

# CARING CONNECTIONS



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## EMPOWERING FAMILIES

Family engagement is a critical ingredient for child and youth success “from cradle to career.” Research suggests that family engagement promotes a range of benefits, including improved school readiness, higher student achievement, better social skills and behavior and increased likelihood of high school graduation. When family engagement is not coming along easily, try using the “empowerment model” to support them in moving forward.

### Steps for Empowering Families

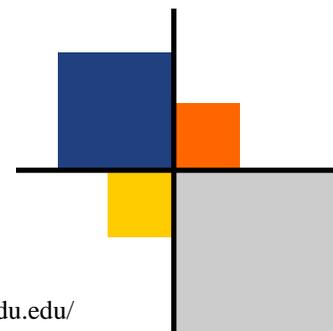
1. Focus is on promotion and growth-producing behaviors rather than treatment of problems or prevention of negative outcomes.
2. Emphasis is placed on promoting and strengthening family functioning by fostering adaptive behaviors.
3. The family is the essential agent of change.
4. The help giver supports, encourages, and creates opportunities for the family to become competent by coping, adapting and growing in response to life’s many challenges.
5. Help givers are positive, see strengths and assist the family in seeing their potential and capabilities.

The goal is to help the family become better able to deal effectively with future problems, NOT to make them problem free!

Castles, T. (2006). *Empowering families through support and mentorship*  
 Westmoreland, H., Rosenberg, H., Lopez, M., and Weiss, H. (2009). *Seeing is believing: Promising practices for how school districts promote family engagement*

## KEY TO FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

- ⇒ **Listening** to each family member.
- ⇒ Demonstrating **respect** and empathy for family members.
- ⇒ Developing an understanding of the family's past experiences, current situation, concerns, and **strengths**.
- ⇒ **Responding** to concrete needs quickly.
- ⇒ Establishing the **purpose** of involvement with the family.
- ⇒ Being aware of one's **own biases** and prejudices.
- ⇒ Validating the **participatory role** of the family.
- ⇒ Being **consistent, reliable, and honest**.
- ⇒ Engaging & **involving fathers** and paternal family members.



# ENGAGING YOUTH

Engaging youth can be challenging and exhausting for adults. There is no secret recipe for success. Youth are a diverse group of individuals that have their own individual needs, desires and goals.

## TOP 5 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES



**Be Culturally Competent and Hip:** Bill Gates and his crew of over-achievers started developing Microsoft related technology at the age of 18. Youth culture is inspirational, fast, hip, laid back, and is always changing. Read magazines such as *VIBE*, *the Source*, *16*, *Teen*, and *ECKO* to keep up with changes in language, clothing and technology. Take what you read and apply it when interacting with youth. Learn about the latest music, clothes, cologne and shoes.

**Be Real:** Youth do an excellent job of identifying “who’s fake and who’s real”. When engaging youth, be yourself and relax. Youth are accepting of adults who ask “what does that mean”. It is an opportunity for youth to become empowered and educate adults. What’s more empowering than educating a 45 year old Project Director on how to send a text without using vowels?

**Be a Mentor, Not a Friend:** Trying to balance being a mentor versus a friend is complex and confusing for adults. For youth it is confusing and sends mixed messages. Mentors show patience, support, and listen to the concerns of youth. A mentor never judges mistakes, but praises accomplishments. Early into the relationship, establish boundaries of what is acceptable and what is not.

**Keep it Strength Based, with a “*Splash of Challenge*”:** Keeping it strength based brings out the best in each individual youth. Youth come in all different sizes, shapes, colors, backgrounds and personal experiences. By keeping it strength based, you make it individualized. Understanding a youth’s individual strength will allow you to build rapport and establish a trusting relationship. Youth not only respect this approach, but they respond well to it.

**Develop an Environment of Youth Empowerment and Healthy Youth Development:** Youth gravitate and engage adults who create environments that are empowering and healthy. Such environments encourage self sufficiency and individual self discovery.

