



Supporting the Families in your program

Approaching a Difficult Conversation

Agenda

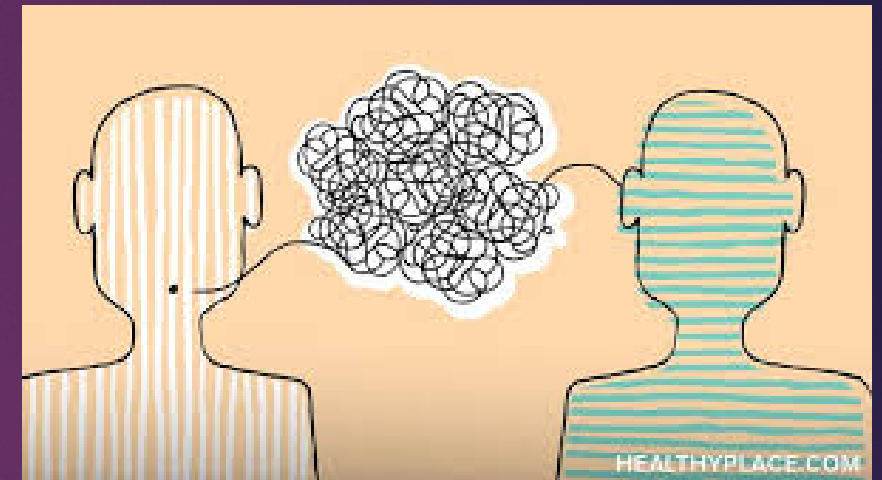
Approaching a Difficult Conversation

1. Laying a Solid Foundation

- ▶ Gaining perspective
- ▶ Building relationships/family engagement

2. Adding Additional Skills

- ▶ The first step – Asking **yourself** some questions
 - ▶ Why? – What? – How?
- ▶ Usable information
- ▶ Conversation tips



Foundational Practices

- Gaining Perspective



► Perspective

- A particular attitude toward or way of seeing something; a point of view

► Perspective Taking

- The ability to look beyond your own point of view so that you can consider how someone else may think or feel about something

I'm sure this isn't new, but....

- Your personal experiences, your upbringing, the place where you live, etc., all impact how you see and react to the world around you
 - The same goes for parents, families, children, etc.

Foundational Practices

- Gaining Perspective

- ▶ If your feeling unregulated (for whatever reason), it's difficult not to let that impact how we perceive a situation, especially if it's a stressful one.



Stressed Out Perspective	Regulated Perspective
The child is doing this on purpose or because they don't like me.	It might seem like it, but it's not about you. They may be having their own difficult day. How can you be there to help them solve the problem?
That parent is so difficult! I dread having to meet with them.	It may be a difficult <i>situation</i> , but it's important that we refrain from seeing the parent or child as difficult.
There is no end in sight. I'll be dealing with this all year!	Try to see things from an outsider's point of view. Maybe ask another teacher to observe the situation.
It's like they don't have time for their child and when we do meet, they hardly pay attention.	We never know what is going on in someone else's life and therefore we shouldn't assume as though we do.

Foundational Practices

- Gaining Perspective



We know that one of the best ways to understand someone's perspective is through building a relationship with that person.

Activity

Does your program have practices or policies in place to promote the building of strong relationships with parents?

If yes, what are they?

Foundational Practices

- Family Engagement = Relationships



Do the practices you listed

- ▶ Focus on a collaborative/shared understanding, where the emphasis is on *building authentic, honest relationships*?
- ▶ *Intentionally engage families* in meaningful ways in order to actively support the well-being, development and success of the child?
- ▶ Show respect for the *strengths* that each person has to offer?

Foundational Practices

- Family Engagement = Relationships

Key Words

1. **Authentic** – genuine, real
2. **Intentional** – done on purpose, deliberate
3. **Honest** – truthful, sincere
4. **Relationship** – the way in which people are connected

► In order to promote authentic (real) family engagement, you must intentionally (purposefully) build an honest (truthful) relationship (connection) with the families in your program.



