

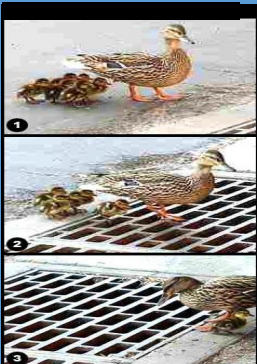
**Reflective practice for home visitors:
From reflective conversations to
reflective supervision/consultation**



The Minnesota Coalition for Targeted Home Visiting
Michele Fallon
May 17, 2018

Plan for our time together

- What is reflective functioning and why does it matter?
- Reflective practice—what, why and how
- Having difficult (but reflective!) conversations: Self-awareness, careful observation and flexible response
- Reflective supervision and consultation
- Next steps...



**What is reflective
functioning and
why does it matter—
For parenting?
Home visiting?**

Reflective functioning is a basic human capacity—it is what allows us to make sense of the people in our world.

Arietta Slade (2002)





What is reflective functioning?

(aka 'mind-mindedness', 'mentalization')

- The capacity to **recognize** "mental states"--feelings, thoughts, intentions—in self & others:
 - *I find myself dreading this home visit.*
 - *I wonder why this mom seems so angry?*

And...

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What is reflective functioning?

(aka 'mind-mindedness', 'mentalization')

- The capacity to **link mental states to behavior**, i.e. how a person thinks and feels shows up in their behavior:
 - *I think I'm irritable because I'm so behind in my paperwork.*
 - *I wonder if that mom 'no shows' because she is worried that I will judge her.*



Reflective Functioning, then...

- Is the necessary capacity for attunement to the thoughts, feelings and intentions of **ourselves and others**—
- Which allows us to read, interpret, and respond empathically to the cues of others,
- **And is necessary for self-regulation.**

Keeping the baby in mind: a critical skill for healthy parenting.



What's so important about reflective functioning?

Without an emotional understanding of the child, parenting skills are of little use, and remain empty recipes that bear little relation to the child's internal experience and needs.



Arietta Slade

What is reflective practice? And why do it?



Why is reflection necessary in our work?

Because we are human,

...it is not possible to work on behalf of human beings to try to help them without having powerful feelings aroused in yourself.



Jeree Pawl

(It's biology...)

Complexity of Reflective Issues in Home Visiting

(Davies, 2014)

The home visitor working on behalf of the child and their family is challenged to take into account the differing mental and emotional perspectives of:

- The infant or toddler
- Other children in the family
- The parent(s)
- Other significant caregivers
- Other professionals
- Own internal perspective

Reflective Practice as a Way of Being

- A “portable lens” for observing interactions and our own reactions;
- Acknowledging that “feelings” are an important source of information;
- And that all behavior has meaning—*What is this child (or parent) trying to tell me?*

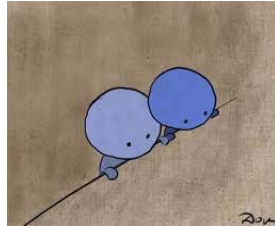


What is Reflective Practice?

The art of 'stepping back' to examine what one is observing and doing;

Alicia Lieberman

Reflecting ON action so we can reflect IN action Schon



What is Reflective Practice?

- Thinking about and analyzing your actions in order to improve your professional practice.
- It involves exploring and explaining events, not just describing them.
- It involves analyzing your anxieties, errors and weaknesses, as well as your strengths and successes.



We must allow ourselves...

- Not to **know**
- To be **surprised** or **confused**
- To **wonder why** :
 - *Why I reacted the way I did?*
 - *Why I handled a situation the way I did?*
 - *Why the parent is reacting this way?*
 - *What was going on with the child or parent?*



What happens in your mind while you are with a parent or child:

Professionals continually question their own and other's internal mental state:

- What is happening now?
- Why are they saying this now?
- Why are they behaving like this?
- Why am I feeling as I do now?
- What has happened recently that may justify the current state?



Mentalization Based Family Treatment (MBFT)
(Aisen, Fonagy et al, 2011)

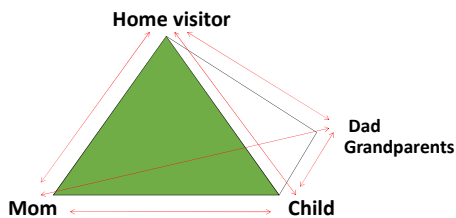
Important questions for helping us to reflect: Taking multiple perspectives

- *What's it like to be this mom?*
- *What's it like to be this dad?*
- *What's it like to be this child?*
- *What is the meaning of this child to this family?*
- *What's it like to be me (the home visitor) in this situation?*
- *What does my presence mean to this family?*

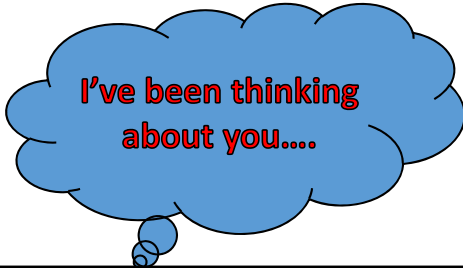


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Attending to All the Relationships: The Perspective Pyramid



Five powerful words for giving parents the experience of "being held in the mind of another":



Inviting reflection from parents: The Power of Open-ended Questions

Using questions and listening rather than being the "expert" with the answers---

- Acknowledges the complexity of the situation and the need for individualized solutions;
- Acknowledges the parent/caregiver as the expert on his or her child.



