests and life outcomes without obtaining insight, input, knowledge and options for (and from) the family.

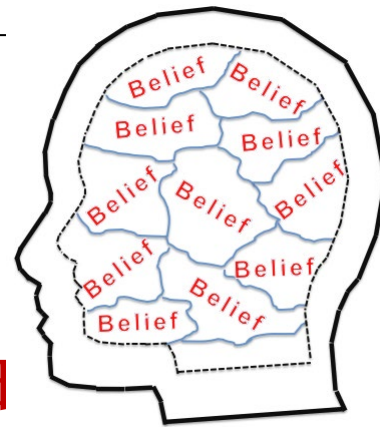
Sherry J. Lusk, 2009



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Core Beliefs (cont'd)

-There is a type of pain, grief, and trauma found in and experienced by families of people with disabilities. Many families have broken spirits and intervention must also focus on spiritual (not necessarily religious) healing. Spiritual approaches include showing compassion and kindness, helping families discover meaning in their suffering, offering hope that current circumstances can improve: and striving to find some degree of peace, joy, harmony and fellowship.



J. Dale Munro, MSW, RSW, FAAIDD, Regional Support Associates Working with Families: Essential Skills Every Professional and Manager Should Know!; NADD Bulletin Volume XII Number 3 Article 1

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It May Not Be About You

**“Hurting
people”
hurt
people.**



John Maxwell

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Hurt People

Hurt people hurt people. That's how pain patterns get passed on, generation after generation after generation. Break the chain today. Meet anger with sympathy, contempt with compassion, cruelty with kindness. Greet grimaces with smiles. Forgive and forget about finding fault. Love is the weapon of the future.

-Yehuda Berg

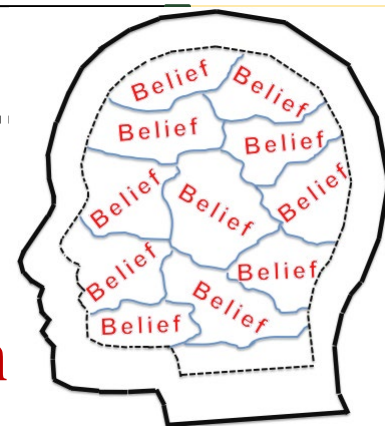
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-Having a child with a developmental disability, despite an urban legend to the contrary, does not necessarily destroy the marriage and a family.

J. Dale Munro, MSW, RSW, FAAIDD, Regional Support Associates Working with Families: Essential Skills Every Professional and Manager Should Know!; NADD Bulletin Volume XII Number 3 Article 1



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Eliminate Anchors

**Beliefs
may be
anchors
that
keep us
stuck!**



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It's Not Magic



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The Struggle Within Us



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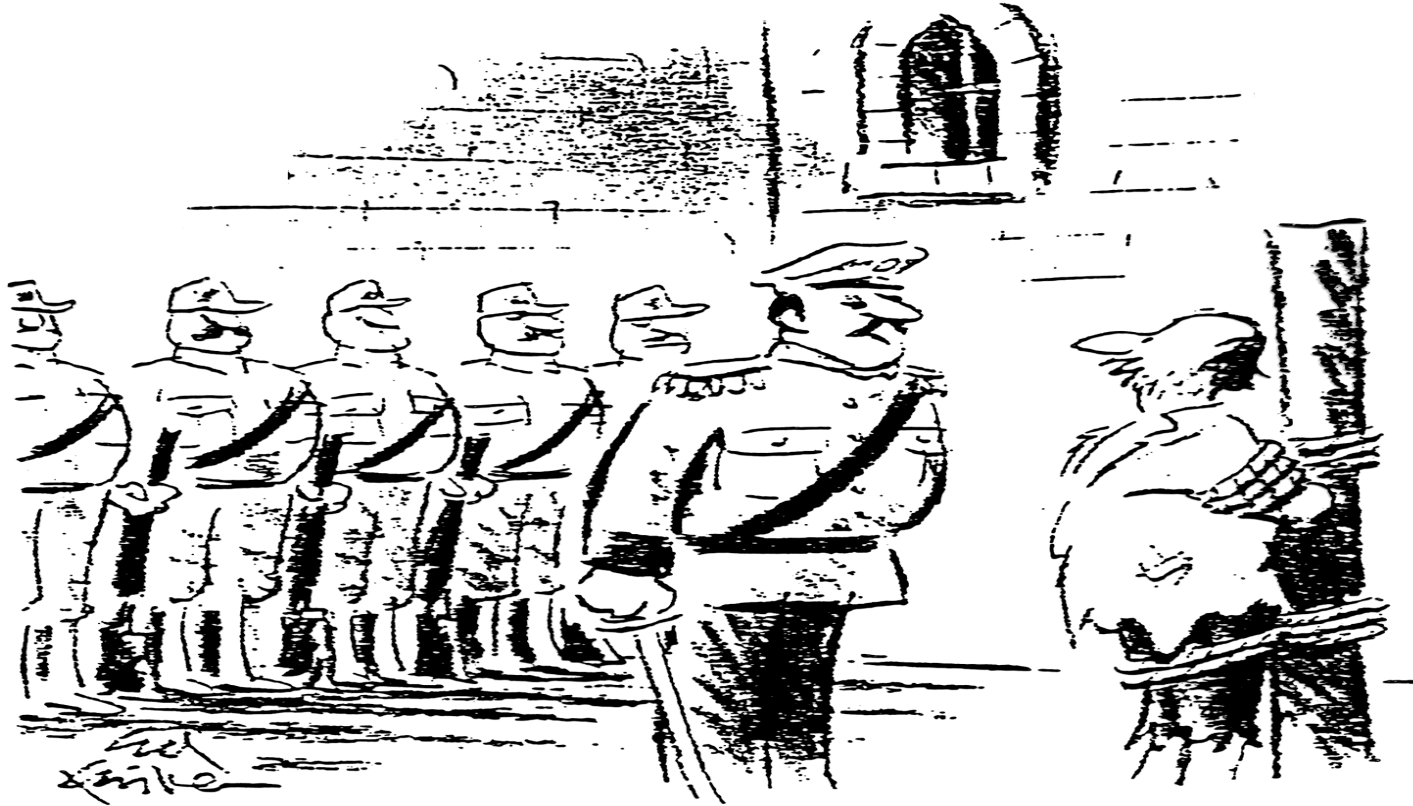
Overcoming Obstacles

Staff who effectively overcome their life's obstacles, are better prepared to assist families in overcoming their challenges.



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Preventative



“We want you to know that this is just a preventative execution.”

I can and I will control a family's behavior!

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Focus On...

Our Behavior

**That is the one thing
we can control!**

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Focus Inward

**Altering the
behavior of
others
necessitates
modifying
our own.**



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Our Attitude...

...and behavior are perhaps the most significant of all influences on families.

Do you:

listen

smile

speak softly

and...

celebrate the efforts of the families!

engage in humor

give options

have fun



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Exemplary Staff

Sensitive and effective Support Staff, their supervisors and clinical staff who serve as their resources need “fire in their bellies.”

Check those characteristics depicting how you present yourself to families:

- ✓ *Energetic*
- ✓ *Happy*
- ✓ *Motivated*
- ✓ *Inspired*
- ✓ *Excited*
- ✓ *Enthusiastic*

- ✓ *Encouraging*
- ✓ *Proud*
- ✓ *Self Confident*
- ✓ *Willing*
- ✓ *A leader*
- ✓ *Determined*



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Is Your Well Full?

***When
your well
is full -
there is
much to
give!***



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Exemplary Staff (cont'd.)

Or...

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tired | <input type="checkbox"/> Reluctant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Depressed | <input type="checkbox"/> Inflexible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discouraged | <input type="checkbox"/> Angry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indifferent | <input type="checkbox"/> Passive/Aggressive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spent | <input type="checkbox"/> Needy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pessimistic | <input type="checkbox"/> Cranky |

**Which staff would you prefer
to
interact with?**

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Lack of Understanding

To refer to a family as uncooperative or undermining is to admit we don't understand them.

The mom is just plain stubborn. She refused to approve the plan!

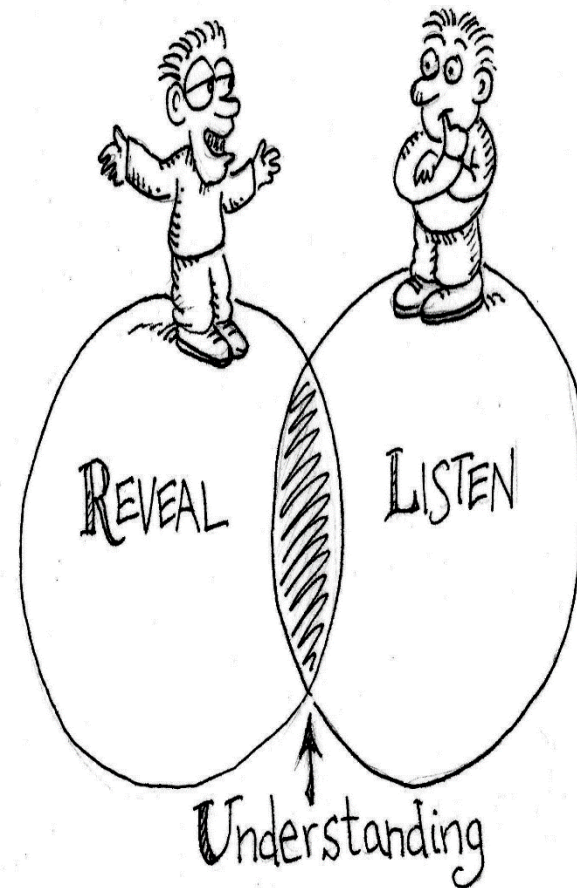


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Maintain A Positive Relationship

Challenging family members can make maintaining a positive relationship difficult.

- *Be proactive; do not let a potential issue develop into a major conflict.*



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Are You Somebody?

I used to ask “why
doesn’t somebody
do something
about that family?”

**Then I realized
that I was
*somebody!***



If It's To Be - It's Up To Me!

Neither Boards of Directors, Executive Directors, Managers, Supervisors or your colleagues can make it happen-

It's up to you!



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I Can!

Not no!

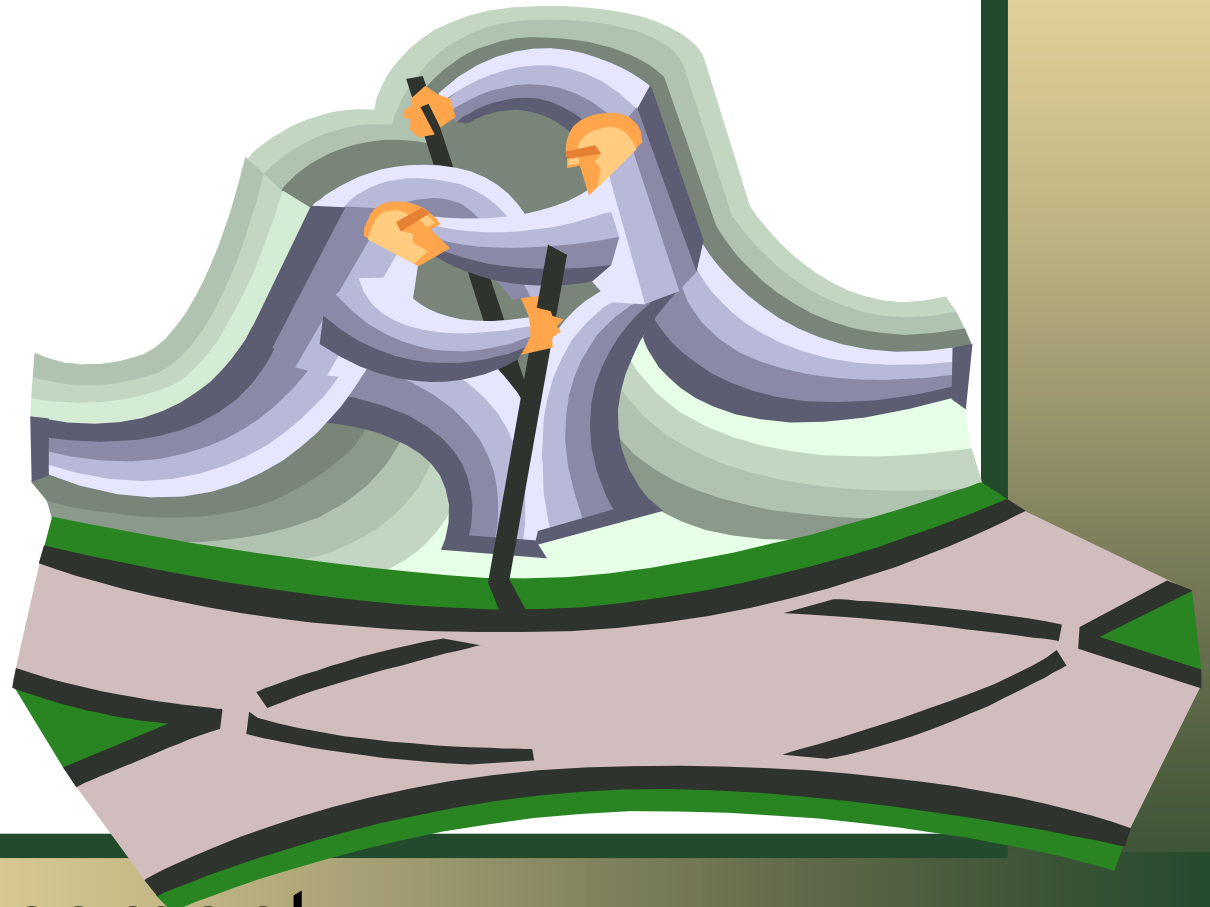
But how?

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Sources of Conflict...

*...develop because of a difference(s) of opinions between families and providers.
For example, differences in:*

Goals



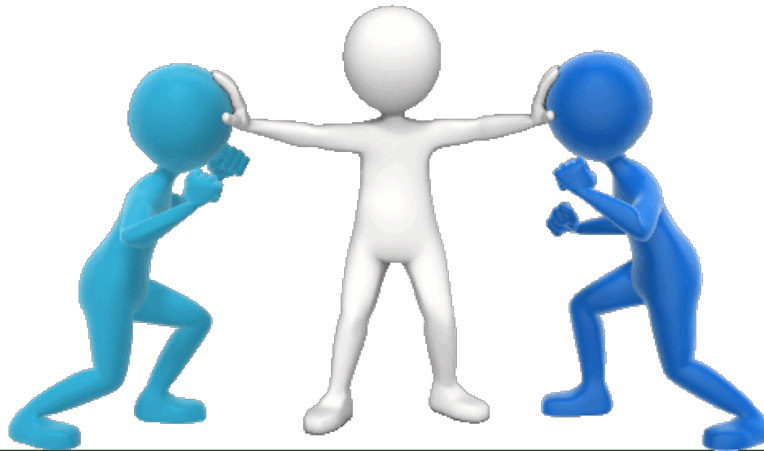
-- R. Blake and J. Mouton

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Goals - Conflict

Interpersonal conflict can ensue between families and providers as a result of conflict over **goals**: desired by/for the support recipient:

- Seeking employment
- Moving away from family into own home
- Pursuing an intimate sexual relationship
- Coming out – identifying oneself as a member of the LGBTQ Community
- Converting their religion



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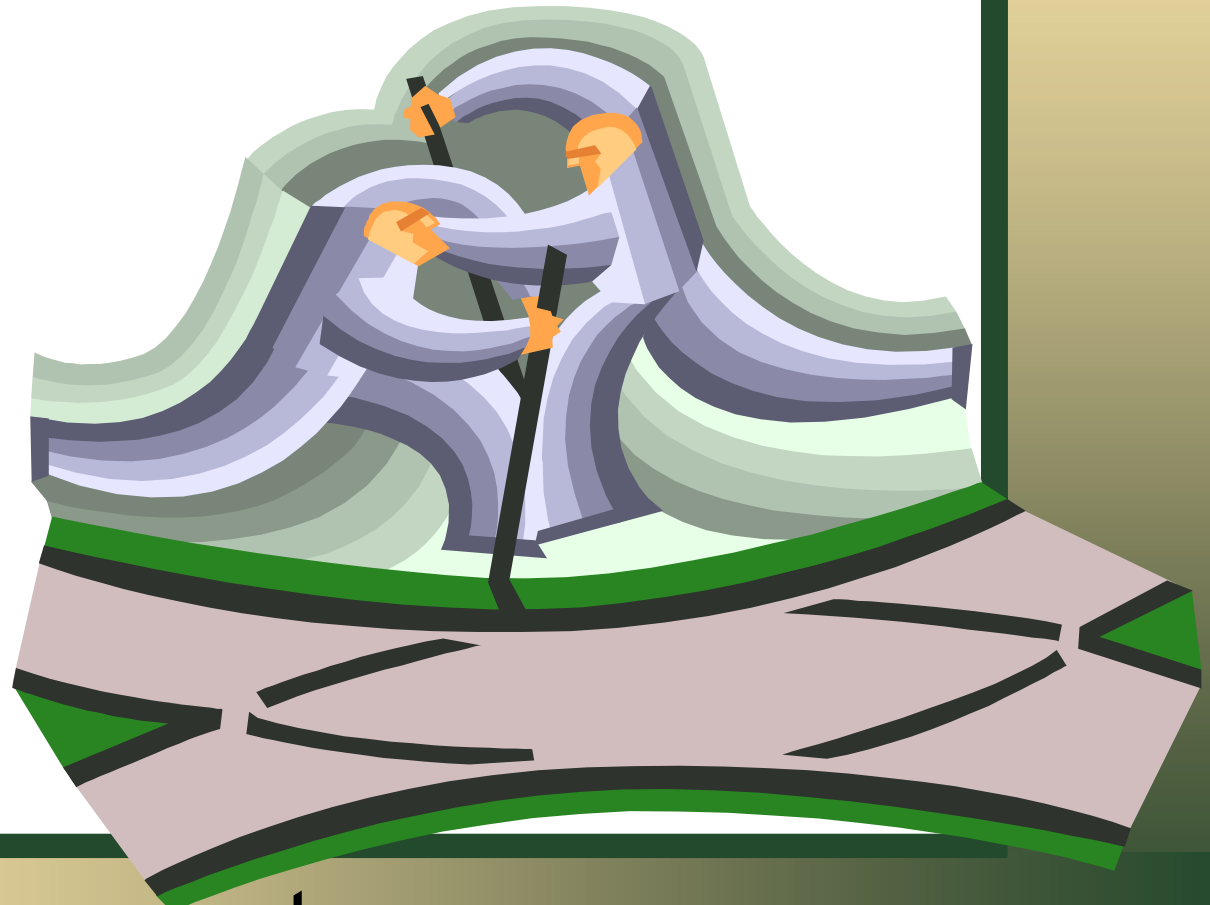
Sources of Conflict...