Foundational Practices

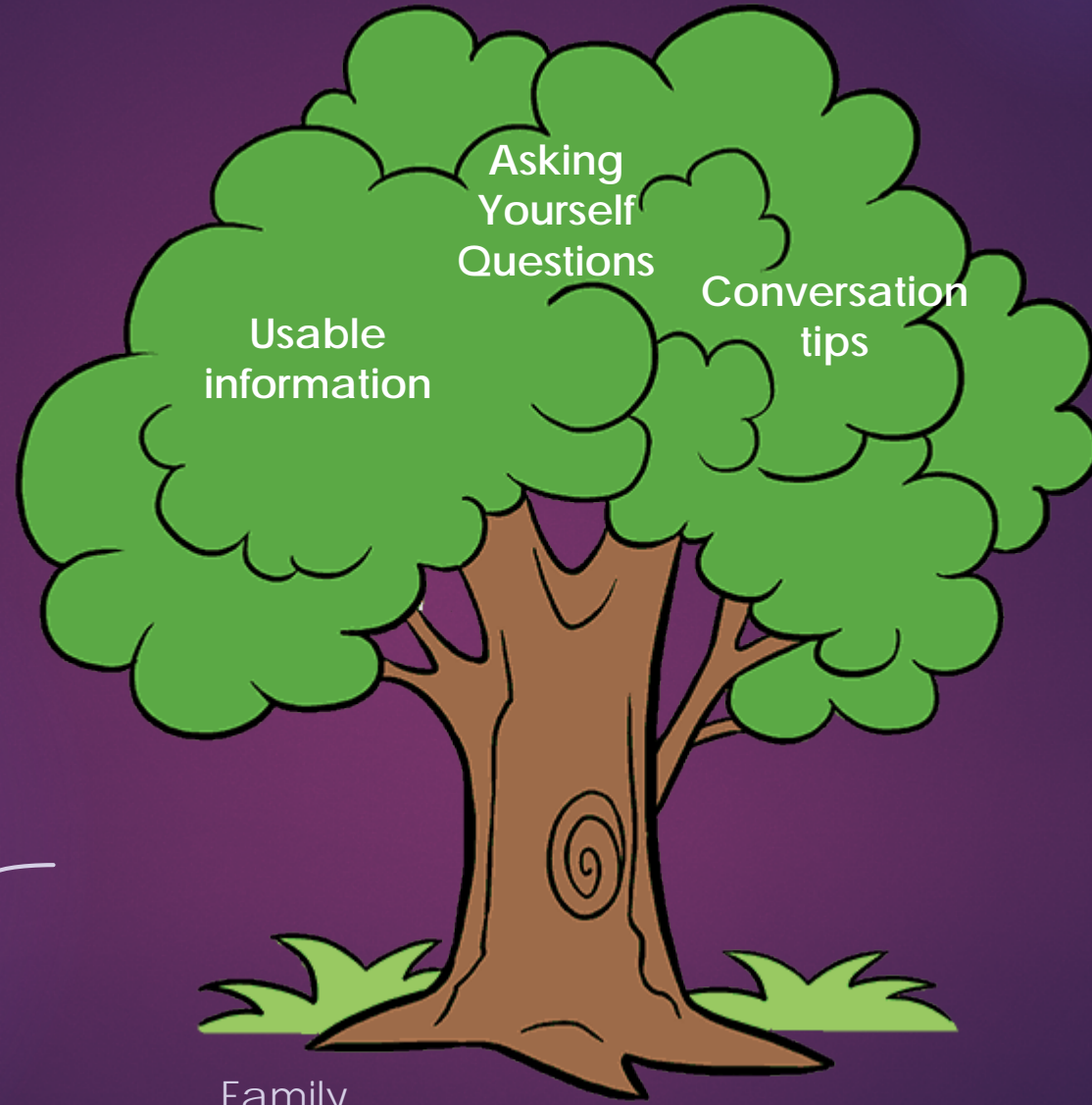
- Intentional, Authentic Family Engagement

- ▶ How can I make this a part of my program?
 - ▶ Make family engagement a central part of your mission and policies
 - ▶ Make sure everyone in your program is on board and committed
 - ▶ Take time to listen to and notice the families in your program (what are their needs, preferences, interests, experiences, etc.)
 - ▶ Regularly discuss a child's development with parents
 - ▶ Engage parents in meaningful conversations
 - ▶ Go out of your way to make a connection



Approaching Difficult Conversations

Foundational
Practices



Asking
Yourself
Questions

Usable
information

Conversation
tips

Additional
Skills

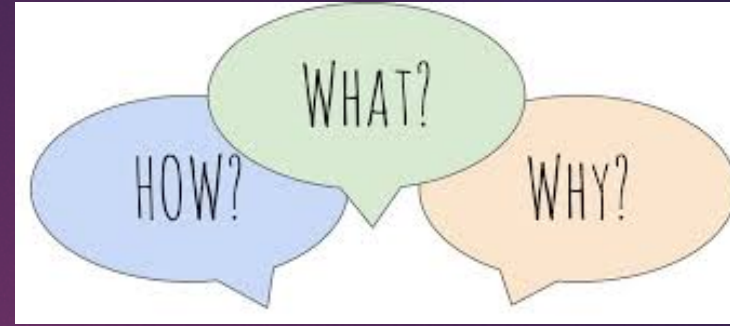
Family
engagement

Gaining
perspective

Building relationships

Difficult Conversations

- The First Step



Three important questions YOU should answer BEFORE talking with a parent about a concern you have:

- 1) **Why** are you having the conversation?
 - ▶ What is it that you hope to accomplish?
- 2) **What** information are you going to share?
 - ▶ Be specific! Write down what you have seen and why you are concerned.
- 3) **How** are you going to share the information/concerns you have?
 - ▶ During pickup? Formal meeting?

