



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:** Self-Awareness and  
the Use of Self in Relationship-  
Based Work

**Date:** October 14, 2017

Presenter: Vivette Catipon, MFT  
Early Childhood Mental Health Program,  
Early Intervention Services  
Transdisciplinary Mental Health  
Practitioners (TMHP) Series

## What We Are Doing Today

Knowledge Area A: Parenting, Caregiving, Family Functioning and Parent-Child Relationships. 3.5 hours

Knowledge Area G: Multidisciplinary Collaboration. 1.5 hours

**Objectives:**

- 1. Consider how providers' relationships with parents might impact parent-child relationships.**
- 2. Develop an understanding of the ways parent-child relationships can promote positive development and resilience in young children and families.**
- 3. Discuss and define relationship-based approaches that are anchored in reflective practice and self-awareness through interactive exercises.**
- 4. Consider the role of use of self in early childhood and early intervention settings exploring how culture and contextual differences impact the family system.**
- 5. Begin exploring how culture and contextual differences shape the family system.**

# Use of Self

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

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



# Self-Awareness Exercise

What's weighing me down today?



What thoughts or worries do these stones hold?



## Interactions With Young Children Bring Up Powerful Emotions



Personal growth and the process of change is rooted in the careful attention to the feelings, values and beliefs that are activated in ourselves and in our interactions with others.



## Reflection on Action

“Reflection on action” is the capacity to think about what happened during an interaction, conscious and unconscious influences on behavior, after the fact. It increases understanding so that future interactions are more nuanced and intentional.

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

## Reflection in Action

Reflection in action is the capacity to observe oneself and consider what is happening internally, simultaneously considering what is happening between self and others at any given moment; “watching multiple screens of thought and behavior and perspectives, have a quick internal dialogue about his own worries and perceptions and decide how to act and what to say.”

Use of self involves a willingness to examine, tolerate and at times use feelings and experiences stimulated by action.

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

## Table Talk

<https://youtu.be/Q5FdzHaOuE>

Imagine that this child is in your class or is a client of yours. Your session has ended and this is happening. The child began to cry before they left you and so you want to help mom.

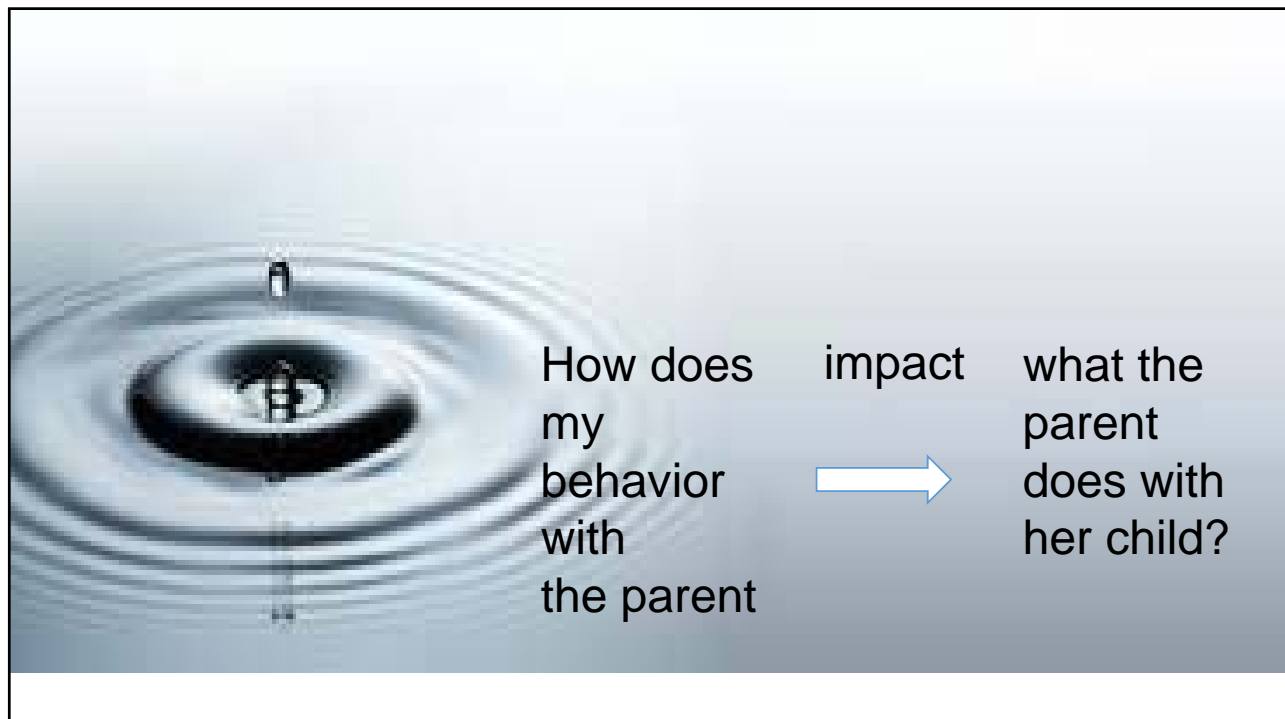
### Reflection in Action vs. Reflection on Action