*...develop because of a difference(s) of opinions between families and providers.
For example, differences in:*

Goals

Values

-- R. Blake and J. Mouton



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Values - Conflict

Interpersonal conflict can ensue between families and providers as a result of conflict over **values**: desired by/for the support recipient:

- **Adult status – seen as a child in an adult body**
- **Having friends – a community presence**
- **A life of purpose – giving and doing for others**
- **The right to risk vs over protective**



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Sources of Conflict...

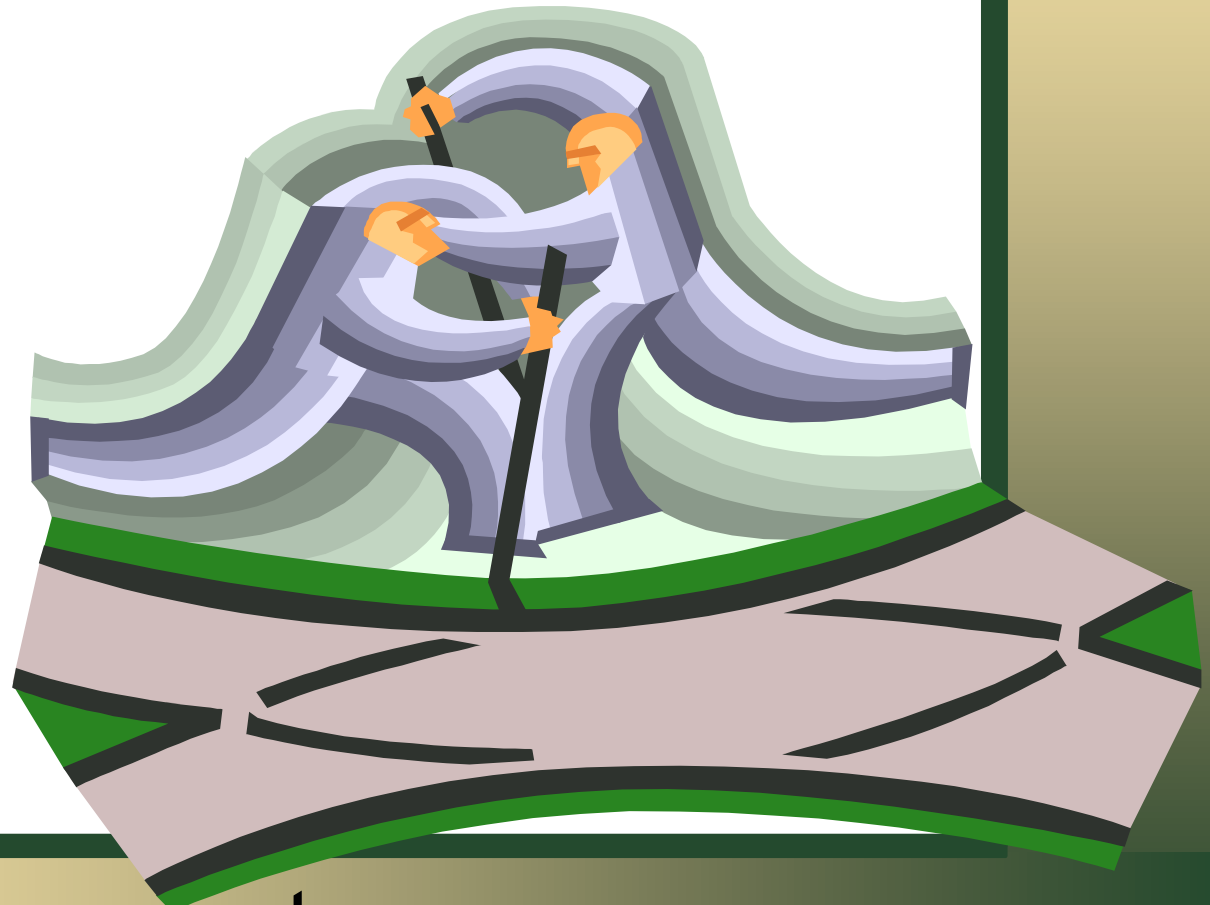
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Values

Facts

-- R. Blake and J. Mouton

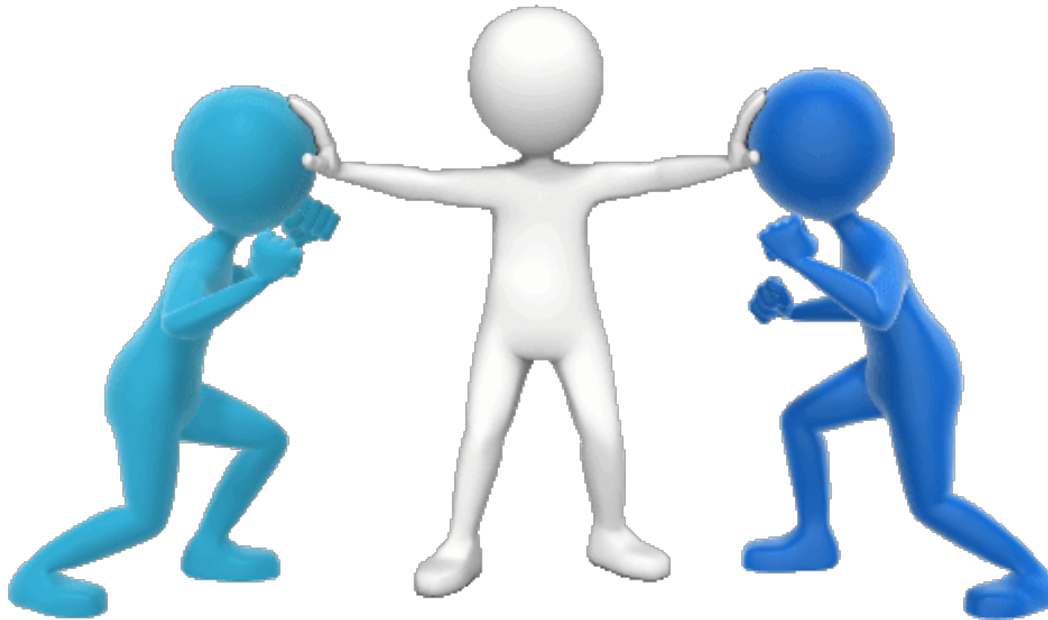


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Facts - Conflict

Interpersonal conflict can ensue between families and providers as a result of conflict over **facts**: desired by/for the support recipient:

- Frequency and intensity of interfering behavior
- Sexual activity
- Diagnosis
- Duration of sleep and awake periods



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Sources of Conflict...

*...develop because of a difference(s) of opinions between families and providers.
For example, differences in:*

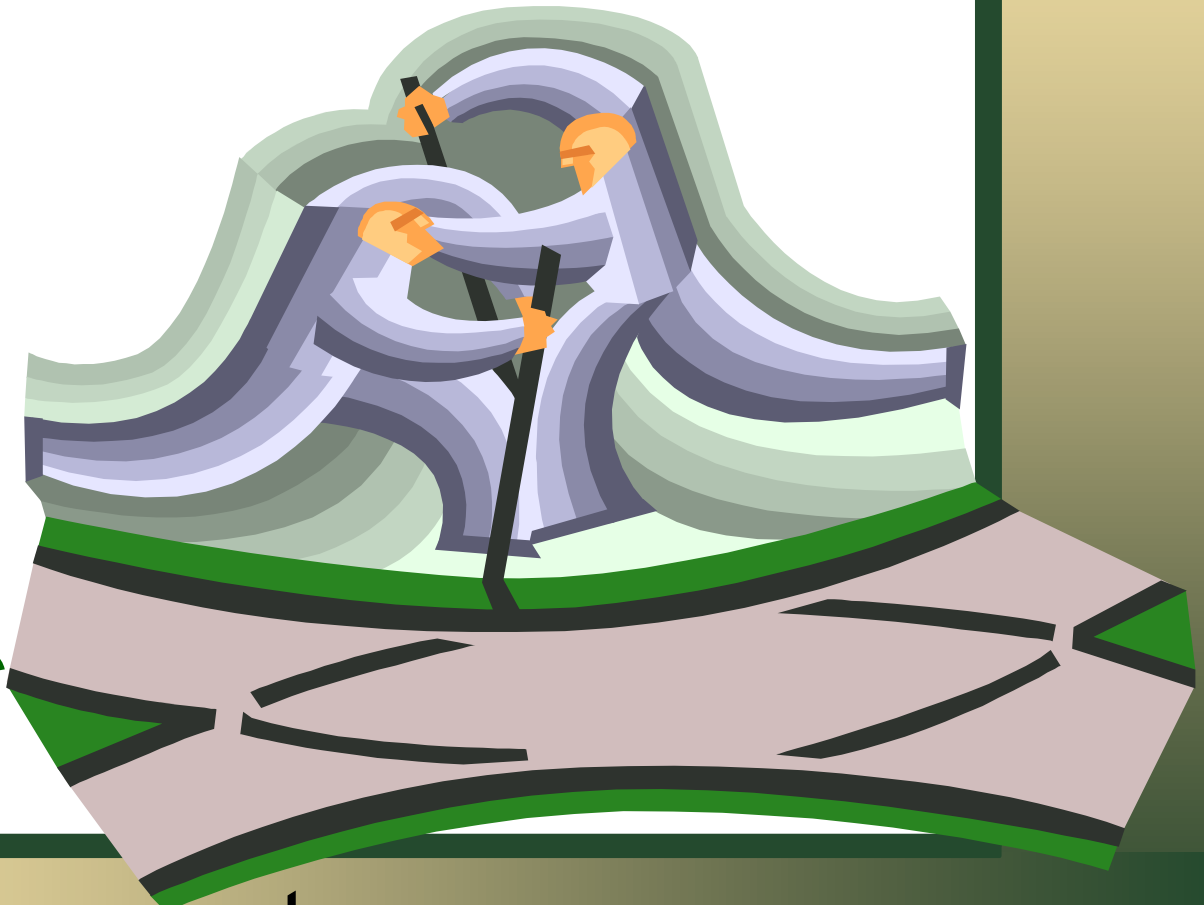
Goals

Values

Facts

Methods

-- R. Blake and J. Mouton



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Methods - Conflict

Interpersonal conflict can ensue between families and providers as a result of conflict over **methods**: desired by/for the support recipient:

- **Strategies to address conduct issues in a Behavior Support Plan**
- **Plan for managing weight, exercise, diet, group meetings, etc.**
- **Protocols to support actual participation in daily routines i.e. cooking, laundry, house cleaning**
- **Procedures to gain independence in toileting, facilitate communication i.e. sign language, tablet, pictographs, etc.**

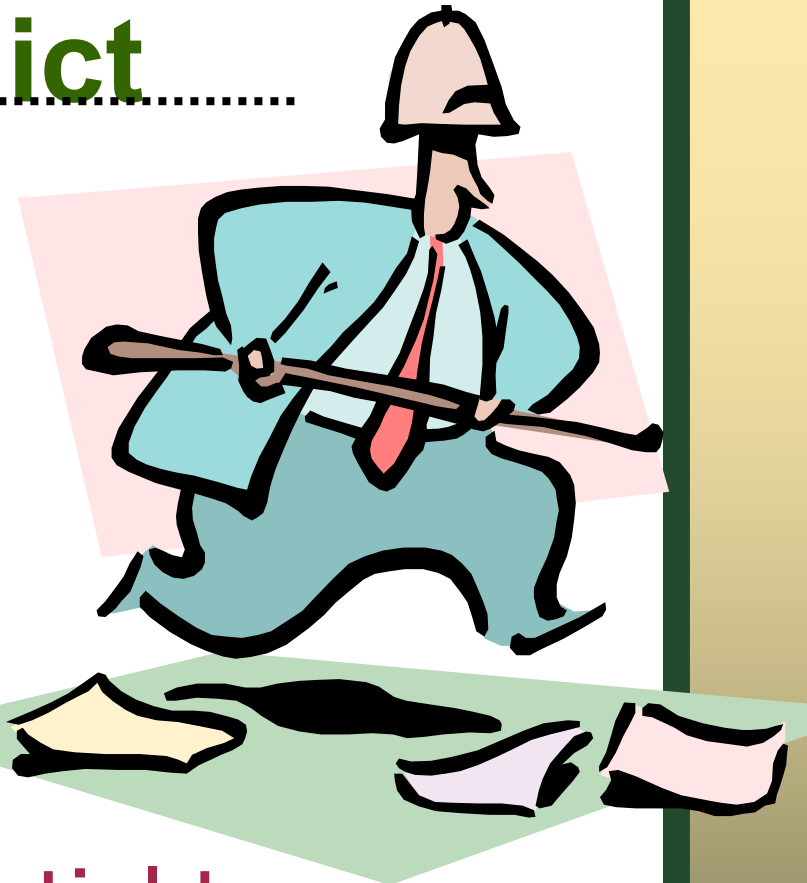


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Address The Conflict

100 % Anticipation
Conscious but
unexpressed
difference
Discussion
Open dispute
0 % Open conflict

The greatest potential to influence conflict is at the anticipation phase and the least potential to influence conflict is at the open conflict stage.

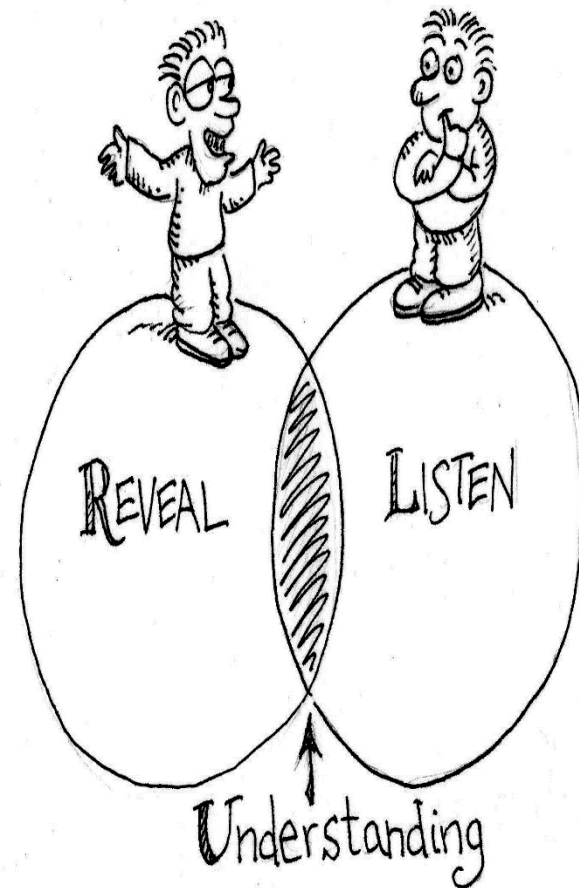


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Maintain A Positive Relationship

Challenging family members can make maintaining a positive relationship difficult.