Talking With Parents

- WHY are you having the conversation



It's important to know the “why” behind any conversation

- ▶ What is the **purpose** of the meeting or conversation?
 - ▶ Is it to inform the parent about something?
 - ▶ Is it to gather information from the parent?
 - ▶ Is it to ask for something? (e.g., parent's help, consent to assess, etc.)
- ▶ Before you talk with a parent, be clear about your purpose
- ▶ Know your WHY!

Talking With Parents

- WHAT information will you share



In order to continuously learn about a child's growth and development it is imperative that you collect **USABLE** information on an ongoing basis

What's **USABLE** information?

- ▶ It's factual (what you see), relevant (current skills), and functional (occur during normal routines) information that is specific to the child
 - ▶ No generalizations or "I think.."
- ▶ It helps answer the question, "Who is this child?"
 - ▶ More specifically, "Who is this child when they are in your program?"
- ▶ It provides information so a parent knows how their child acts and interacts while in your program

Talking With Parents

- HOW you share information



When sharing information/concerns with parents, keep in mind:

- ▶ **Your attitude** - How are you feeling about the conversation?
 - ▶ Are you upset with the child's actions?
 - ▶ Are you concerned about the child?
 - ▶ Are you feeling anxious about the conversation?
 - ▶ Are you excited about something new the child has learned?
- ▶ **Your delivery** - How are you going to present the information?
 - ▶ What kind of meeting is it? (Formal or informal)
 - ▶ Can you be casual, or should you be more professional?
 - ▶ Are your words accusatory, complimentary or neutral?

Conversation Tips

- Things to keep in mind

- ▶ Difficult conversations are called that for a reason; they tend to center around difficult topics (e.g., delays in development, behaviors, etc.)
- ▶ What else can you do to prepare?
 - ▶ Perspective Taking
 - ▶ The parents may not see things the way you do (or may not see them at all)
 - ▶ They may not place the same importance on a set of skills that you do (e.g., different cultures have different priorities)
 - ▶ Your words may contain more power than you are aware of
 - ▶ Understand that you may be talking about more than just their child; you may be impacting how they see their child going forward and the dreams they have for them
 - ▶ Your words can provide support and empathy as well (Relationships matter)

Conversation Tips

- A few more things

- ▶ Approach the conversation as a caring reporter
 - ▶ Be truthful, understanding, and compassionate
- ▶ Think about how the parent might feel after receiving the information
- ▶ Ask for and listen to the parent's perspective
 - ▶ What USABLE information are they sharing?
- ▶ If things become heated or defensive, take a moment (offer a moment) to BREATHE!



TIPS FOR MANAGING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

1
DON'T AVOID HAVING
THE CONVERSATION



2
NAIL DOWN THE PURPOSE
OF THE CONVERSATION



3
BE WILLING TO LISTEN



4
COME UP WITH SOLUTIONS



5
REVIEW THE ISSUE



TAKE A BEAT + ALTER YOUR MINDSET

BREATHE

MAKE A LOOSE AGENDA

LISTEN CAREFULLY + ACTIVELY

SHOW EMPATHY + COMPASSION

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT

OFFER A SOLUTION OR INPUT



HOW TO TACKLE TOUGH CONVERSATIONS



1. **ASK** yourself 3 questions.



2. **CHECK** yourself and decide whether to raise the issue.



3. **APPROACH** from a neutral perspective.



4. **EXPLORE** their story and yours.



5. **PROBLEM-SOLVE** to move forward.

Other Examples



- ▶ Connect with Parents - Illinois Early Learning Tip sheets
 - ▶ <https://illinoisearlylearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/connect.pdf>
- ▶ Tips for talking with parents about developmental delays - CDC
 - ▶ https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/tipstalkingparents.pdf
- ▶ How to talk to parents about their child's development – CDC Module
 - ▶ <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/watchmetraining/module4.html>
- ▶ How to communicate with parents – Zero to Three
 - ▶ <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/92-how-to-communicate-with-parents>
- ▶ Caregiver Parent Communication Tool – Zero to Three
 - ▶ <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/93-caregiver-parent-communication-tools>
- ▶ Talking to parents about behavior – Extension Alliance
 - ▶ <https://childcare.extension.org/how-can-i-approach-parents-when-i-have-concerns-about-their-childs-aggressive-behavior/>
- ▶ Tips for child care providers to communicate with parents
 - ▶ <https://childcare.extension.org/tips-for-child-care-providers-to-communicate-with-parents-their-concerns-about-a-childs-development/>