

ERIKSON INSTITUTE  
Fussy Baby Network



# Facilitating Attuned Interactions: An Introduction to the FAN Approach for Engaging Families

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# Disclosures

The presenters of this session have NOT had any relevant financial relationships during the past 12 months.



# Objectives

- Introduce participants to the FAN (Facilitating Attuned Interactions) approach to working with families
- Illustrated each process of the FAN with examples provided
- Practice using the FAN approach through video and discussion



# Becoming a parent



“It’s like getting on the fast track to personal growth and you can’t get off.”



# Parents' two worries



- Is my baby alright?
- Am I a good enough parent?

T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.  
America's Pediatrician



Photo courtesy of <http://www.dextermaine.org/news/brazelton.html>

# Attunement: Feeling Connected and Understood



# Process of Attunement

- Families seeking support feel emotional distress and are worried about their child or themselves as parents
- Intense feelings are hard to hold
- Parents experience a lack of attunement to their emotional needs and concerns, often from those who want to help most



# Process of Attunement

- Matching/attunement increases safety and decreases anxiety
- We can read parent's cues and match interventions to parent's needs in the moment
- This promotes internal cohesion and increases parental capacity





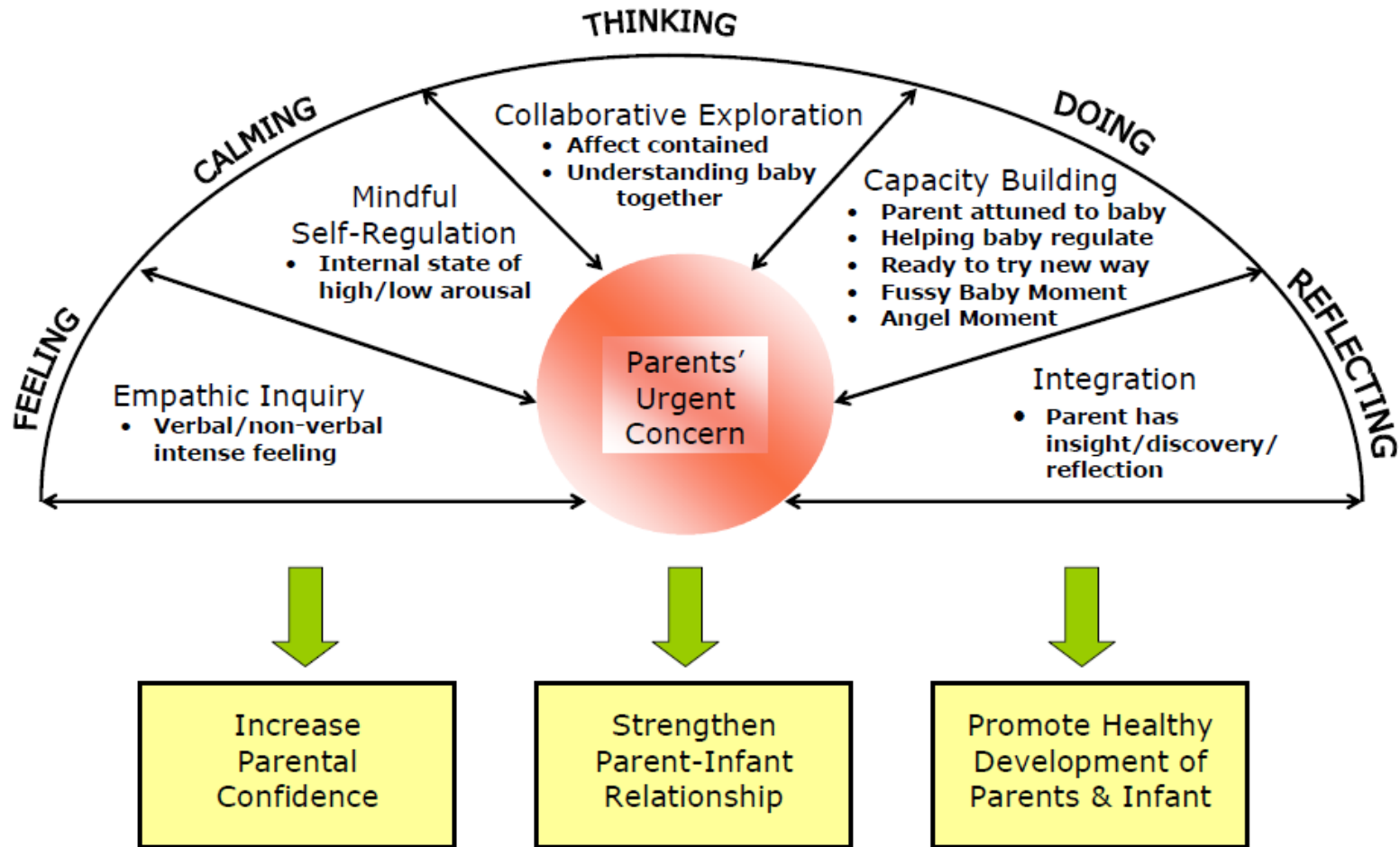
# Attunement with Parents



- Read cues
- Attune to internal state
- Experience connection
- Parent feels understood
- Models parent-baby attunement