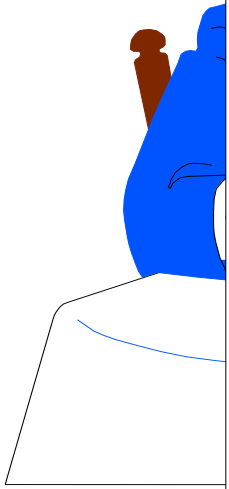
- *Be proactive; do not let a potential issue develop into a major conflict.*
- *Strive to understand the other person's perspective and keep lines of communication open*



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Good Listener

**Listener's Code: Never Pass Up
The Opportunity To Be Silent**

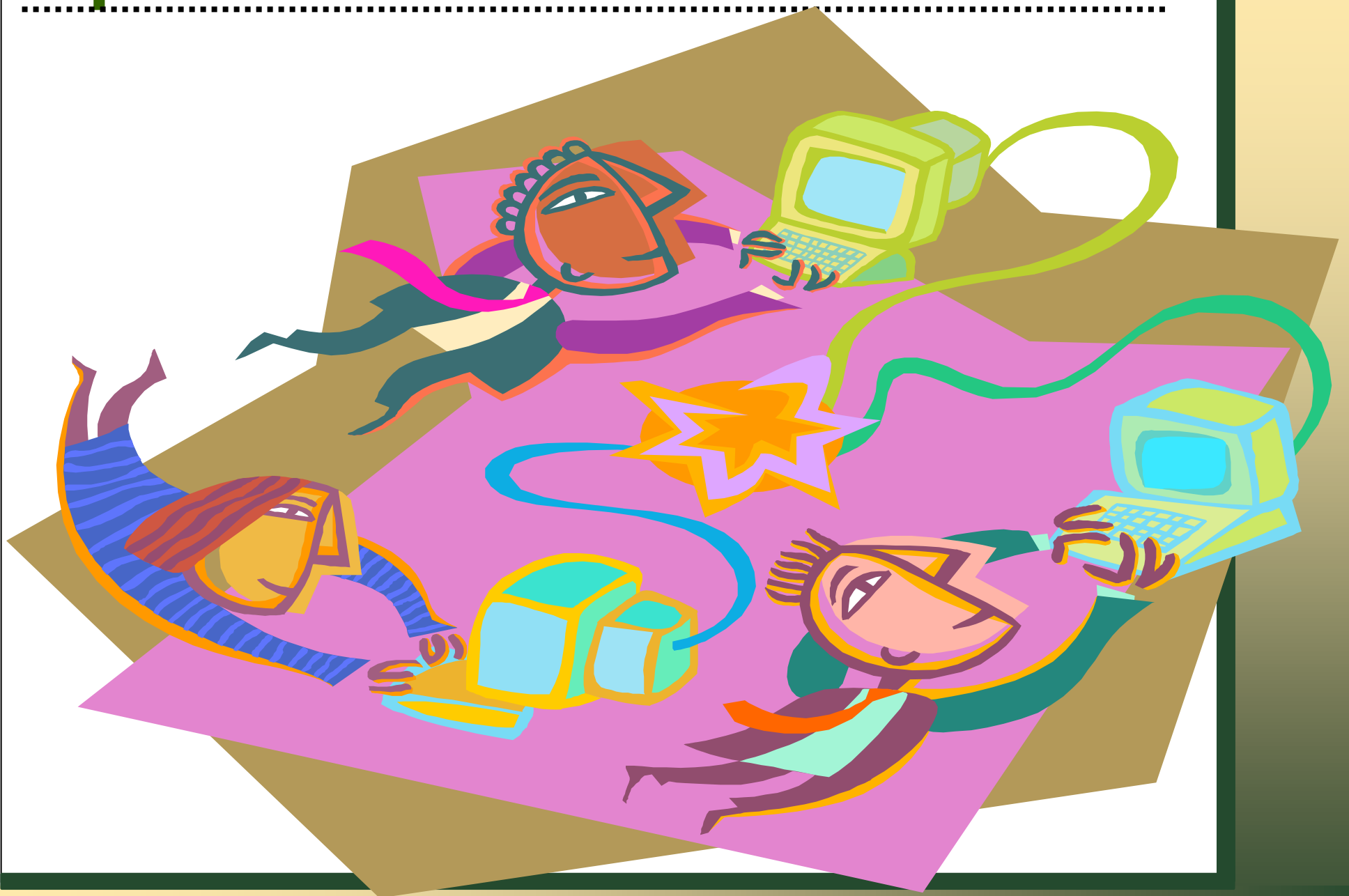


Definition of Listening:

Quiet

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Open Communication



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Mentor Families...

...help families learn and grow – by listening to what they have to say, identifying emotions which they cannot.



Mentors assist the family in making life choices (without judging), which will enhance their life and the life of their family member with disabilities.

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Conflicted Communication

**I know you believe
you understand
what you think
I said, but I am
not sure you
realize what you
heard is not
what I meant.**

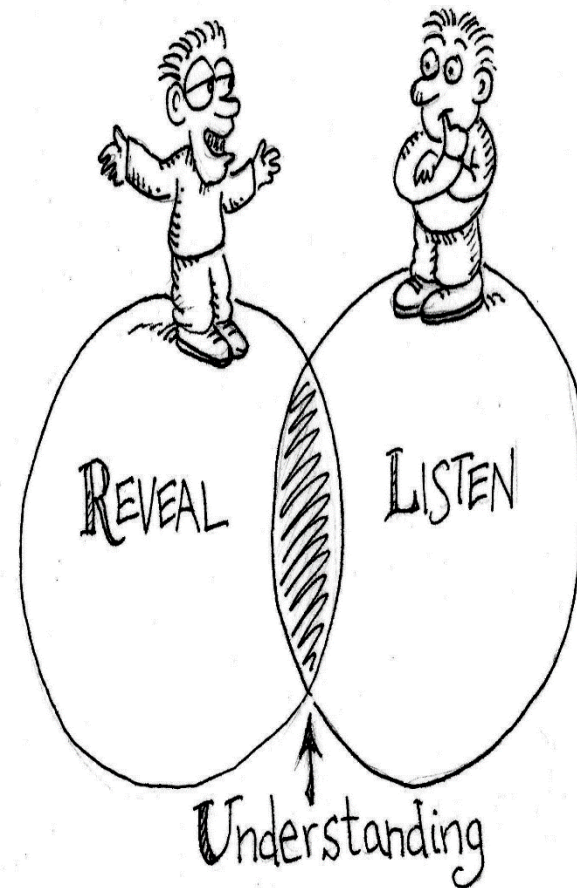


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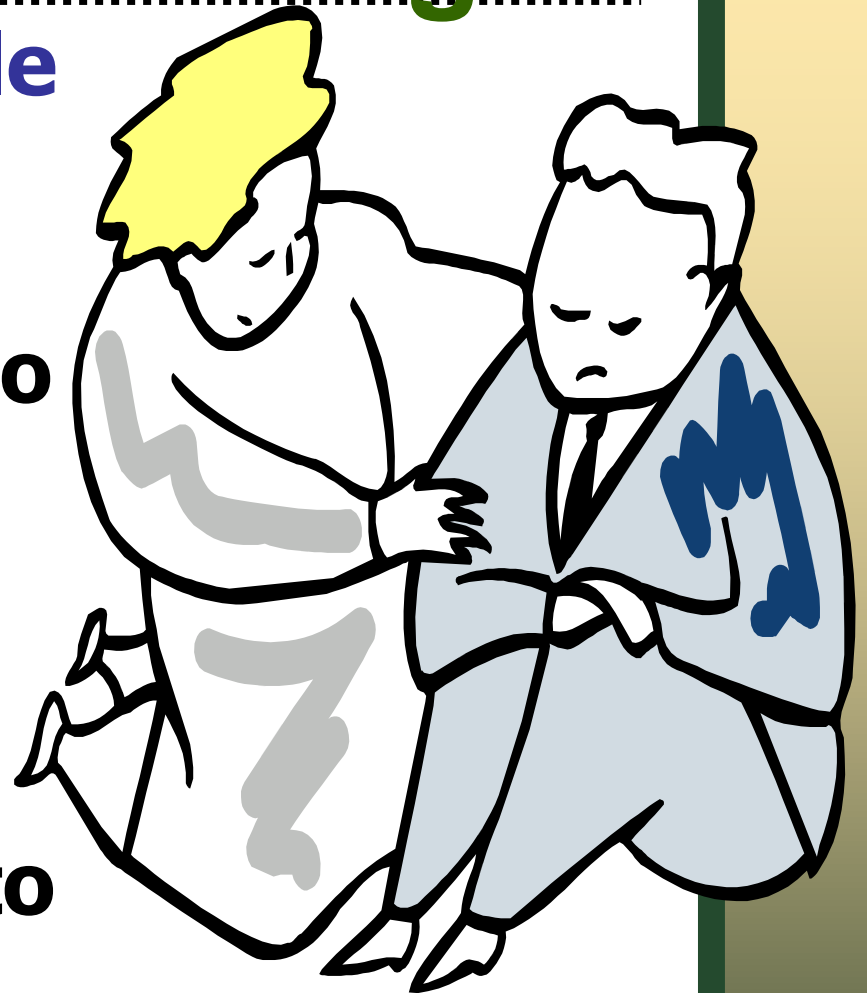
- *Be proactive; do not let a potential issue develop into a major conflict.*
- *Strive to understand the other person's perspective and keep lines of communication open*
- *Remember that a family member's reluctance or resistance likely has nothing to do with you*



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Take Care of My Feelings

- **You are not responsible for someone else's feelings or behaviors**
- **Do not expect others to take care of your feelings**
- **Do not accept blame and don't give it**
- **Set reasonable limits to protect yourself**
- **You have a right to say "no"**



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Value Yourself

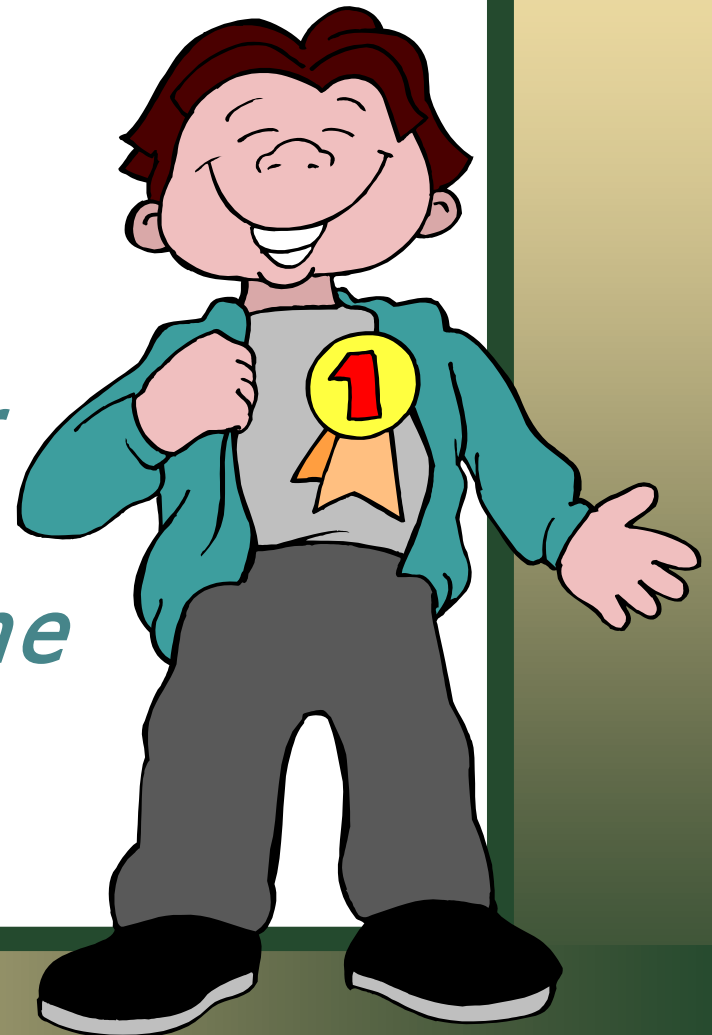
When you treat yourself kindly it is a good indication that you will treat families kindly as well. It is a statement that you have "water in your well."

Know when to say no

Take time off from work for renewal

Your personal life must come first

Stay home when ill

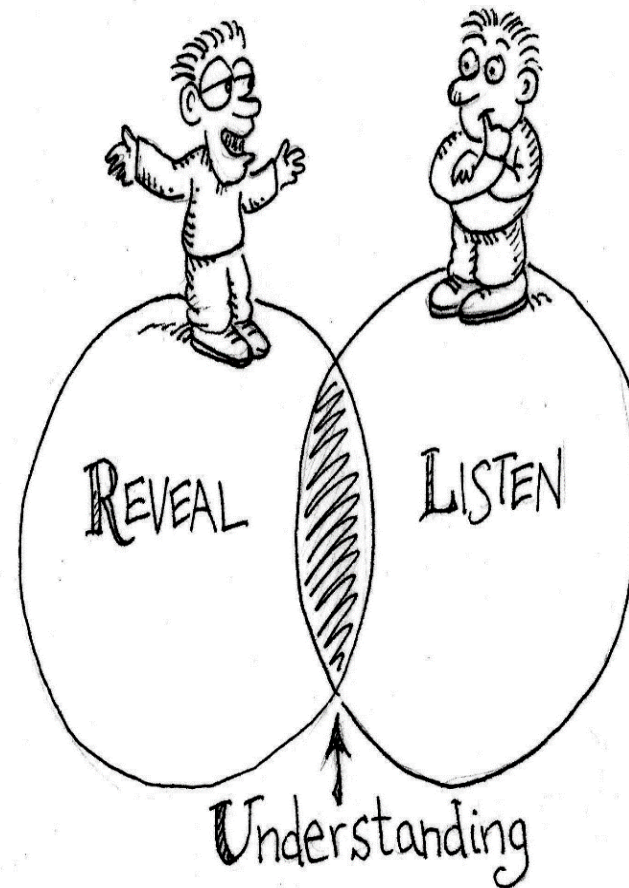


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Maintain A Positive Relationship

Challenging family members can make maintaining a positive relationship difficult.

- *Be proactive; do not let a potential issue develop into a major conflict.*
- *Strive to understand the other person's perspective and keep lines of communication open*
- *Remember that a family member's reluctance or resistance likely has nothing to do with you*
- *Consistently enforce limits and continue to work on building positive relationships*



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Saying No says I Care!

When you allow families to place demands on you that are not reasonable, a cycle of mediocrity is nurtured.

Set boundaries!

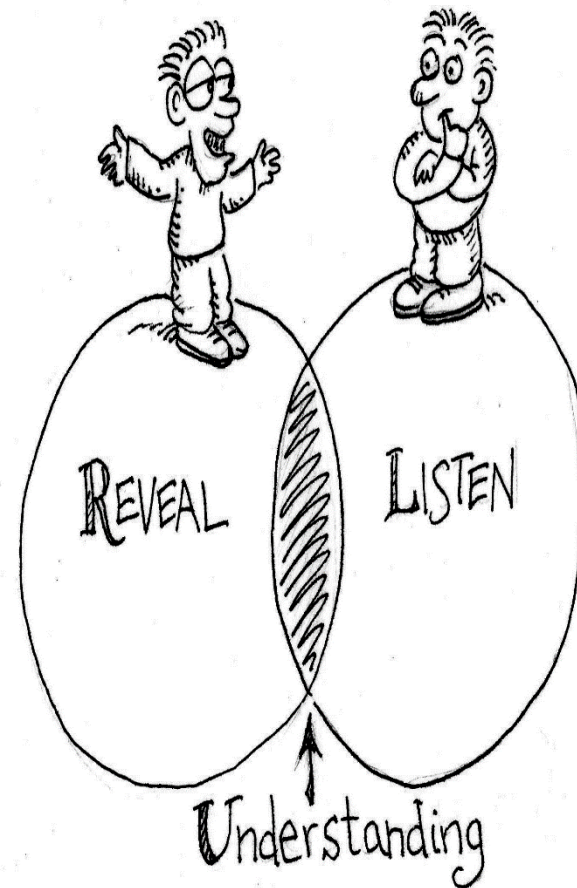


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Maintain A Positive Relationship

Challenging family members can make maintaining a positive relationship difficult.

- *Be proactive; do not let a potential issue develop into a major conflict.*
- *Strive to understand the other person's perspective and keep lines of communication open*
- *Remember that a family member's reluctance or resistance likely has nothing to do with you*
- *Consistently enforce limits and continue to work on building positive relationships*
- *Be willing to be flexible in some situations*



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Flexibility

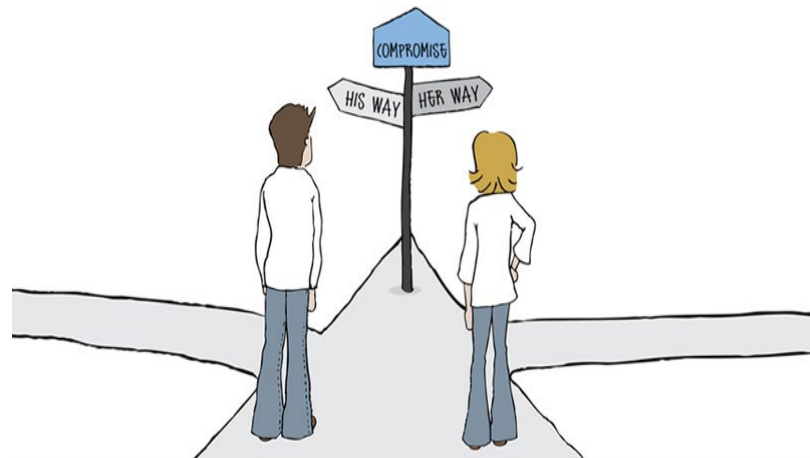
**“Take what you
can get
closest to
what you
want.”**


-- Lee Graber

Compromise

is *not* an act of weakness.