The Power of Open-ended Questions

- *What were you thinking/feeling then?*
- *How did you know....?*
- *What do you think he's trying to tell you?*
- *What did you do? Why do you think that worked/didn't work?*
- *Tell me about a time when things seemed to go well.*
- ***I wonder.....***



Conversation Number 1:

- **Talking First Person:** Tell your partner about a time that a child/parent was difficult to work with. Share some of the details about the event.
- **Listening First Person** - Use some of these questions after your partner has shared their story. Try to only use the questions listed.
 - *Who is it you are talking about?*
 - *Which staff or peers were involved in the situation?*
 - *What did you do about it?*
 - *When did it happen?*
 - *How long have you worked with this parent/child?*
 - *Where did it happen?*

Conversation Number 2: Switch Roles

- **Talking Person:** Tell your partner about a time that a child/parent was difficult to work with. Share some of the details about the event.
- **Listener:** Use some of these questions after your partner has shared their story. Try to only use the questions listed.
 - *What was it like for you when that happened?*
 - *Did this remind you of another similar incident/parent/child?*
 - *I wonder what it felt like to be the child/parent in that situation.*
 - *What do you think they were trying to tell you when they did that?*
 - *What might be going on for this parent/child/family at home/school?*
 - *Is this how it usually goes with this child/parent? How would you like it to go?*

The need for self-awareness & reflection

- Your own feelings are an essential source of information as you decide whether and how to respond.
- Our own histories, experiences, values, implicit biases and assumptions are with us every minute in our work and affect how we interact.



What happens in your mind while you are with a parent?

Professionals continually question their own and other's internal mental state:

- *What is happening now?*
- *Why are they saying this now?*
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Mentalization Based Family Treatment (MBFT)
(Aislen, Fonagy et al, 2011)

The need for self-awareness & reflection

- Working with young children and their families is **relationship-based work**, which requires us to engage our emotions as well as our intellect.
- We can become overwhelmed & susceptible to many of the same stressors as the families and children with whom we work.



Having those hard conversations (Planned or 'in the moment')





Talking about the “hard stuff:”

- **Why is it important** to talk about difficult things like referrals for children, concerning practices, chemical use, birth control, mental health concerns?
- **What gets in our way** of asking about these topics with parents?
- **How do we balance** asking about ‘hard things’ while acknowledging our limits of practice?
- **How do we keep the children “in the lens”** when bringing up difficult topics?

The good news is that...

- How we handle/repair misunderstandings, mistakes and difficult situations with parents can actually strengthen relationship.
- We have the opportunity to offer parents a different experience of “hard conversations:”
 - *People don’t go away when I mess up.*
 - *Adults can admit they make mistakes (especially someone in a perceived position of power).*
 - *“Big feelings” can be worked through without rupturing the relationship.*

Reflection--helping us decide what to do...

Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect, 2006

- **Careful observation**— *What’s happening here? What is the meaning of the behavior I am seeing?*
- **Self-awareness**— *What are my thoughts and feelings about this? Where do they come from?*
- **Flexible response**—
 - *What are my goals?*
 - *What responses will best fit this parent or caregiver?*
 - *How am I being intentional in my responses to address the goals (KNOW why that’s the intervention you are choosing).*

Careful Observation: Assess the Situation

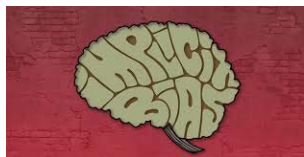
- Where does this interaction fall on the continuum—positive, potentially harmful, or abusive/neglectful?
- Is the child in danger?
- Is this part of a pattern?
- What is my relationship with this caregiver?

**Self awareness:
Identify your own reactions**

- **Do I identify with the child?** (which may feel like fear, shame, guilt, confusion)
- **Do I identify with the caregiver?** (which may feel like annoyance, anger, frustration)
- **Am I feeling judgmental?** (which may lead to feelings of rejection, anger, hostility)
- **Am I missing important information?** What else do I need to know? (which may make me feel uncertain about what to do)

**Is culture influencing my reaction?
The painful topic of implicit bias**

- Implicit bias refers to the automatic and unconscious stereotypes that drive people to behave and make decisions in certain ways.
- We ALL have implicit biases—it's the way our brain works.



Cultural Humility



- An active self-reflection and critical consciousness of one’s own assumptions, beliefs, values, and worldview; and
- Knowing the limitations of one’s own perspective.

Harper-Brown (2014). The Strengthening Families Approach and Protective Factors Framework: Branching out and reaching deeper.

Without cultural humility, we are likely to assume that it is our own assumptions, beliefs, values and worldview which define the “normal” against which all others are measured.