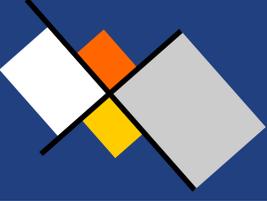
### Examples of empowering youth:

- ⇒ Support youth at their local youth councils.
- ⇒ Help youth access funding for projects.
- ⇒ Create opportunities for community empowerment (painting over graffiti or holding youth speak outs).

### Examples of Healthy Youth Development:

- ⇒ Engaging youth so they thrive in their individual communities.
- ⇒ Promoting learning opportunities that increase self discovery.





## YOUNG CHILDREN AND GRIEF

By Martha Buchanan



He was only seven years old and tears trickled down his face as he stood beside the casket that held his mother. He was silent for a few moments, and then turned to me and said, “Mommies should not die when their kids are still little.” What true words...yet he has to deal with the fact that his mom is gone, and he will never hear her say, “I love you!” or feel her warm hug or sense her pride when he takes yet another step toward being grown-up. He was sad, incredibly sad, and he was surrounded with grown-ups who wanted nothing but the best for him. But after a short time he said, “I’m done!” and he was ready to leave.

The next day at the funeral his eyes were dry, but before he went into the church he said, “I don’t want to see my mom’s body again,” and, blessedly, he had folks who listened to him. However, when the minister asked if anyone wanted to say anything or share any memories, the brave seven year old marched staunchly to the podium and addressed the mourners, again stating that mommies should not die when their kids are little. When he finished he said, “I’m done!” and he was ready to leave.

Many adults do not know that children grieve and mourn in ways different from the big people in their lives. They take as much sadness as they can take and then they are done, recognizing that there has to be some relief from the tension and difficult feelings. They are ready to go play and relax, refresh and reinvigorate. They know that too much grief is unbearable!

If anyone had seen that young man at McDonald’s 30 minutes later, they perhaps would not have believed that he had just attended his mother’s funeral. He was running and laughing and being joyful with some friends who joined him.



## GRIEF RESOURCES

### Kids Health

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/positive/talk/death.html>

### Calm Waters

<http://www.calmwaters.org/grief.htm>

### American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

[http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts\\_for\\_families/children\\_and\\_grief](http://www.aacap.org/cs/root/facts_for_families/children_and_grief)

*“...side by side with  
grief, lies joy...”*

~ Fran Drescher



## RESOURCE CONNECTIONS



For those of you who don't know me, I am a Systems of Care coach/trainer for the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services working out of Central Office. Prior to taking on this role, I was a Care Coordinator for Family Frontier Systems of Care in Norman. As a Care Coordinator, I was constantly working with my Family Support Providers to find resources in my community. I often discovered awesome agencies and people that I never knew existed before!

This section of the newsletter will be devoted to "getting the word out" about some of the resources that are available in each of our Systems of Care communities. These can be resources that address needs such as food, clothing, school supplies, hygiene products, etc., upcoming activities, interesting places to visit, or any helpful resources that Systems of Care staff and families would be interested in.

Each month I will feature a different city and/or region of the state and some of the resources that are available in that area. If you would like to brag about a great resource in your community, please e-mail me and let me know! Some basic information that I need to know about each resource is: type of resource available, name of agency/group providing the resource, contact information (i.e. address, phone number, website, etc.) and a brief description. If the resource is only offered during a certain time of the year or there are limitations on who can access it, such as only residents of certain counties, certain age groups, please let me know. I will be contacting Wraparound staff each month from the city/region being highlighted and ask for resource ideas. Thank you all so much for your help and I look forward to hearing from you!

*Shannon Lee*

srlee@odmhsas.org



## TRAINING UPDATE

The FY10 training schedule is now available online at: <http://www.ok.gov/odmhsas/>. Wrap 401 trainings will be added to the schedule soon. Watch for email updates.

### **What to expect with coaching?**

Our coaches have been working really hard to ensure that everyone is receiving consistent coaching that results in high fidelity wraparound.

A few **things that are changing** include the state coach working with sites to develop a site wrap plan. We want sites to identify areas that may be a struggle so that we can continue to improve and better serve families. The credentialing process has begun for care coordinators.