It demonstrates that you care for
something or someone beyond yourself.



 Relationship-Architecture.com

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Offer Options

**When families refuse, don't
give ultimatums!**

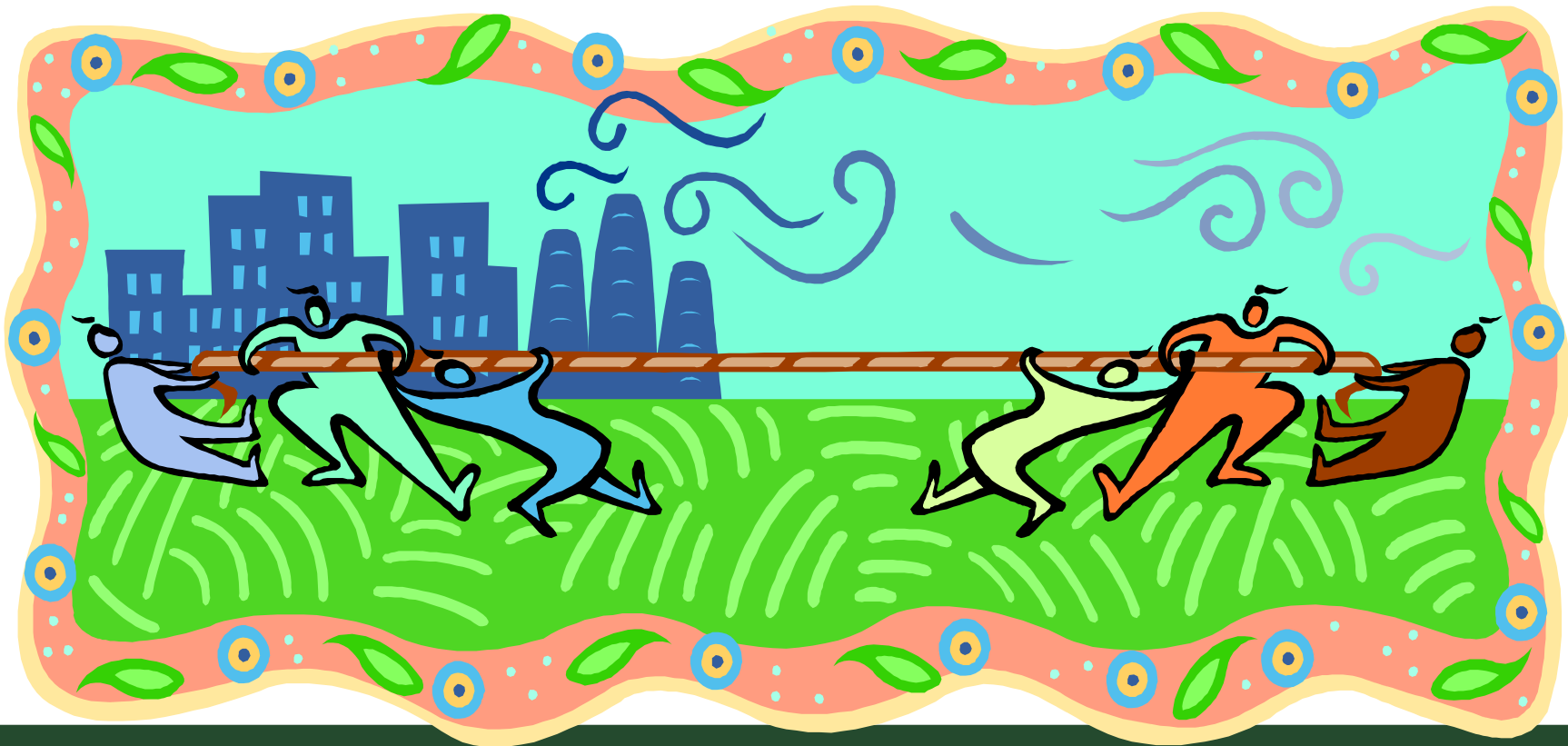
Offer Options!



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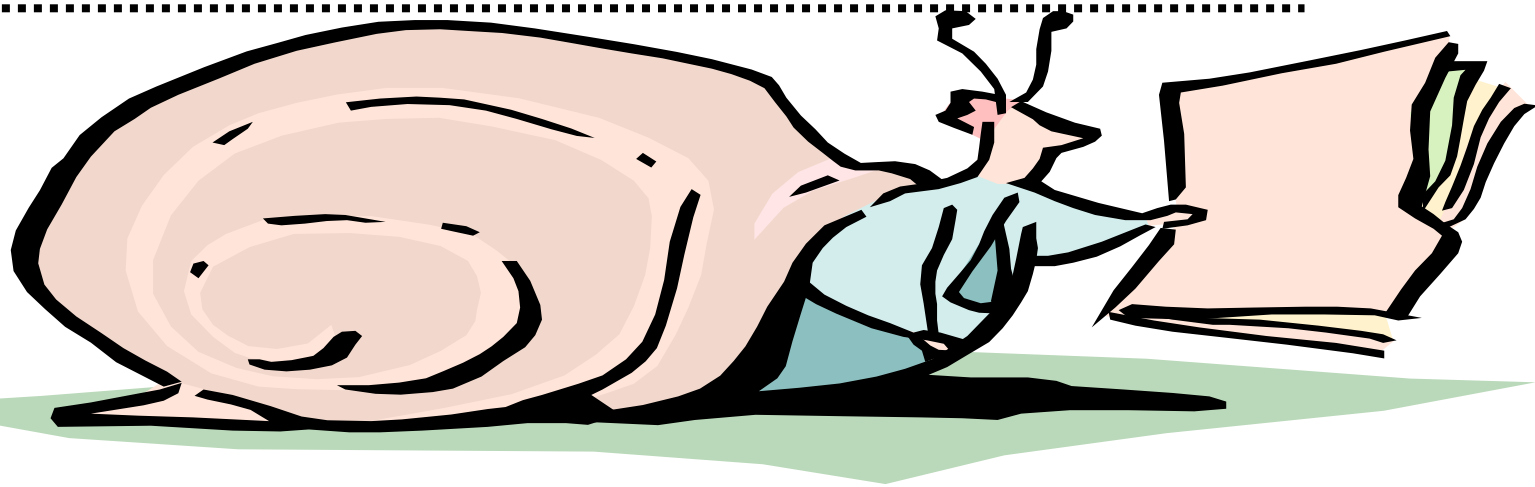
“If You Make It A Struggle - YOU Will Lose.”

Lee Graber



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Comfortable With Change



Move slowly

Be flexible

Praise cooperation

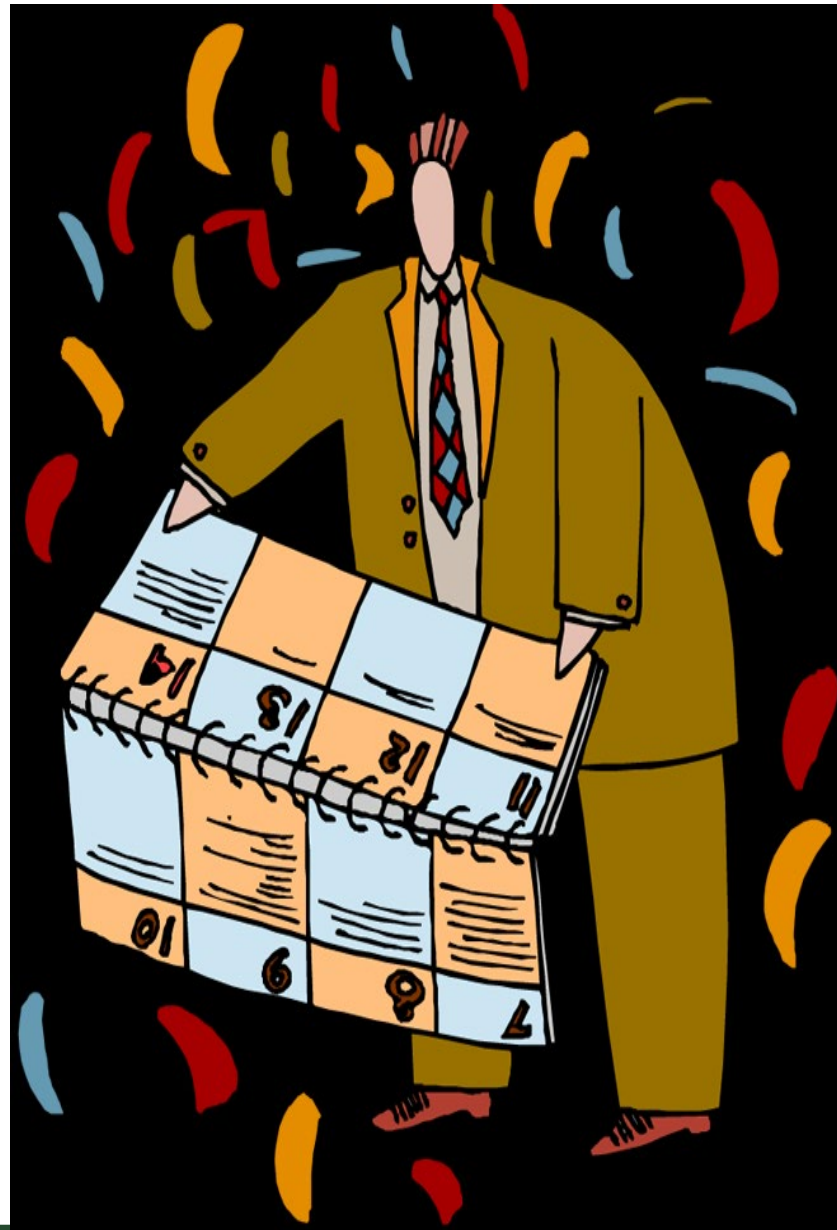
Look at what's right

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Potential Staff Barriers

- **Staff emotional status**
- **Unsure of their role with family**
- **Assume a “one-up” position**
- **Overwhelmed with tasks at hand**
- **Feelings of being rejected by family**
- **Lack of empathy for family**

Jan Finch, LCSW, Ph.D.
Working with Challenging Families



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Don't Be Defensive

Staff in any role (e.g.DSP, clinical, management) may perceive their interactions with a caring dedicated parent as:

Threatening	or	Demanding
Rejecting	or	Oppositional
Unrealistic	or	Unappreciative



These feelings may be because the parent is:

- disappointed with a particular outcome or condition
- having an expectation requiring a significant effort or sacrifice by staff
- Not acknowledging their appreciation for staff effort expended
- Refusing to approve medication regimes, behavioral interventions, dietary restrictions or clinical referrals
- Struggling with a sense of guilt with their son's/daughter's condition

Don't be defensive or argumentative.

Be introspective - you must appreciate the fact that both you and the parent want what is best for their son or daughter.

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Requirements



**Intellect and
empathy are
core
requirements
for effectively
supporting
families.**

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Be Empathetic

Empathy is...

seeing with the eyes of another,
listening with the ears of another,
and feeling with the heart of another.



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Connect Emotionally

Each individual defines what an emotional connection means to him/her. The following are some basic characteristics that are Universal:

- An emotional connection is a bundle of subjective feelings that meld – creating a bond between two people

- The word emotional means to arouse strong feelings

- The in-depth feelings may be happiness, disappointment, rejection, sorrow, guilt or any of thousands of emotions that humans experience



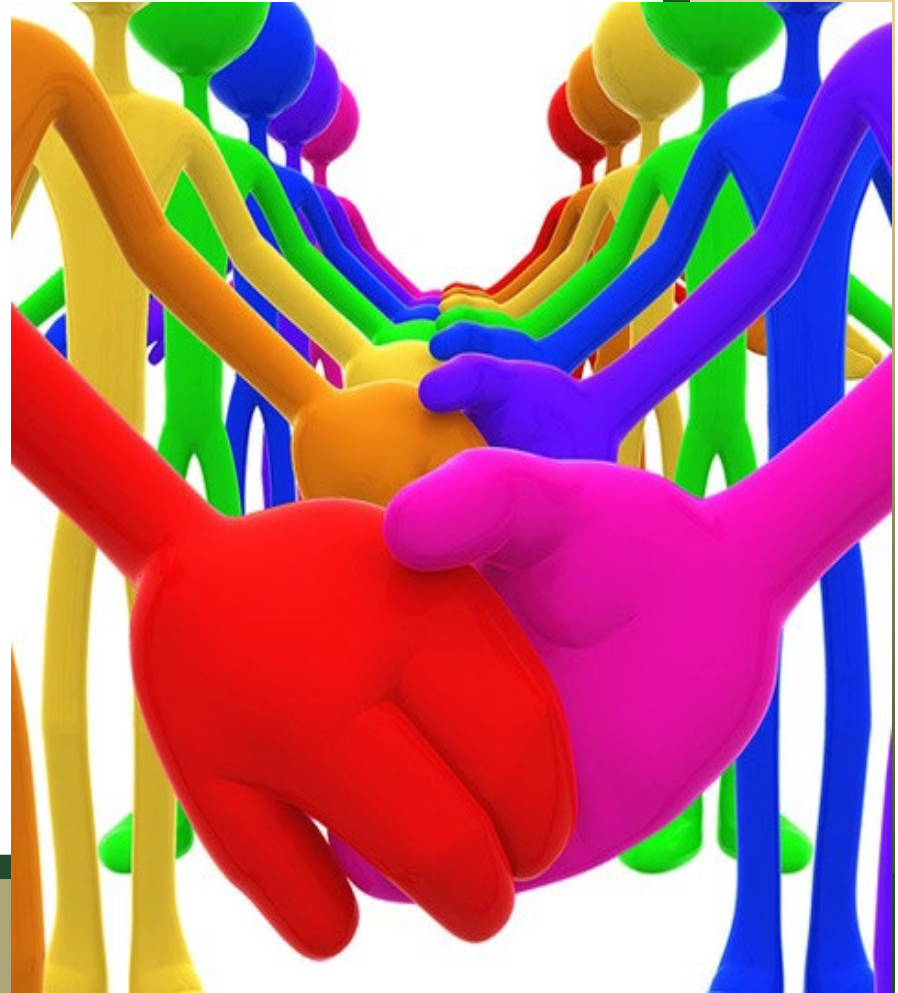
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Connect Emotionally (cont'd)

- A connection is a bond, a link or tie to something or someone
- Pair the two words - emotional and connection and it transitions to a bond or tie to someone with whom a set of emotions are shared

Forge an emotional
connection – to build
a strong and
enduring
relationship!

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Cognitive vs Affective

Knowing what is sensitive behavior does not assure sensitive behavior!

Sensitivity necessitates that the cognitive process be evoked by emotive (affective) influences.

Know it + Feel it = Show It!



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Being Empathetic...

...is an enlightened approach to understanding their feelings and behavior.

- What are their experiences & life conditions?
- What emotions are evoked?
- Seek more specifics
- Envision being in "their shoes"

How would you behave?



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Kindness

Be kind, for
everyone
you meet is
fighting a
hard battle.



Plato

Universal Enhancement

Treating Others

**Treat everyone as
though they are
who they
wish they
could be.**

Gandhi



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Potential Family Barriers

Appearance of defensiveness, hostility and rejection of agency staff may have many causes:

Feelings of intrusion

Feelings of guilt for family member's problems

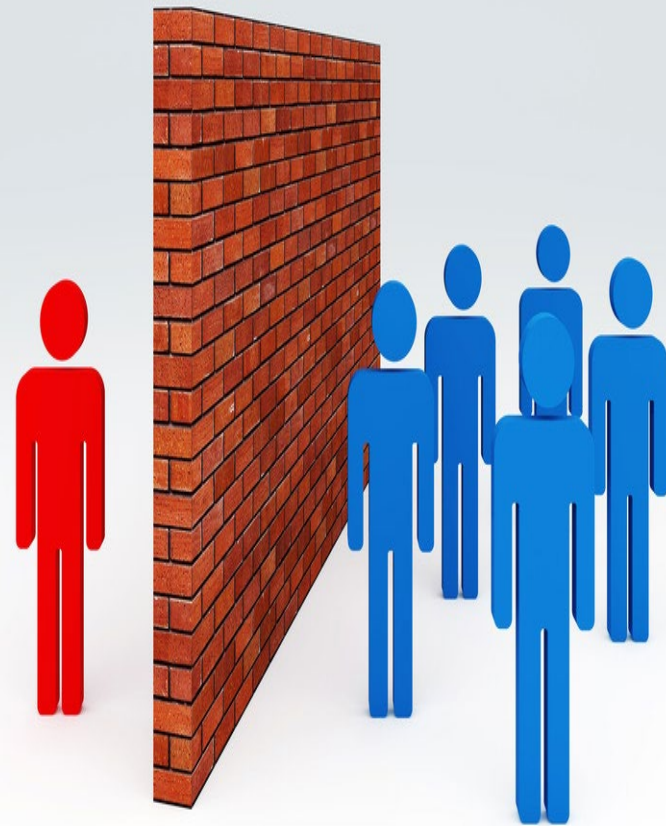
Denial that there is a problem

Pressure from other family members

Cultural issues

Others just don't understand what they are going through

Jan Finch, LCSW, Ph.D.
Working with Challenging Families



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Focus On What Matters

R before I or T

Relationships

before

Issues

or

Tasks



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Bond With Families

**When we bond
with families
they are less
likely to behave
in a way to
disappoint us.**

**How do we
need to
behave in
order to bond?**



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Do Something Fun

Doing an activity in which both staff and family can share a common experience of enjoyment may alter the direction of the relationship.