# Parallel Process

- \* The effect of a relationship upon other relationships
- \* Do unto others as you would have others do unto others”

Jeree Pawl



Select two events in your life, as far back as you can remember, that impacted the way you engage with others.



## Self-Reflection



## Perspective Taking

Perspective taking is the capacity to see the point of view of another and particularly critical when interacting with those coming from a different cultural and socioeconomic background than ourselves. It does not imply approval. It allows one to have empathy and choose actions that may be more effective.

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

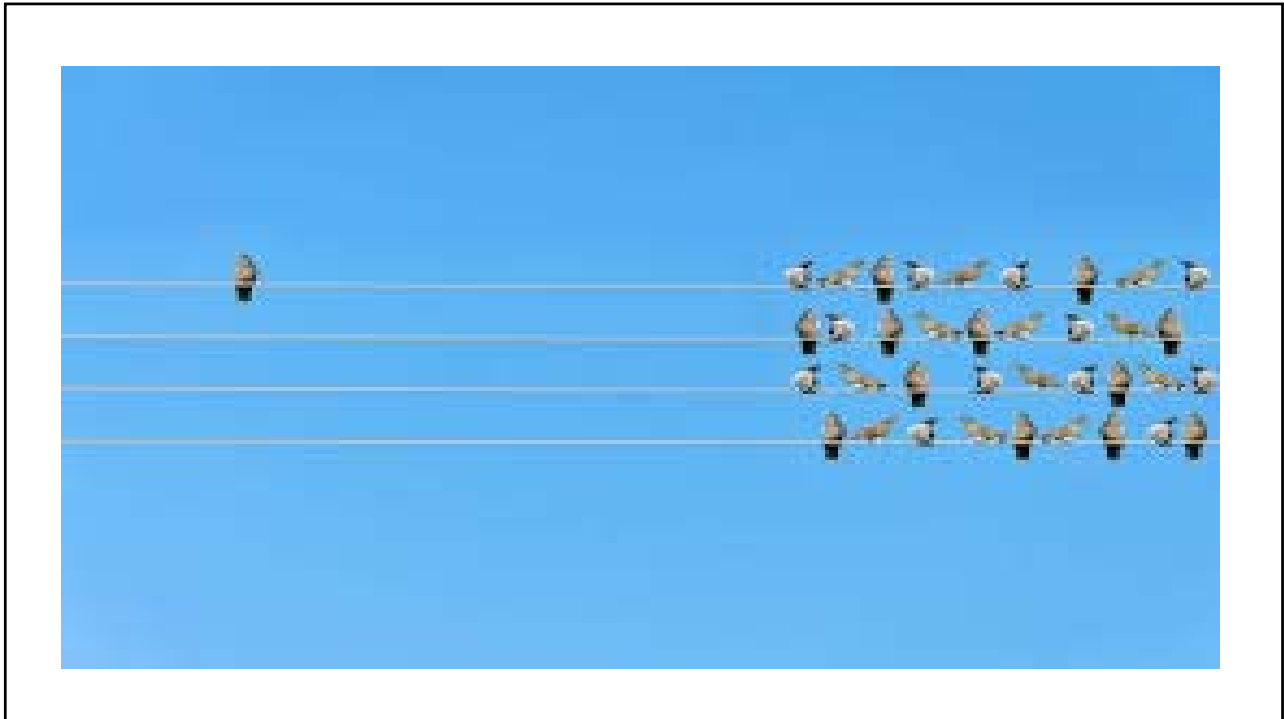
## Table Talk

### “Belonging and Feeling Safe”

Describe a specific incident or memory from a group, organization or community you are part of that goes with the words “Belonging” or “Feeling Safe”.

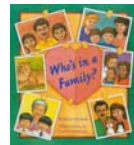
Describe a specific incident or memory where you felt vulnerable, uncomfortable or different.





## Honor Diverse Family Structures

Families define who they are comprised of and how they are structured; no particular family constellation or organization is inherently optimal compared to any other. Diversity-informed infant mental health practice recognizes and strives to counter the historical bias toward idealizing (and conversely blaming) biological mothers as primary caregivers while overlooking the critical child-rearing contributions of other parents and caregivers including fathers, second mothers, foster parents, kin and felt family, early care and educational providers, and others.



## **Self-Awareness Leads to Better Services for Families**

Professionals in the field of infant mental health must reflect on their own culture, personal values, and beliefs, and on the impact racism, classism, sexism, able-ism, homophobia, xenophobia, and other systems of oppression have had on their lives in order to provide diversity-informed, culturally attuned services on behalf of infants, toddlers, and their families.

## **Learning to Use Background and Foreground**

Learning to use background and foreground is the capacity to hold multiple thought processes; in the background are questions one might have about the encounter and in the foreground one remains attentive to both behavior and material in the interaction and not allow thoughts in the background to intrude and get in the way of staying present with the family.

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



### **“Press”, Identifying and Tolerating**

“Press” is the affective internal pressure that one experiences during an interaction that creates a strong urge to act. ex: how you feel when you hear a crying infant...an urge to pick the baby up. It comes from a desire to protect, from cultural upbringing and from moral imperatives. A press when examined allows one to clarify their own values and explore differences in belief and action.