**For more information**, contact Lauren Merrell at [lmerrell@odmhsas.org](mailto:lmerrell@odmhsas.org) or 405-522-6810.

## PROMOTING HEALTHY PARENTING PRACTICES ACROSS CULTURAL GROUPS

Several familial factors have been proposed to potentially buffer against risks and lower the likelihood that a child will become involved in violence. These factors include connectedness to family; stable family relationships; family and community support; clear and age-appropriate rules and expectations for children; conflict resolution and problem solving skills; shared activities with parents; and community and cultural beliefs that support parents and families (CDC 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). Common strategies for strengthening these protective factors include parent training programs; public health messages that promote healthy parenting; and a variety of other parent support and intervention programs (Gorman and Balter 1997).

To read this in its entirety, go to:

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/images/DVP/Healthy\\_Parenting\\_RIB\\_a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/images/DVP/Healthy_Parenting_RIB_a.pdf)



## CULTURAL CORNER—VALUING DIVERSITY

To value diversity is to see and respect its worth. A system of care is strengthened when it accepts that the people it serves are from very different backgrounds and will make different choices based on culture. While all people share common basic needs, there are vast differences in how people of various cultures go about meeting those needs. These differences are as important as the similarities.

Here are some brief pointers concerning body language variations and gestures in cultures which differ from Western behavior. Have fun and continue to expand your cultural knowledge!

**Filipino** people (and in fact many other people of all races) can find it offensive/uncomfortable when beckoned by a repeatedly curled index finger - the gesture evokes feelings of having done something wrong and being chastised for it.

In some **Australian Aboriginal** cultures, it is disrespectful to look an elder, or person of a rank above you, in the eyes. It is a sign of respect to drop your eyes, (whereas in western culture not meeting somebody's gaze is commonly considered to be a negative sign, indicating deceit, lying, lack of attention, lack of confidence, etc).

Showing the soles of the feet is insulting and rude in many **Asian** and **Arabian** cultures. Similarly pointing the foot or feet at anyone is rude. Feet are considered dirty.

In **Arabian** culture the left hand is commonly considered unclean due to associations with toilet functions, and should therefore not be offered or used for touching or eating. When in doubt in Arabian environments, using the right hand for everything is a safer idea.



[HTTP://WWW.OK.GOV/ODMHSAS/](http://www.ok.gov/odmhsas/)



### CONTACT US

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Oklahoma City, OK 73152  
Phone (405) 522-4151

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

### Systems of Care Training

Sept 14-15 & 28-29	Fundamentals of Wraparound 101	OKC
September 15	Cultural Competency	McAlester
October 1-2	FSP Training	OKC

### On the Road Family Perspectives Conference—Durant September 22, 2009

To register, contact Sally Selvidge—[sally-selvidge@ouhsc.edu](mailto:sally-selvidge@ouhsc.edu)

### Oklahoma Statewide Autism Conference

November 6-7, 2009

Embassy Suites Norman – Hotel & Conference Center

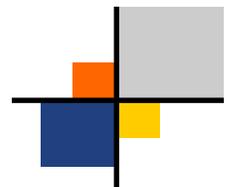
Sponsored by the Oklahoma Autism Network

More information available at [www.okautism.org](http://www.okautism.org)

### From the Oklahoma Parents Center

For more information/registration, contact: Ellen Kimbrell, Director of Trainers  
Phone/Fax: 405-485-8660 or [ekimbrell@oklahomaparentscenter.org](mailto:ekimbrell@oklahomaparentscenter.org)

Sept. 9th—10th	Oklahoma Transition Institute, Oklahoma City
Sept. 10th	Bullying Prevention Training, Tahlequah (6pm)
Sept. 10th	Basic Rights Training, Duncan (6pm)
Sept. 14th	Count Me In Puppets, Oklahoma City (10am)
Sept. 17th	Bullying Prevention Training, Okmulgee (6pm)
Sept. 17th	Bullying Prevention Training, Vinita (6:30pm)
Oct. 1st	Many Faces of Autism Support Group, Miami (5:30pm)



### September 25-27 NAMI Basics

Contact Kelsey Lunsford at [klunsford@nami.org](mailto:klunsford@nami.org) or 405-230-1900, (toll free) 800-583-1264