- Go for coffee
- Take a walk together
- Meet at the park
- Work on a project together (e.g. fund raiser)

Walk-a-thon



taken in part from Jan Finck, LCSW, Ph.D,
Working with Challenging Families

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Be Involved!

Snapshots at jasonlove.com

**If you're
not at the
table,
you're on
the menu!**

Washington political saying; unknown origin



"Ah, man, Stu again?"

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Cooperation



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Always Remember...

**Your ability to work
successfully with families
depends on you!**

*You are an important
person!*

*Remember to take
care of you!*

*Take time to relax
before you visit with
your challenging
family!*

Jan Finch, LCSW Ph.D. Working with Challenging Families



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**THIS
IS MORE
ABOUT
US
THAN
THEM**



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Self - Disclose

It is OK to admit to a family that:

- You are tired
- **You have other families to serve**
- You are having a bad day
- **That sometimes you do run a little late, but will call to let them know next time**
- You care about their family member
- **You want only the very best for them**
- You are human too
- **You may need to agree to disagree and move on**



Taken in part from Jan Finch, LCSW, Ph.D.
Working with Challenging Families

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Reflect

You must be introspective and realize that you are not alone.

Reflect on the situation -

- **What is going right with our conversation with this family?**
- **What is going wrong?**
- **Is there something about this family that pushes our buttons?**



Jan Finch LCSW, Ph.D. Working with Challenging Families

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Button Pushers

Remember, more often than not, families may have difficulty expressing their primary emotions (fear, frustration, guilt, etc.); thus their behavior may be an expression of those unmet needs!

Have you made my son's doctor appointments yet?

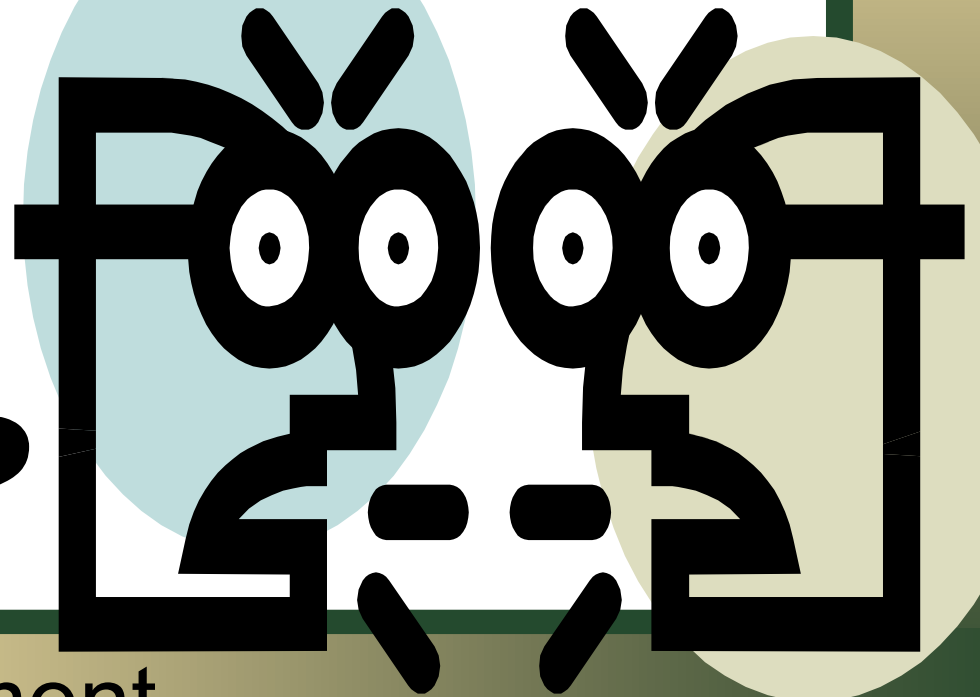


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The Worst In Us

**Obstinate, malcontent
and aversive people
bring out the worst
in us...**

**Can you
bond
with them?**



Universal Enhancement

Secondary Emotion

Anger communicates unmet need



Universal Enhancement

Secondary Emotion

Anger is a secondary emotion to:

Fear

Frustration

Grief

Anxiety

Disappointment

Paranoia

Inferiority

Confusion

Suppression

Repression

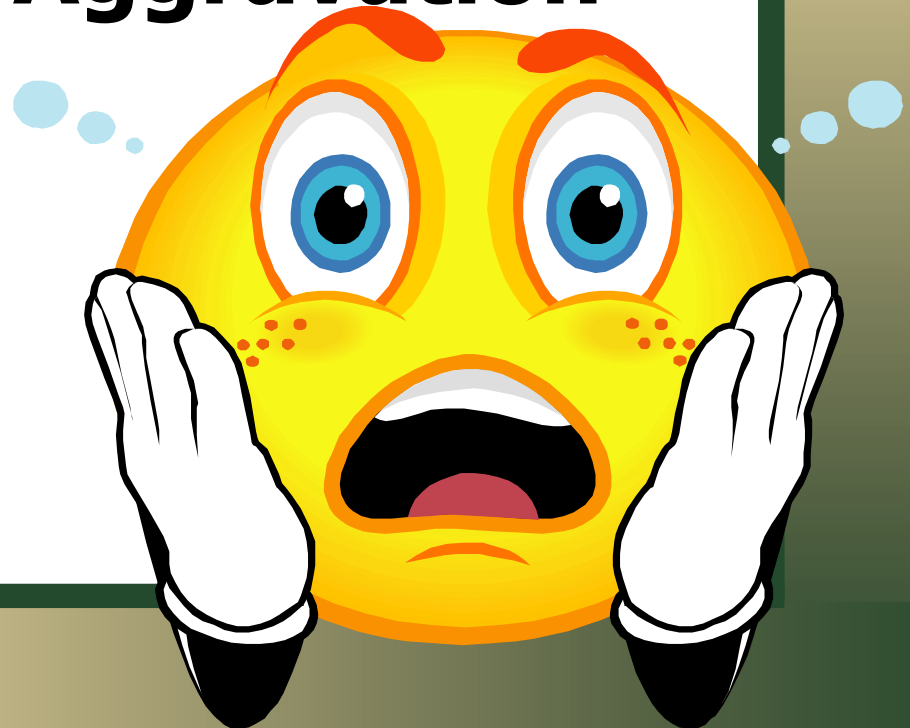
Depression

Panic

Loneliness

Hysteria

Aggravation



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Secondary Emotion (cont'd)

Disillusionment

Subjugation

Impatience

Rejection

Hopelessness

Remorse

Overwhelmed

Jealousy

Ineptness

Sadness

Deprivation

Exhaustion

**A family's inability
to manage these
emotions may
result in anger.**



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The Challenge

Identifying the family's unmet needs does not assure that one is either able or willing to meet them.



Universal Enhancement

Don't Inflame

When families are resistive to support approaches for their family member....

**frustrating
alienating
angering
provoking
or denigrating
families,**

will not resolve the issue.



Universal Enhancement

Reflect

You must be introspective and realize that you are not alone.

Reflect on the situation -

- **What is going right with our conversation with this family?**
- **What is going wrong?**
- **Is there something about this family that pushes our buttons?**
- **Is there a way to reframe the situation to improve the relationship?**



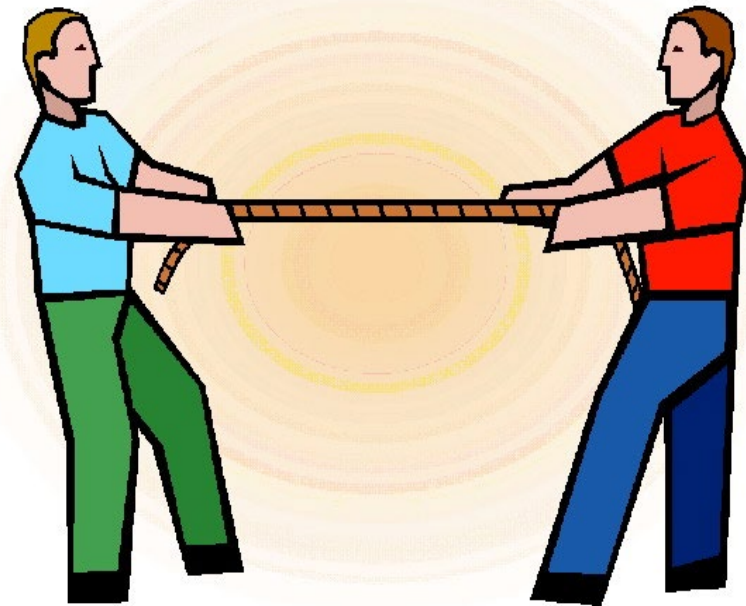
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What Are My Options?

When the relationship is not going well:

- **Speak with your supervisor early on**
- **Check with others on the team**
- **Reflect with your supervisor and/or peers about what you might do differently**
- **Don't be afraid to ask for the family to be reassigned to another staff – we can't be expected to "click" with all families.**



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Strategies

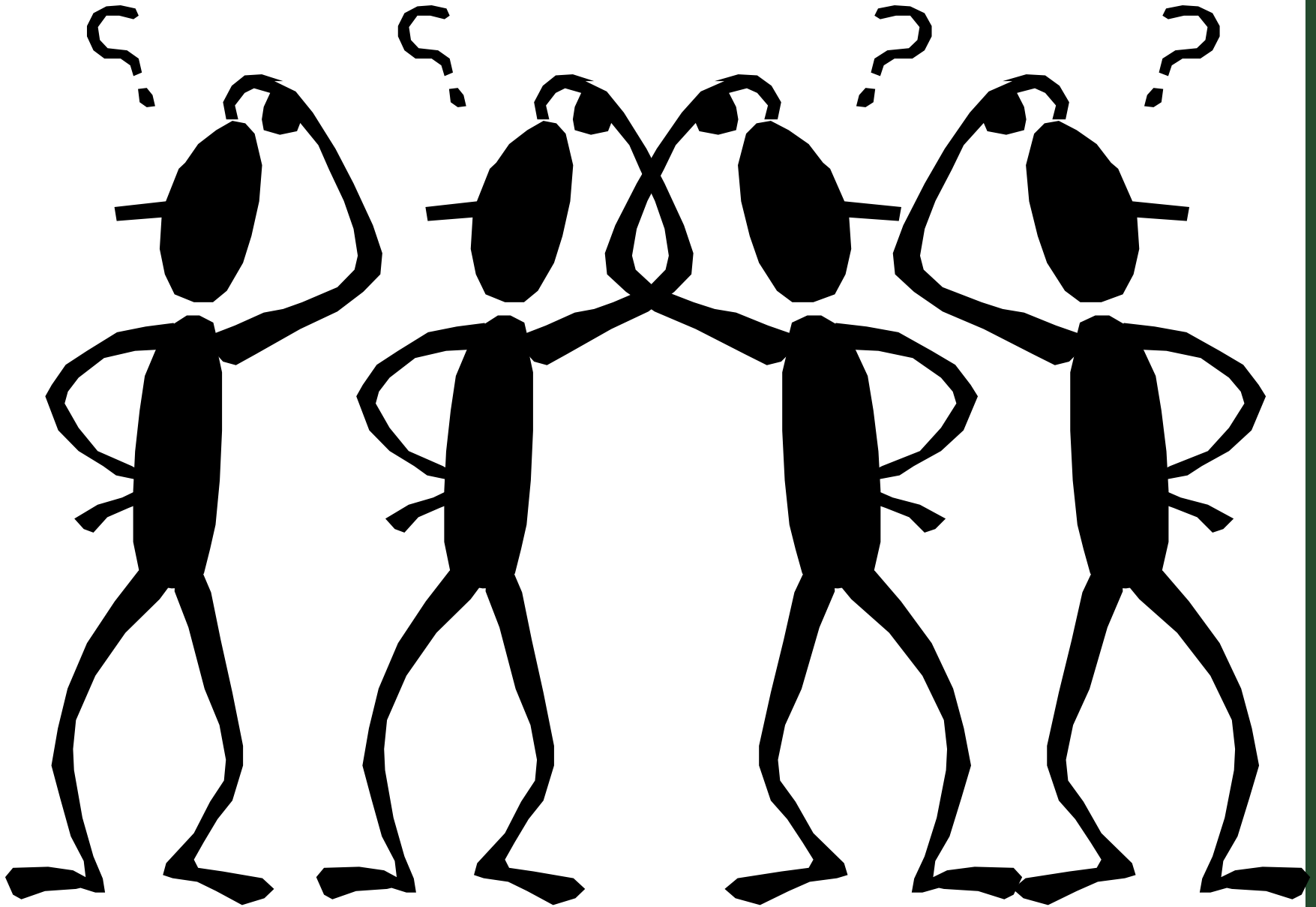
We must develop strategies to assure that we can “emotionally connect” with the family. Remember, they in fact need our help and support.

- **Explain your role**



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Clarify Roles



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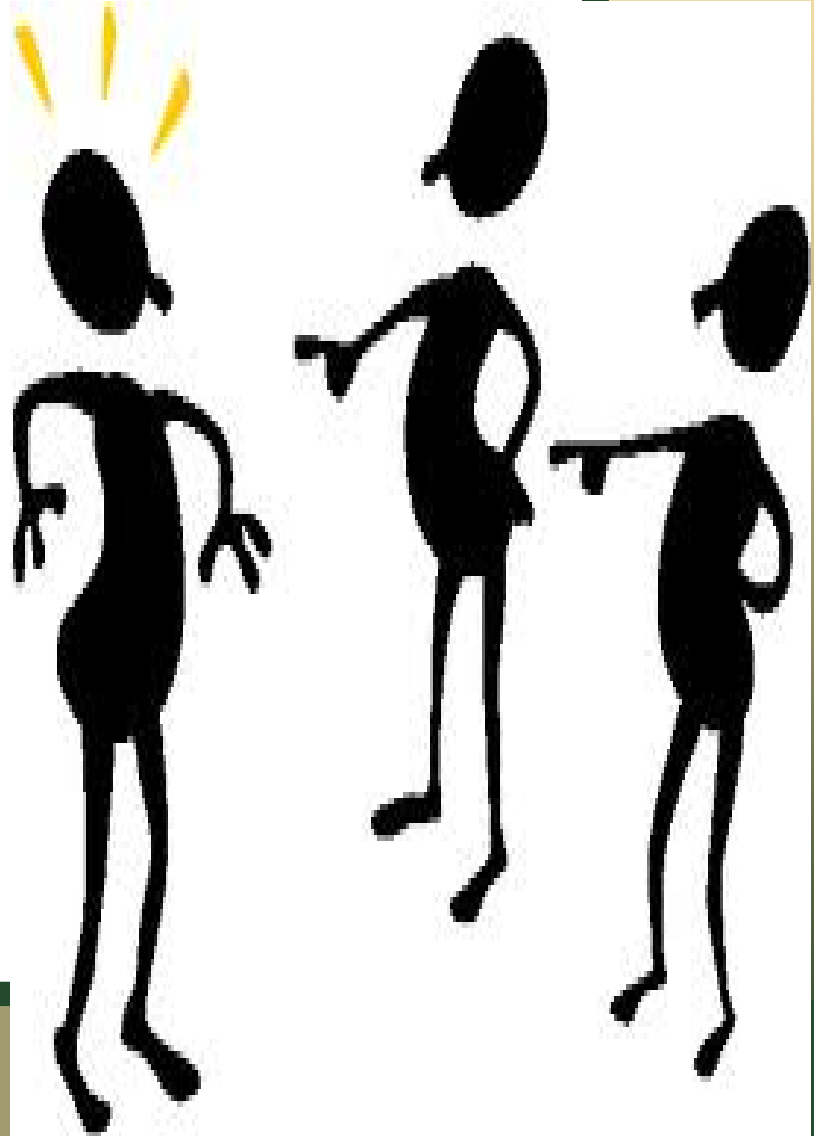
Establish Expectations

Families commonly expect (if not demand) that their loved one be cared for; served versus supported!

Don't blame the families!

Our services system has done a remarkable job in nurturing these expectations.

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Strategies

We must develop strategies to assure that we can “emotionally connect” with the family. Remember, they in fact need our help and support.