Implicit bias: A little test

- A comedian makes us laugh by telling a _____.
- Little Red Riding Hood wore a red _____.
- Swallowing water down the wrong ‘pipe’ will cause you to _____.
- The white part of an egg is called the _____.

Flexible response

Identify goals--based on self-awareness and careful observation:

- Am I expecting to help, support, provide information, reduce tension, prevent harm?
- Am I acting on my beliefs and values about protecting children and supporting caregivers?

Deciding when and how to intervene:*Self-awareness, careful observation, flexible response*Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect, 2006

- Intervene as primary prevention—offer support and positive feedback;
- Intervene when you sense tension building—provide help and relief;
- Intervene when you see something harmful or potentially harmful;
- Intervene when you can be a nonjudgmental helper (without taking sides).

Choosing not to intervene in the moment:

- When you have very strong feelings that may not be fully under control;
- When you are just so uncomfortable you can't act right away;
- When you are uncertain about the meaning of the behavior, e.g. difference in values or culture that are surprising but not harmful
- Disadvantages outweigh advantages, e.g. low risk situation & need more relationship time

Considering the possible results:*Careful observation and flexible response*

- The parent may have a negative reaction to your intervention.
- This is less likely if you have established a relationship and respond empathically.
- Parents are likely to feel cared about, helped, noticed and respected when you offer supportive responses. (*You 'get it.'*)
- You are likely to feel good about acting on your values and beliefs.

Organizing language for BOTH parent and child

Whenever speaking directly to the parent or directly to the child, [we] must keep the parent-child relationship in mind.

Lieberman and Van Horn



Strategies

- Turning judgment into an internal question--*I wonder what happened to you?...vs. What's wrong with you?*
- Use humor (*It can be challenging to raise a strong woman!*)
- Talking for the child--(*Mom, I'm crying because I missed you so much.*)
- Empathic non-verbals
- Useful phrases—see handout



Think of a hard conversation you need[ed] to have with a provider

- What makes this challenging?
- What gets in your way?
- On a scale of one to ten, how hard would this be for you and why?
- And a little practice....



What are my coping strategies for managing intense feelings in the moment?



What is reflective supervision/consultation (RS/C)?



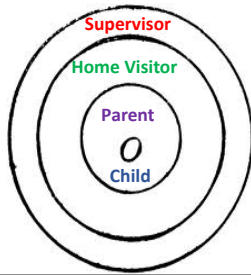
Reflective Consultation is a parallel process based on the notion of mutual competence...

- ...which seeks to offer a nurturing and supportive environment to explore cases from different perspectives; and
- Is a form of professional development.
- Key concepts include that reflective consultation:
 - Is collaborative, reflective, and occurs regularly;
 - Focuses on **process** rather than product;
 - Supports a shared exploration of the parallel process and acknowledges the importance of all relationships.



What is Reflective Supervision/Consultation?

A **parallel process** which seeks to provide a validating, partnering relationship with the home visitor which promotes the relationship between the home visitor and the child, the home visitor and the parent, and the parent and the child.



You can't give what you don't get!

What is Reflective Supervision/Consultation?

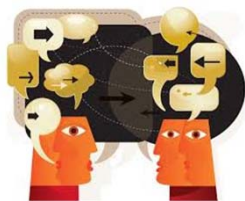
*A safe **relationship** for learning where strengths are supported and vulnerabilities are partnered.*

Rebecca Shamooh-Shanok

(even in the face of mistakes or strong feelings....)



What is Reflective Supervision/Consultation?



A shared process of inquiry using open-ended questions to facilitate the supervisee's own insights and reflections, rather than advice-giving.

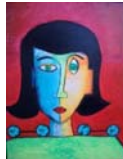
Essential elements of RS/C: Content

(Watson, Harrison, Hennes, Harris 2017)

- **Understanding the family story** and focusing on the relationships among the adults;
- **Professional use of self** and paying attention to the relationships the practitioner has with others;
- **Holding the baby in mind** and attending to the baby's relationships;
- **Parallel process**--noting the way in which one relationship affects and is affected by other relationships.

Why do reflective supervision?

- A way to slow the work down for consideration;
- Helps to establish the boundaries and scope of practice (*What is my role and what is not?*); Eggbeer, Mann & Siebel (2007)
- To assure high quality services to young children and their families;
- Reduce stress and burnout for home visitors;
- To replenish the reserves needed to interact with families in a responsive, supportive, and planful manner.



Why do reflective supervision?

- An opportunity to explore issues of implicit bias and cultural humility.



'How?'—A Way of Being

How you are is as important as what you do.

- Relationships are the heart of reflective supervision;
- Supervisor as 'partner' rather than 'expert';
- Parallel process as an organizing principle;
- Consistent and predictable (as possible...)



Engaging our organizations

- How do you feel reflective supervision might benefit your workplace?
- Who needs to "buy into" the idea?
- What might be some next steps for you to introduce reflective supervision to your workplace?
- What barriers might you anticipate?
- What resources are available for your own reflective supervision?



Reflective Supervision/Consultation Resources

The Minnesota Association for Children's Mental Health—
Infant and Early Childhood Division



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Michele Fallon at whataboutthebaby@comcast.net