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

# Imagine You're on a Home Visit...

<https://youtu.be/BsRIUsH IOk>

What are my assumptions, judgements, intolerances, biases, wishes, hot buttons and fears?

# Self-Reflection



Use of somatic observations as a way to discuss interpersonal process

- awareness of physiological changes, shifts in mood and learning to inquire about these in a way that reinforces a meaningful relationship.

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

# Learning to Inhibit Actions

Learning to inhibit actions is the ability to reflect, consult and collaborate before responding with an intervention. Slowing down and valuing the process of listening; help a client explore possibilities instead of rushing to judgment and action.

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

# Holding the Tension



Holding the tension is the ability to hold and tolerate conflicting ideas, presses and anxieties and helping the client process these without pushing for a particular outcome.

# Reframing

Reframing is offering a different view to suggest a more positive or developmentally appropriate meaning. It requires an understanding of the parent's perspective.

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

# Use of Gentle Inquiry in Promoting Use of Self

This means carefully asking questions aimed at minimum defensive action; it also leads to mutual discovery and a way to guide the other into understanding their perspectives and responses. This skill involves finding the questions that lead to further understanding.

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

Dad tells you that he and his wife haven't been on the same page with regards to his 3 year old son's behavior lately. His son, Esteban, frequently barges into his older sister's room and the 13 year old sister gets very annoyed. They then scream at each other and fight and it won't stop until either he or his wife breaks up the fight. He feels that his wife often sides with their daughter. His wife nags him to give his son attention and play with him. He tells you that he takes his son to the park to play soccer almost everyday. He says his wife and their daughter do too many "girlie, girlie" things together and should give Esteban attention too sometimes.

## Table Talk

- Share how you feel about this vignette. Each one of you chose an essential skill that you can use to respond to this dad. Share with the group what you might say to the dad.



## Final Activity

I AM  
two of the most  
powerful words.  
For what you put  
after them  
shapes your reality.

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