- **Explain your role**
- **Explain what we expect of them**



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My Entitlement

A concept meant to encapsulate the social or economic beliefs that a government should provide access to goods or services.

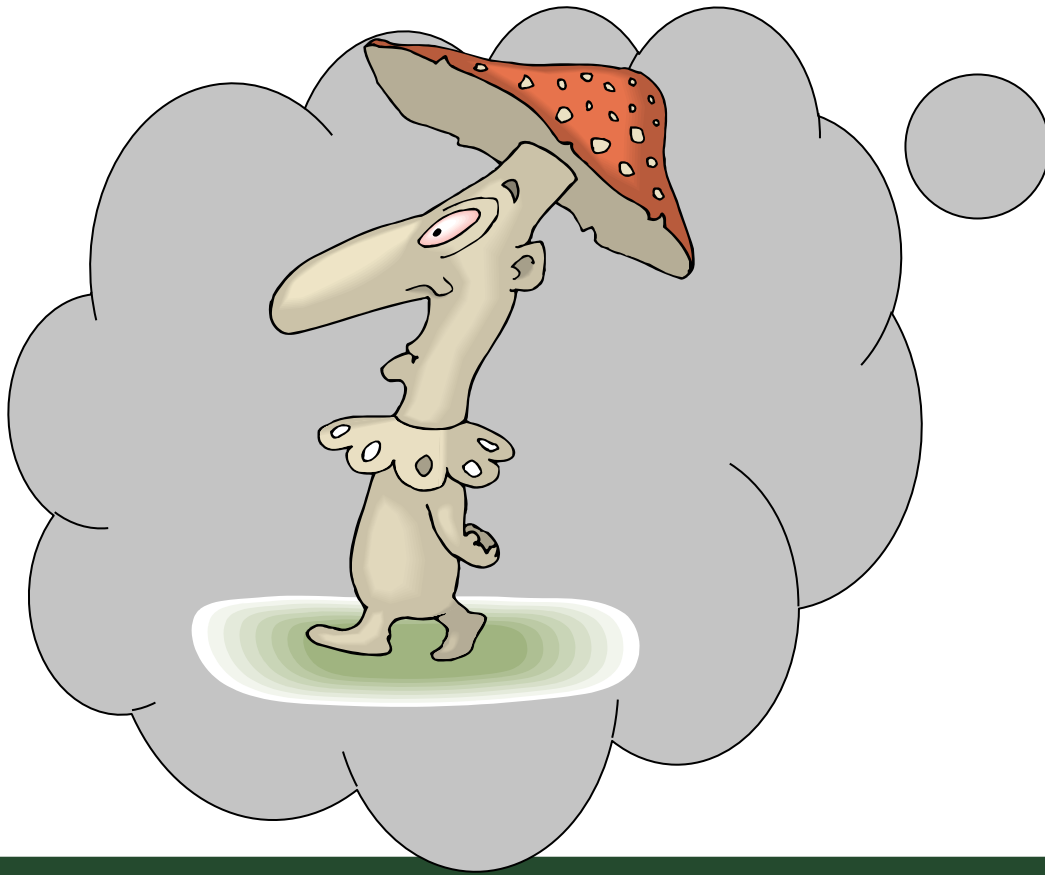


The connotation of the phrase often implies that the recipients of government entitlements are individuals that do not deserve to receive such benefits or entitlements. Wikipedia

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Communicate

**I think I'm a mushroom 'cause
they keep me in the dark and
feed me manure.**



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Guardian's Confusion

Many guardians and providers are confused--- guardian's are not bestowed unlimited rights by the court. They are delegated duties and responsibilities!



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Confusing Roles

It may be confusing to some parents – the role of a parent to a minor vs. a guardian to an adult ward.

Wearing makeup

**Engaging in
masturbation**

Decorating your room

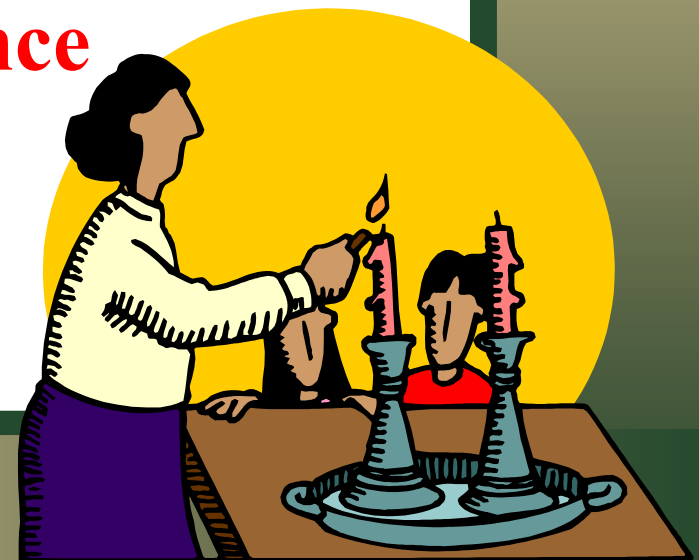
**Choosing clothing
style**

Choosing a hairstyle

**Expressing religious
preference**

**This is the domain of the parent
to a minor; not the guardian of
an adult ward.**

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Guardian's Expectations.....

**...can serve as a self-fulfilling prophecy
either negative or positive!**

**Their expectations should not be
determined by a diagnosis!**

**It is essential that
guardians dream
about opportunities
for their family
members enhanced
quality of life.**



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It's A Choice

**Destiny is
not a matter
of chance,
it is a matter
of choice.**

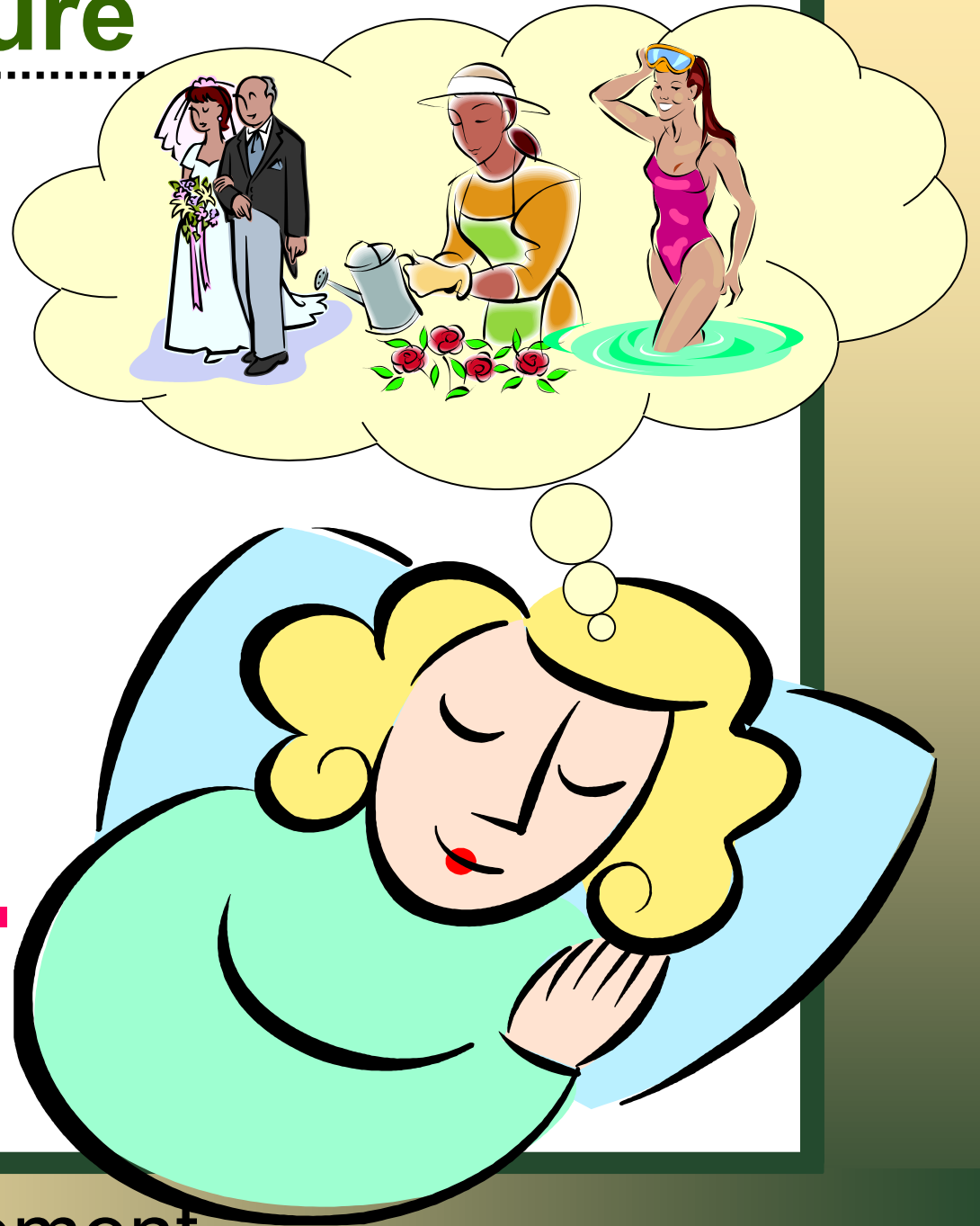
William Jennings Bryan

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Preferred Future

**Identifying
and seeking
a preferred
future is the
essence of
a quality life.**



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***The greatest obstacle
to discovering the
shape of the earth, the
continents and the
ocean was not
ignorance, but the
illusion of
knowledge.***

Daniel J. Boorstein

Universal Enhancement



Avoid Blaming Families

Be a support and role model for parents and other family members:

- Do parents observe staff interacting with their son or daughter as an adult?
- Do staff provide parents with a list of suggested gift items that are appropriate?



- Do staff celebrate and acknowledge efforts and interactions of parents that are age appropriate?
- Do staff share with parents accomplishments of their son or daughter—he made the bed, earned a pay check, participated in cooking?

Universal Enhancement

Strategies

.....
We must develop strategies to assure that we can
“emotionally connect” with the family.
Remember, they in fact need our help
and support.

- **Explain your role**
- **Explain what we expect of them**
- **Start where the family is**
- **Listen to their concerns before starting**
- **Notice something positive and comment**



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Positive Focus

Celebrate the family's successes and accomplishments in supporting their family member, instead of just looking for problems. Then they will be more willing to listen and accept change.



Universal Enhancement

Strategies

.....
We must develop strategies to assure that we can “emotionally connect” with the family. Remember, they in fact need our help and support.

- **Explain your role**
- **Explain what we expect of them**
- **Start where the family is**
- **Listen to their concerns before starting**
- **Notice something positive and comment**
- **Ask what their greatest success and greatest frustration were**

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Be Celebratory

**If you
don't have
it.....
You can't
give it!**



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Strategies (cont'd)

- **Acknowledge how difficult it can be for that parent**
- **Change the location of the visit (away from your office or at least sitting beside them not behind a desk)**
- **Find out what the parents' goals are for themselves**



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Unreasonable Requests

When families ask for things that are not available, “professionals” may determine the request inappropriate.



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Strategies (cont'd)

- **Acknowledge how difficult it must be for that parent**
- **Change the location of the visit (away from your office or at least sitting beside them not behind a desk)**
- **Find out what the parents' goals are for their family member**
- **Find resources for what they want**
- **Work on something together – tasks of cooperation**



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Family Intervention



An intervention is a deliberate process by which change is introduced into peoples' thoughts, feelings and behaviors. The overall objective of an intervention is to confront a person in a non-threatening way and allow them to see their self-destructive behavior and how it affects themselves, his or her family, friends, coworkers, etc.

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Family Intervention (cont'd)

- Consider having someone skilled to facilitate the intervention and keep it focused.
- Prepare for and anticipate a hostile or emotionally confronting response from the Focus Person.
- Though the intervention may not be successful at the time it is conducted, the Focus Person may process the discussion later on and modify their self-defeating behavior.
- It is critically important that the right people are invited to and attend the intervention.
- Selecting a venue for the intervention must be carefully considered.



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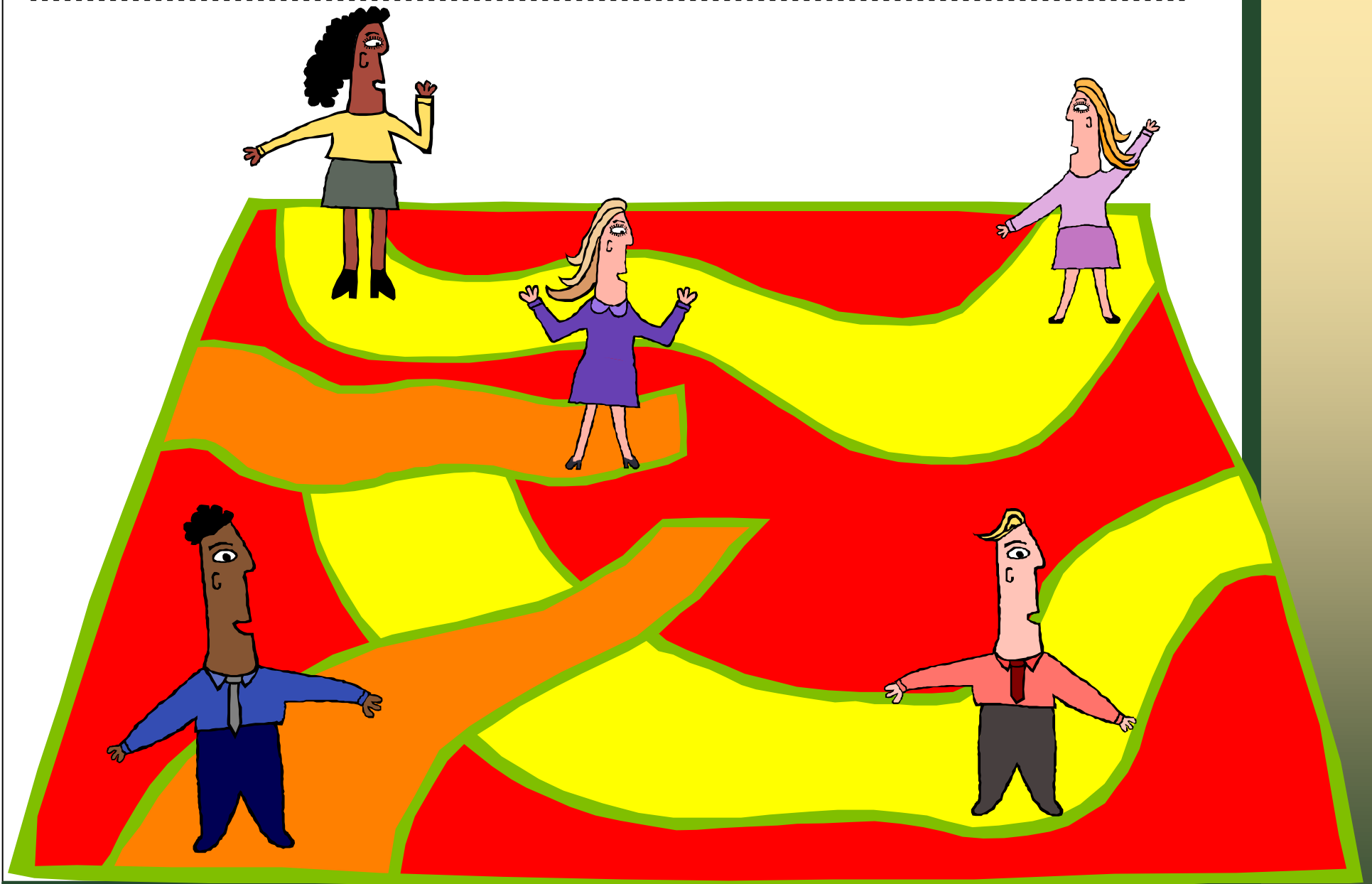
Family Intervention (cont'd)

- The stronger the emotional connection with the Focus Person the more effective the intervention.
- The purpose of the intervention is to breakthrough the Focus Person's denial of their conduct so that he or she can experience a moment of clarity, admit the depth of the problem and agree to alter their behavior and/or accept support and guidance to do so.
- When possible, Intervention Members should share how the Focus Person's conduct has effected them personally – the negative consequences.
- In preparation, the Intervention Members should identify and discuss ahead of the meeting the defensive statement which may be posed by the Focus Person.



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Joint Decisions



Universal Enhancement

Maldistribution of Time

Consider: We must address and

• Why is it very important to address the issue? Rule!

• What are the implications if the maldistribution of staff time is not resolved?