# Fussy Baby Network® Approach



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# FAN as Tool for Attunement

- **Feeling: Empathic Inquiry**
  - When parents show or express emotion/beginning
- **Thinking: Collaborative Exploration**
  - When parents are calm and wanting to figure out
- **Doing: Capacity Building**
  - When parents are focused and ready for change
  - When the child is needing help
- **Reflecting: Integration**
  - When parents have insights/at end of visit
- **Calming: Mindful Self-Regulation**
  - When you are dysregulated/out of balance



# FAN Matching Process

- **Observing Parent's Cues**
  - What is the parent showing me in the moment?
- **Offering**
  - Which core process matches the parent's cues?
- **Checking**
  - Is this working? (For the parent, the baby or me?)
  - If in the right FAN wedge, should be “flowing”
- **Re-attune**
  - Move on the FAN based on the parent's, child's or own response



# Empathic Inquiry

- Message:
  - Your feelings matter
  - I am open to hear what you want to share
- Stance:
  - *Listening with acceptance*
  - *Being non-judgmental*
  - *Validating*
  - *Unhurried*



BBC Radio



# Empathic Inquiry

- Holding environment where its safe to feel
- We invite parents to share their subjective experience
  - *What has it been like for you to take care of your baby?*
- We watch for feelings and respond
  - Amplify positive feelings
  - Accept, validate, explore & hold negative feelings
  - Explore both sides of the ambivalence



# Practice

- Mom looks sad, distracted:
  - “I tried for four years and now I wish I never had him.”
- An unemployed Dad calls on phone upset, talking about his fussy 4 month old:
  - “He’s just like his brother. I can’t believe it’s happening again.
- Mom and Dad start to laugh as they tell you:
  - “We can’t get ourselves and the dog out the door. Let alone two babies!”



# Empathic Inquiry: FEELINGS

- Consider going to Empathic Inquiry
  - Parents show presence or absence of feeling around an issue at the core of their concern
- Consider moving away from Empathic Inquiry
  - Parents show some relief
  - Parents want to focus on baby
  - Parents do not want to talk about feelings
- Incompatible with Empathic Inquiry
  - Fast talking, talking over feelings, teaching





# Collaborative Exploration



- Message:
  - Let's understand this together
  - Help me see the baby you see
- Stance:
  - *Open*
  - *Curious*
  - *Thinking together*



# COLLABORATIVE EXPLORATION: THINKING

## Let's Understand And Explore Together

- Baby and baby's day (best and worst times)
- Parent's goals, theory of problem, strategies tried
- See baby parent sees:
  - Tell me more: when is he most \_\_\_\_\_? What does he do that makes you feel she's \_\_\_\_\_?
- Change questions:
  - If one thing could change, what would it be?
  - How do you/your partner/other caregivers feel about making this change?



# Practice

- Parent of 9 month old says: “I don’t know what to do with him. He won’t try anything but sweet potatoes.”
- Parent says: “Do you have any tips about how to get him to sleep?”
- Parent of 4 week old calls: “I know this sounds crazy but I think he has autism. I saw the article about it in the Sunday paper.”



# Collaborative Exploration: THINKING

- When to consider going to Collaborative Exploration
  - Affect is contained; parent can focus on baby
  - Want to understand baby parent sees
  - Parents want you to tell them what to do (early on)
  - Sort out conflicting views that are not emotionally laden
- When to consider moving away
  - Emotions emerge, mutual understanding achieved, parents focused and want to try new way
  - Fussy Baby or Angel Moment



# Capacity Building



- Message:
  - You know your child.
  - You can help him.
- Stance:
  - *Encouraging*
  - *Noticing*
  - *Supporting*
  - *Scaffolding*
  - *Validating*
  - *Help find surety*



# Capacity Building DOING

- Strengthen parent's confidence and competence
  - Generate approaches based on parent's observations and joint observations
  - Offer attuned/invited developmental guidance in the service of the parent's competence
  - Say it in one breath and explore meaning: THINK DOSAGE
  - Highlight what parent IS doing
  - Access parent's intuitive competence
    - “What's your hunch?”*



# Capacity Building

- Fussy Baby Moment
  - Acknowledge what is happening
  - Affirm the parental role
  - Become a holding environment: I'm here with you.
- Angel Moment
  - Pause and protect
  - Glow with them
  - Affirm the relationship



# Practice

- You're on a home visit and the child begins to look really drowsy and starts to fall asleep--the issue that the mom has been talking about.
- Dad, of 7 month old, whose been texting during the home visit, looks up and says: "What's that about temperament? I've never heard of it."
- You see the baby quiet, reach up to touch mom's face and she snuggles into him.





# Capacity Building

- When to consider going to Capacity Building
  - Parent is attuned to baby/baby attuned to parent
  - