

Engaging and Supporting Families



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Overview of morning

- What is the family support approach?
 - Background, theory and evidence of effectiveness
 - Elements of family support practice
- BREAK at 10:30
- Honing family support skills
 - Overcoming barriers



What is a family support approach?

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**Do unto others
as you would have them
do unto you**

~

Respected Empathetic Welcoming

Warm Trusting Flexible Honest

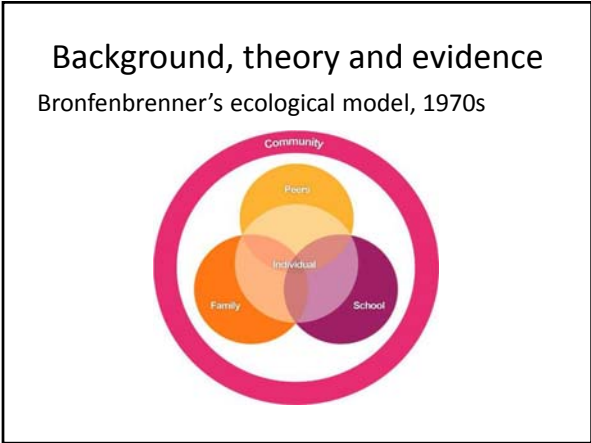
Collaborative, not bossy Friendly

Appreciative Informal

Family-centred health care



- Children are **dependent upon families**, which are part of networks of **informal and formal support systems**
- Respect for **diversity** of family structures, roles, values, beliefs and coping styles
- Respect family **autonomy**, decision-making
- **Collaborative relationships** between professionals and parents, parents and other parents
- Services that are **flexible, accessible, normative and responsive** to family-identified needs
- Promotion of parent’s sense of their own **capabilities and competencies**, leading to empowering consequences such as increased confidence.



- Grass roots community programs started by parents for parents in the U.S. and Canada during the 1970s using informal, strength-based approaches: *The how is more important than the what.*
- Evidence of improved health outcomes and satisfaction when using family-centred practice in health services
- Formal articulation of Guiding Principles of family support practice in U.S. and Canada in 1990s
- Distinction between “relational” and “participatory” practices (Carl Dunst and Carol Trivette)

Relational practices include behaviours typically associated with effective helpgiving (compassion, active listening, etc.) and positive staff attributions about program participant capabilities.

Participatory practices include behaviours that involve program participant choice and decision-making, and which meaningfully involve participants in actively procuring or obtaining desired resources or supports.

“Capacity-building helpgiving and family-systems intervention practices had direct effects on both parent self-efficacy beliefs and well-being and indirect effects on parent-child interactions and child development.”

Dunst and Trivette, 2009

Examples of family support practice



What family support elements do you see here?



Elements of family support practice

- Relationship-based: non-judgmental, respectful (everyone has challenges; everyone has something to offer)
- Collaborative
- Warm, comfortable, safe (emotional and physical tone)
- Parent as expert (facilitation vs. instruction)
- Multi-faceted, non-categorical, holistic, integrated
- Understanding that basic needs should be met first
- Value the contribution of informal support networks
- Attention to process, feelings
- Culturally sensitive and affirming
- Others?

Six key family support practices

1. Supportive physical environments
2. Responsive programming
3. Showing respect and positive regard
4. Conversations to gain understanding
5. Knowledge sharing, adult education
6. Collaborative problem solving

1. Supportive physical environments





2. Responsive programming

- Surveying preferences
- Communication when something cannot be done or when something is being changed based on feedback

3. Showing Respect and Positive Regard

- Use person's name
- Start and end on time
- Focus on assets, not deficits
- Dress neatly but not so fancy as to be intimidating
- Maintain confidentiality, no gossiping
- Follow requests like removing shoes in house
- Seek contributions, ask for help, show appreciation
- Consider impact of requests such as sign-in, completing surveys
- Suggestion box, focus groups for feedback
- Membership on board, committees
- Link parent with other parents as sources of strength
- ?
- ?
- ?

4. Conversations to gain understanding

Using pictures



Asking questions

- When does this happen? (context)
- Is this unusual behaviour for (the child) (the child's age)?
- What do you think your child is feeling?
- If you baby could talk, what do you think she would be saying to you?
- What have you tried already?
- What else are you thinking of trying?
- Would you like me to share some ideas with you that other parents have tried?
- Would you like me to introduce you to other moms with children the same age as yours?

4. Knowledge sharing

- Facilitation, not instruction
- Flexibility with agenda, content
- Set group agreements together
- Draw upon wisdom and experience of group members

5. Problem Solving

- Defining the problem
- Brainstorming ideas
- Selecting option or options to try
- Evaluating outcomes after a set time and choosing another strategy if needed

Suggestion Circle

Challenging situations

- Temptation to offer advice or give instruction
- When there are child protection concerns
- When parents believe in corporal punishment
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Thank you!