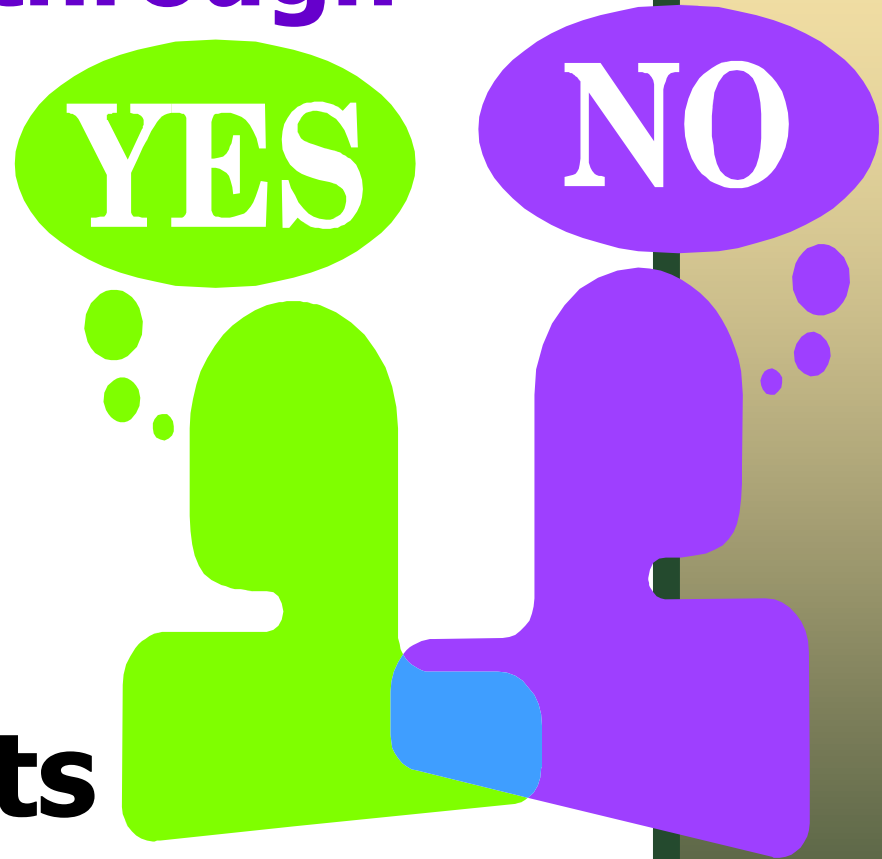
• What strategies can be used to resolve the maldistribution of staff time?

The Rule states that 20% of the families consume 80% of the staff's time.

Resolving Differences

Resolving differences of opinion is achieved through active listening:

- **Ask questions**
- **Repeat what you understand of their position**
- **Use "I" statements**
- **Stick to the initial issue**



Resolving Differences (cont'd)

Find points of agreement:

- Agree with the goal
- **Agree with basic values**
- Agree with the stated need
- **Agree with the process**
- Agree with some specifics of the resolution



Resolving Differences (cont'd)

Negotiate toward resolution:

- Be prepared to give up something in order to gain something
- Validate the other person's good points
- Stay non-defensive
- Don't take it personally
- Focus on the immediate issue



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Resolving Differences (cont'd)

Positive internal messages:

Put anger on hold

Say 'Stop! I'm not going to get angry.'

Give benefit of doubt

Think – 'I'm OK. I have skills.'

Give yourself an affirmation

Think – 'I need to learn more about this.'

Think – 'They have a right to their opinion.'



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Resolving Differences (cont'd)

Body language:

Good eye contact

**Hands at side –
comfortable**

**Respect personal
space**

**Stand calmly –
better yet – sit!**

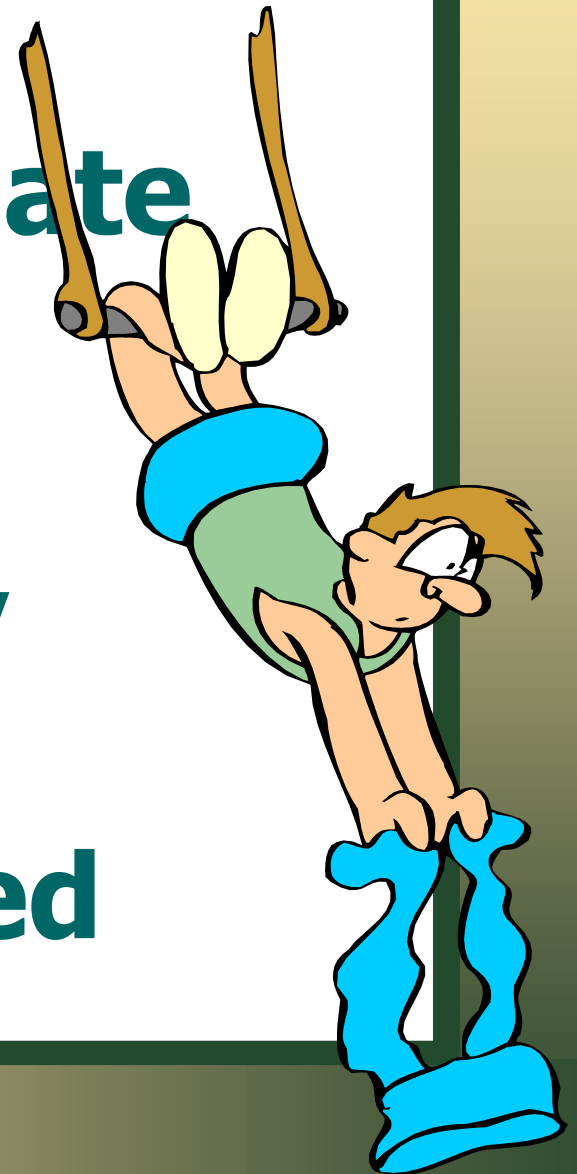


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Resolving Differences (cont'd)

State your opinion clearly:

- Use “I” statements
- Focus on the immediate issue
- Admit your mistakes
- Accept responsibility for correction
- Ask for what you need



Resolving Differences (cont'd)

When negotiations fail:

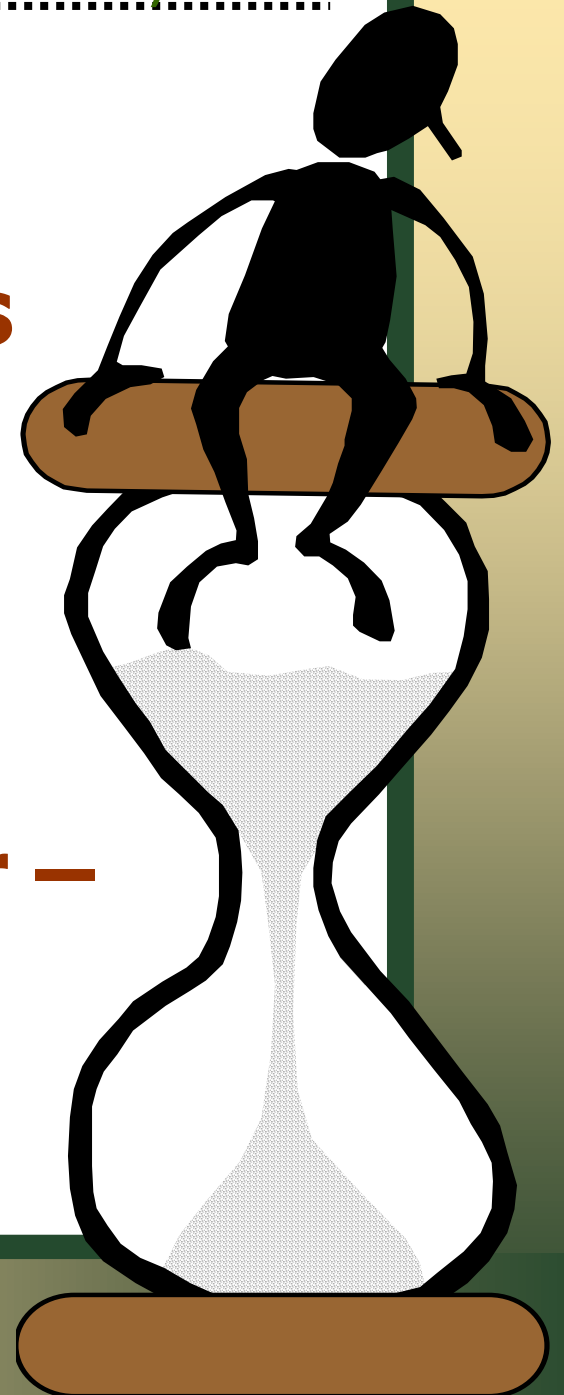
Listen more – longer

**Repeat validations & points
of agreement**

Have patience

**If there is too much anger
to continue – then leave**

**Set boundaries on behavior –
be willing to follow
through**



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Resolving Differences (cont'd)

Backlash:

- **A change in your behavior may not change someone else**
- **Change is a difficult & slow process – have patience**
- **Some people may become angrier when you refuse to fight**

Consistency over time will pay off!

Remember, you will be treating everyone with dignity and respect!

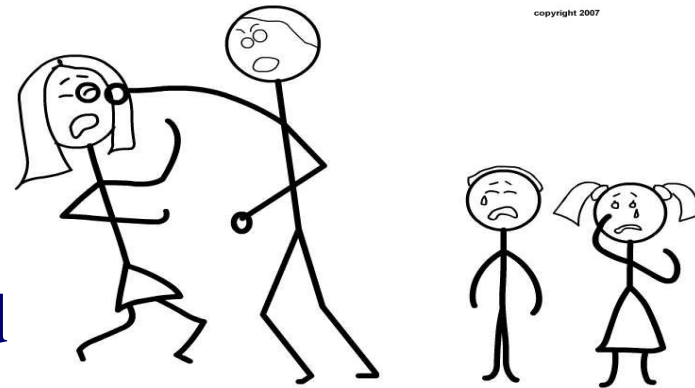


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Dysfunctional Family...

...a family whose interrelationships serve to detract from, rather than promote, the emotional and physical health and well being of its members.

Although this term is used casually in popular culture, health care professionals define dysfunctional family as one where the relationships among family members are not conducive to emotional and physical health. Sexual or physical abuse, alcohol and substance addictions, delinquency and behavior problems, eating disorders and extreme aggression are some conditions commonly associated with dysfunctional family relationships.



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Familial Pall

Definition: a covering that darkens or obscures; a gloomy effect or atmosphere.



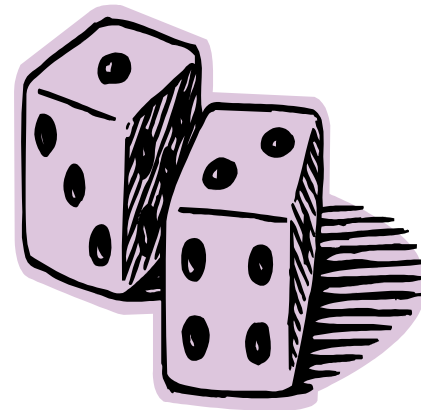
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Fatalism...

... a doctrine that events are fixed in advance so that human beings are powerless to fix them

(Webster Dictionary)

Some families believe that their family member with a significant disability cannot have a quality life!



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Dysfunctional Family (cont'd)

Some of the characteristics of dysfunctional family systems:

- **Blaming; failure to take responsibility for personal actions and feelings; and invalidation of other family members' feelings**
- **Boundaries between family members that are either too loose or too rigid. For example, the parent may depend excessively on the child for emotional support (loose boundaries) or prevent the child from developing autonomy by making all the decisions for the child (rigid boundaries)**

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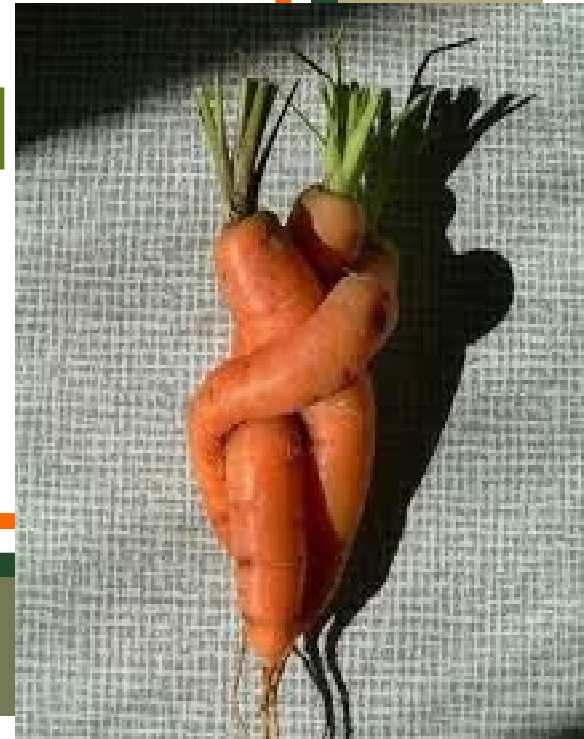


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Enmeshment

This often happens on an emotional level in which two people “feel” each other’s emotions or when one person becomes emotionally escalated and the other family member does as well.

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Enmeshment (cont'd)

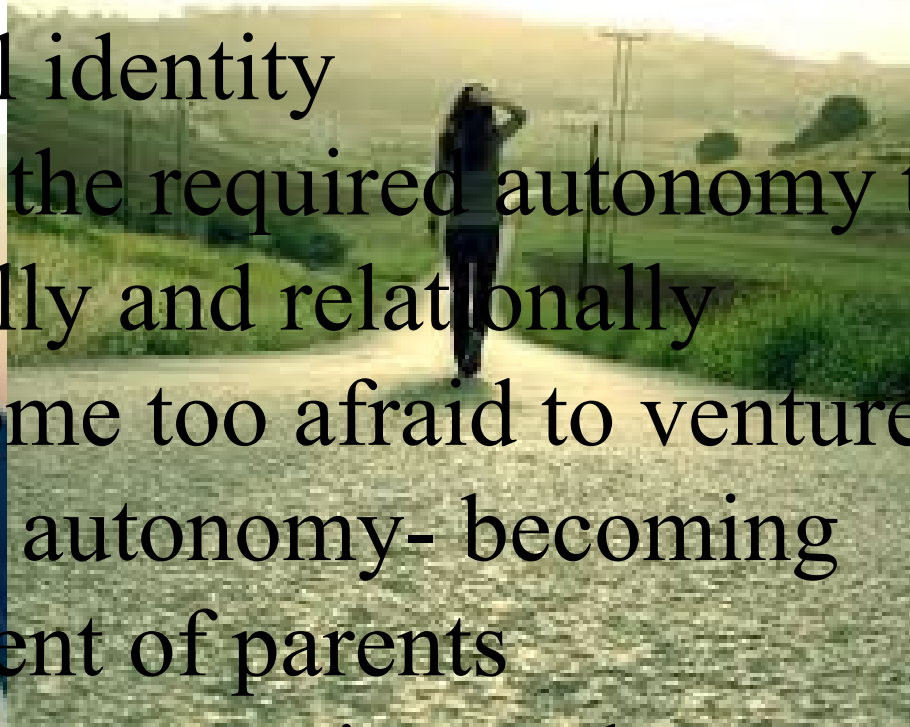


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Consequences of Enmeshment

Enmeshment becomes a problem when:

- the individual starts to lose their emotional identity
- they lack the required autonomy to grow emotionally and relationally
- they become too afraid to venture to increased autonomy- becoming independent of parents
- they become reactive to the enmeshment and run too far in the other direction.



Glenview Counseling Group Glory Jordan L.C.S.W.

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Disengagement

The opposite of enmeshment is disengagement, in which personal and relational boundaries are overly rigid and family members come and go without any apparent knowledge of what each other is going through.



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Disengagement (cont'd)

Disengagement may manifest itself by:

- **Failing to return phone calls of staff**
- **Not participating in planning meetings**
- **Responding with indifference when concerns are shared regarding the welfare, health and/or safety of their family member with disabilities**



WHAT
DO
YOU
THINK?



Universal Enhancement

Dysfunctional Family

Some of the characteristics of dysfunctional family systems:

- **Blaming; failure to take responsibility for personal actions and feelings; and invalidation of other family members' feelings**
- **Boundaries between family members that are either too loose or too rigid. For example, the parent may depend excessively on the child for emotional support (loose boundaries) or prevent the child from developing autonomy by making all the decisions for the child (rigid boundaries)**
- **Boundaries between the family as a whole and the outside world may also be too loose or too rigid**

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Dysfunctional Families (cont'd)

- A tendency for family members to enact set roles (e.g. caregiver, hero, scapegoat, saint, bad girl or boy, little prince or princess) that serve to restrict feelings, experience, and self-expression
- A tendency to have an “identified patient” – one family member who is recognized as mentally unhealthy, who may or may not be in treatment, but whose symptoms are a sign of the inner family conflict.

Dysfunctional families require family therapy. Family therapists, like other therapists, take many different treatment approaches – psychodynamic, behavioral, cognitive or a combination of these therapies.



All Alone

The reality is that most families are not receiving counseling to promote their emotional well being and address their intra/inter personal conflicts.

- The role of support staff may need to extend beyond the individual they support by providing emotional encouragement and sustenance to family members.
- When needed and available families should be encouraged to seek professional counseling to address their emotional pain and suffering.

Many families are emotionally



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Source of Frustration

A severely dysfunctional family is defined as a group of two or more blood relatives, at least one of whom is permanently disabled, that behave in an extremely self-destructive or resistant manner.



