



CALIFORNIA CENTER

for Infant-Family and Early Childhood Mental Health
at WestEd Center for Prevention & Early Intervention

*Foundations of Infant-Family and
Early Childhood Mental Health
Training*

**Course: Using Self-Awareness as a
Tool to Understanding Children's
Emotional Experiences**

Date: November , 2017

PRESENTER Tala Ghanous, LCSW



TRANSDISCIPLINARY MENTAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS
(TMHP) SERIES

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Video Clip: Inside Out



Practicing Self Awareness

With a partner, please take a moment to share an example of an interaction you had when your behavior and/or communication impacted a relationship with a child, family or colleague.

What was the impact on the other person? What did you notice? And did you respond?

Working with young children and families stirs up many complex feelings *because of our own experiences* of parenting, being a child in a family, and growing up in a particular way.



Self Awareness

The capacity to observe oneself and be aware of our own thoughts, feelings and behaviors as an important source of communication and information in a variety of work experiences.



The Value of Self Awareness

Self awareness can lead to an appreciation and curiosity about differences in clients' beliefs, values and practices

Self awareness can lead us to identify our values and biases and how they may be impacting our relationship with children and their families.



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Use of Self

Is a *tool* of self awareness that helps use our feelings and thoughts to shape our responses and interventions.

Reflective Capacity

Is the capacity to reflect on what the response should be (just listen, make a suggestion, offer a resource, etc.).

Use of Self Example: Carlos

Carlos is a 5-year-old whose parents have recently separated after several domestic violence incidents. Carlos is splitting his time between his mother and father's homes. When he returns from his mother's home, she often asks him questions about his father and will have a strong reaction if Carlos tells her something she disagrees with. The parents both receive mental health services from the same therapist at different times, they come to the session with Carlos separately.

After one of the sessions with Carlos and his father, the mother texted the therapist to ask her if Carlos and his father did indeed attend the session. Mom has been worried that father has not been bringing him to therapy. They actually missed a session due to father's lack of transportation.

Carlos

The therapist asked to talk with mom on the phone and not answer her question through a text because she was worried about mom's reaction to Carlos missing a session.

Mom asked again through a text and the therapist did not respond through text whether they had attended or not.

The next day, mom texted the therapist and told her that Carlos had told her they had not attended.

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Table Talk

How might the therapist be feeling and thinking?

How might Carlos be feeling?

How could the therapist use her own experience to talk with mom about Carlos' feelings?

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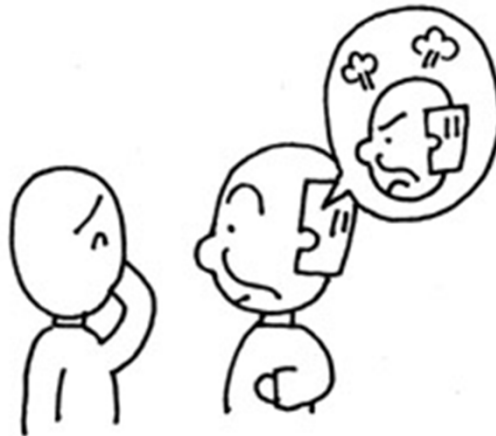
Reflection In Action

The capacity to observe oneself and consider what is happening internally, *simultaneously* considering what is happening between self and others at any given moment.



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The self awareness related to “use of self” can be used to build interventions and help us figure out what to say in an interaction with another person.



Sometimes the best “use of self” is to remain silent and be aware that our feelings and reactions are present and important and not quite ready to share.

Some of these strong feelings would benefit from some time for self-reflection so our responses do not injure our working relationships.



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Holding the Tension



Holding the tension is the ability to hold and tolerate worries and presses while remaining open to gathering more information

Finding an Authentic Voice, Mary Claire Heffron, Ph.D.; Barbara Ivins, Ph.D.; Donna R. Weston, Ph.D. 2005

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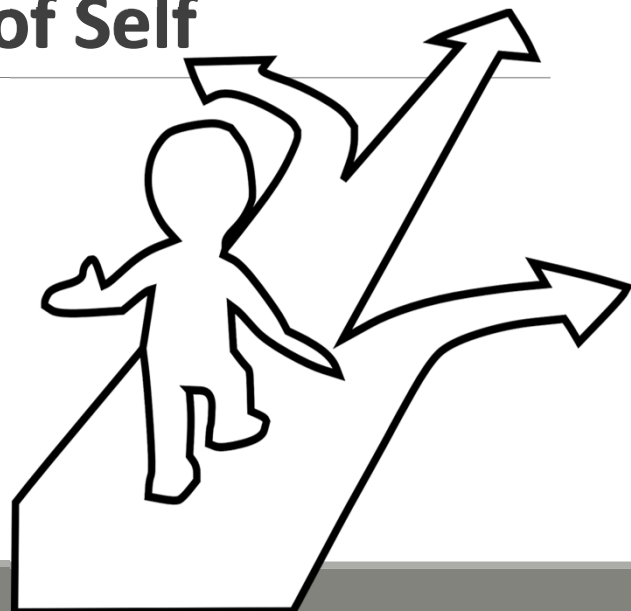
Providers who are skilled in self awareness are able to develop a strong working relationship with families and they are able to use interventions in a way that matches the family's ability to *take in and use information, empathy, and exploration of their relationships with others* (i.e. children).



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Use of Self

Can help guide us in choosing effective responses (use of self) when we experience our own strong feelings in our work.



TWO THINGS
TO REMEMBER IN LIFE :
"Take care of your
thoughts when you're
alone", and
"Take care of your
words when you're
with people."

Consider These Three Areas

1. Noticing our own internal and external reactions to others and situations : "I can't understand how she leaves her baby so easily with strangers."
2. Noticing our impact on a situation: the internal and external reactions that others may have towards you. "I notice you cancelled our meeting after we talked about that difficult situation."
3. Noticing Interactions Between Children and Families. "I see that you always smile when you talk about Valentina."

Vignette Activity

Please read the vignette on your table.

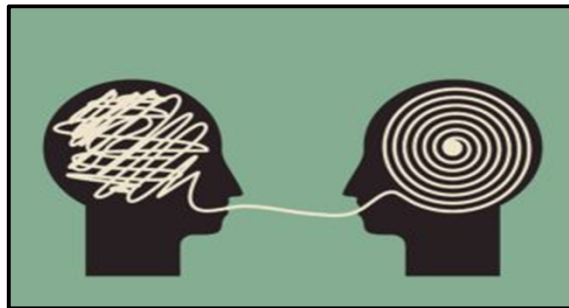
1. Identify your own feelings first
2. How would you respond...

What Do I Do?

1. Slow it down, don't say anything
2. Ask for permission to respond, be careful in the response
3. What is the port of entry (what do I choose to respond to)
4. Think about the situation and adjust my response to what the other person can take in at the moment
5. Consider the priorities and perspective of others and lead with that as a response

Reflection on Action

The capacity to think about what happened during an interaction; conscious and unconscious influences on behavior after the interaction has happened



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“Use of Self” Reflection

Please take a moment to look at the handout and circle the areas that you are working on and the areas you feel competence in.

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“

Awareness is like the sun. When it shines on things, they are transformed.

- Thich Nhat Hanh -

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OkDay.com