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Source of Frustration (cont'd)

These families pose one of the greatest dangers to the emotional growth of their “disabled member” and are a constant source of frustration for direct support professionals and agency executives.



J. Dale Munro
Counseling Severely Dysfunctional Families of
Mentally and Physically Disabled Persons

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Family Enablers

Codependence:

A relationship in which one person, the Rescuer/Victim is a partner in codependency – the rescuer/victim is psychologically dependent in an unhealthy way on someone who struggles with issues of addiction or disability.



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Family Enablers (cont'd)

In a codependent relationship:

The person with the disability is tricked, or taken advantage of, thus harmed by or made to suffer from an act or circumstance of the rescuer/victim “doing for.” “Doing for” people with disabilities fulfills the needs of the rescuer/victim.

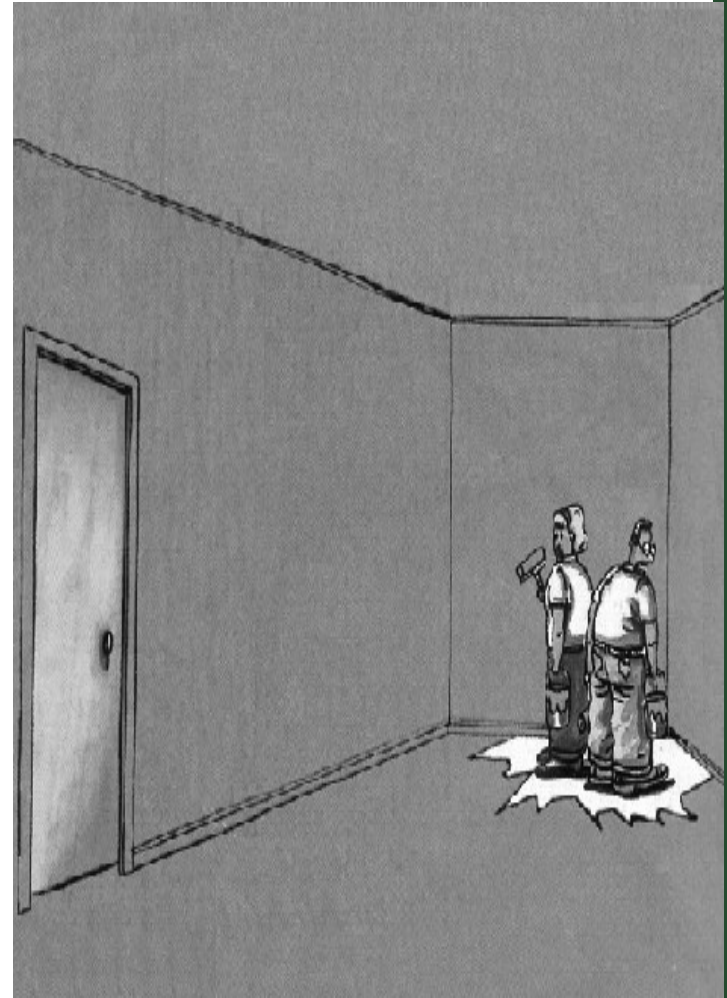
How does this codependency “enable” people with disabilities to maintain a life of dependency?

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At An Impasse

When we come to an impasse with families;
when it seems like there is no resolution to
the impasse:

- **We blame ourselves**
- **We blame the family**
- **We feel inadequate**
- **We are perplexed**
- **We don't feel we are effective in our profession**
- **We are not doing what we set out to do – help others**
- **We are frustrated**
- **We want to give up on this family**



Jan Finch, LCSW, Ph.D. Working with Challenging Families

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Against Medical Advice...

...includes a discussion disclosing the risks, benefits, and alternatives to hospitalization (aka supports, services, interventions), as well as the patient's (aka support recipient's) understanding.

This should be documented in the patient's (aka support recipient's) chart (aka record). (This is applicable in our work to the support recipient's family and/or legal guardian or conservator).

Taken in part from Wikipedia



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Against Medical Advice (cont'd)

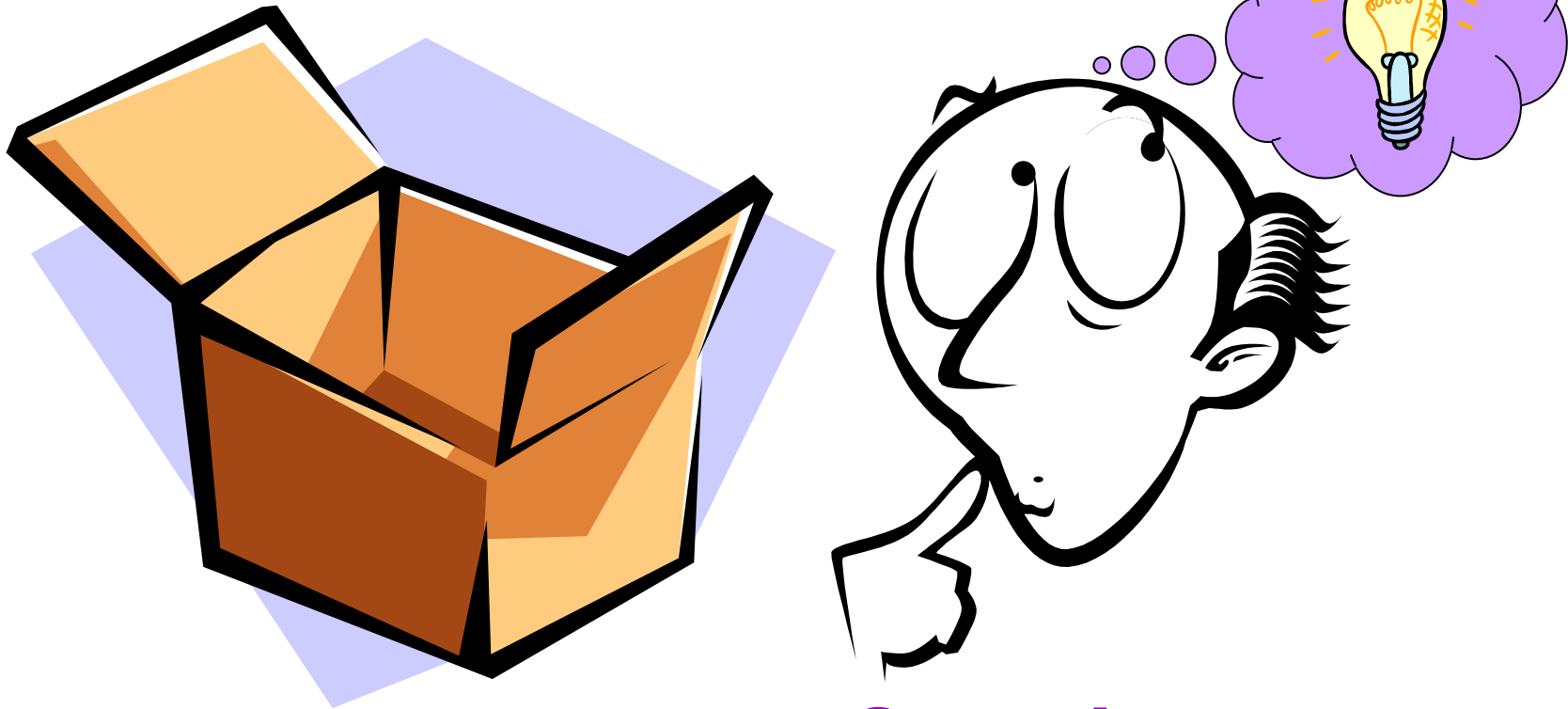
Though AMA commonly connotes a situation in which a patient chooses to leave the hospital against medical advice, it has valued applicability in addressing a family's and/or guardian/conservator's refusal to:

- *authorize prescribed medications*
- *follow behavioral support plan guidelines*
- *respect the privacy of their "ward"*
- *interact with their "ward" with dignity and respect*
- *follow through with recommended therapies/counseling*
- *allow certain recommended services*



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Think Creatively



*Supporting families in
realizing their goals is a
creative process*

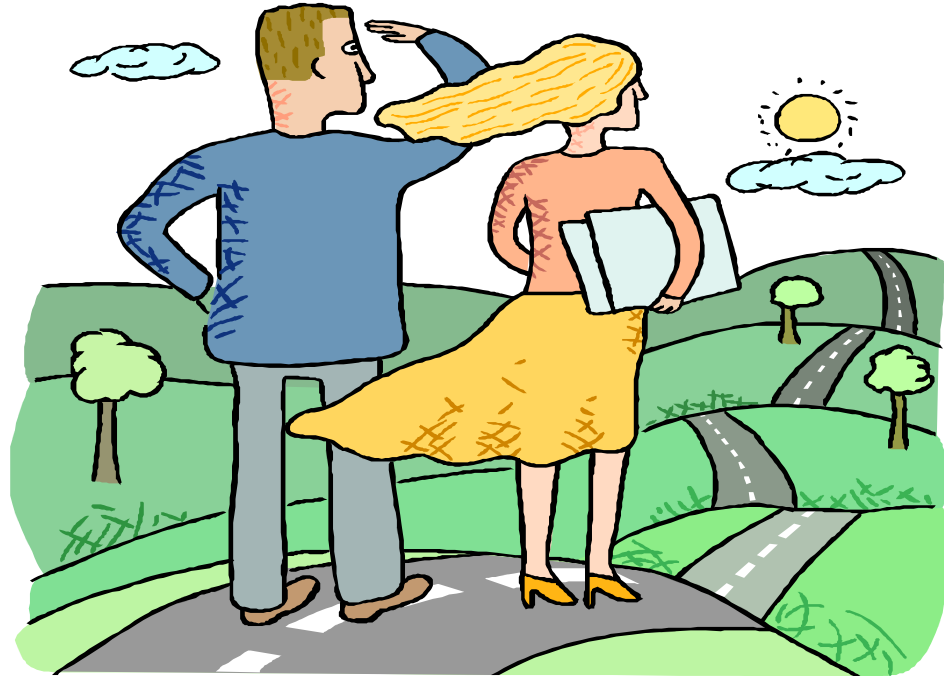
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Limiting Influences

Supporting families in realizing their goals requires creativity.

Limiting factors:

Stress
Self doubt
Routines
Fear
Ego
Beliefs



Don't give up—we must persist! Use creative approaches to support families in being focused and proactive.

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Essential Family-Work Skills

- **History:** It is vitally important to help professionals who may be overly critical of families, to gain a level of historical perspective. The need to know that almost every significant service advance for people with I/DD has come because of hard-fought advocacy by dedicated family members. It is also important to know that there have been tragic times in human services' history when professionals recklessly blamed parents for their children's disabilities, told parents to place them in state institutions and never see them again, etc. We must vigorously guard against seeing families as "the enemy."
- **Recognize Healthy Families:** Professionals are often too quick to criticize the relatives of people with disabilities and may tend to "pathologize" family behavior that is essentially normal (e.g. appropriate assertive expression of concerns). Even healthy families can become negative at times if they are exhausted or not comfortable with how services are provided.



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Essential Family-Work Skills (cont'd)

- **Building Positive Relationships:**

Professionals may need to be reminded that collaborative relationships with families frequently begin in simple ways, by casual small talk, practicing empathic listening and sharing a coffee. Rapport with families can be enhanced by professionals who focus on “here and now” issues; avoid jargon; celebrate (even small) successes; suggest helpful reading about families taking care of themselves; frankness and cheerleading.



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“Hibbity Hobbity Speak”

MUI LRE ASD HR MSW
ISL PT UE SSI PST TID DD
IHP IAF QA CP IEP PWS
OT HCBW SOP LD OSHA
ICF/MR BID AAID DWA QOL
IPP BMP
PL

What are you
talking about?



Universal Enhancement

Essential Family-Work Skills (cont'd)

- **Building Positive Relationships (cont'd):**

-When dealing with people who have pervasive, coexisting disabilities, families often are desperate for, and appreciate staff suggestions about calming activities that allow visits with the individuals to go better (e.g. going for walks in nearby parks, car rides, trips to the beach, or preparing a favorite food together). This advice can contribute to a growing sense of family-agency teamwork and cooperation.

-Family - professional relationships can improve through the use of regular planning or support circle meetings that may include the individual, family members, friends, volunteers, and key professionals. These meetings help to reduce family isolation, improve planning and create strong family-system networks.



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Essential Family Work-Skills (cont'd)

- **Really Understanding Why Families Challenge Us:**
Many professionals need to better understand why families sometimes give us such a rough time. They need to become more insightful about how unresolved grief can affect family behavior and emotions (e.g. following the diagnosis of a disability, when there is a death in the family); how intellectual and communication deficits, language and cultural differences, powerful personality dynamics, caregiver exhaustion or how relatively healthy families can be labeled difficult, **when the real problem may rest with exhausted professionals or impersonal, unresponsive or nonexistent human services.**



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Essential Family Work-Skills (cont'd)

- **Becoming Aware of Unspoken Family Questions:**

To ensure family cooperation, agency staff need to become more skilled at reassuring families. This reassurance (requiring examples from individual's typical week) must address questions that are seldom stated openly.

Family members often “test” professionals and organizations to reassuringly answer four unspoken (but vitally important) questions:

- 1. Do you really care (about my relative/me)?;**
- 2. Is my child/relative really safe?;**
- 3. Is my child/relative happy?;**
- 4. Am I a good parent/sibling/grandparent?**



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Ponder This

What does it mean when a parent says "If I'm happy, then they're happy!?"



Universal Enhancement

Essential Family-Work Skills (cont'd)

- Clarifying Roles:

One of the greatest sources of acrimony and confusion between service providers and families, result from unclear roles and expectations.

-Families and professionals can improve their relationships and reduce distress by deciding who does what, how and when.

-In particularly complicated situations, a written service agreement is useful in outlining the responsibilities of agencies, professionals, families and the individual, to enhance the possibility of the individual's successes.

-It is often wise to designate one contact person (usually a supervisor or middle manager) through whom families can raise serious concerns with an agency.



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Essential Family-Work Skills (cont'd)

- Clarifying Roles (cont'd):

Some families prefer to approach many different (often part-time or weekend) staff with complaints or deep concerns, but this usually results in miscommunication and emotional upset.

A brief written script can be created and rehearsed by staff to be used if family members approach them with complaints [“I know you are concerned and I will ask Joe (the designated contact person) to get back to you as soon as he can about it.”]

Likewise, staff should feel empowered to suggest positive ideas or raise concerns about the family’s behavior with the designated contact person. Staff ideas or concerns can be addressed with the family at regularly scheduled planning or support circle meetings. Please remember, constructive complaining should always be a two-way street!

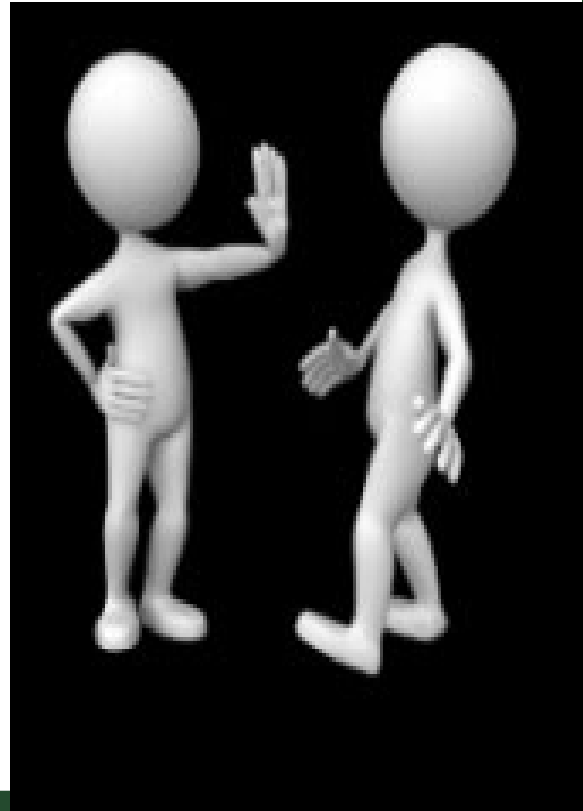


Essential Family-Work Skills (cont'd)

- **Setting Proper Boundaries:** Professionals who learn to set appropriate work-related boundaries, tend to manage stress better, and families inadvertently benefit from dealing with healthier, more confident professionals.

Examples of setting boundaries may include:

- reducing excessive overtime
- politely ending acrimonious meetings
- demonstrating team solidarity in not disclosing certain personal information with families
- showing caution about receiving gifts or giving hugs
- not giving out home phone numbers



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Essential Family-Work Skills (cont'd)

Conclusion:

Most professionals involved in the I/DD field receive limited or no training in effective family-work methods, yet often interact with families on a regular basis. It is important that professionals develop specific skills for improving communication and ensuring a strong foundation of professional-family cooperation. This will make the difference between tremendous progress, or failure, in appropriately supporting a family member with a developmental disability!

Essential Family – Work Skills slide series based on J. Dale Munro,
MSW, RSW, FAAIDD, Regional Support Associates;
NADD Bulletin Volume XII Number 3 Article 1

Universal Enhancement

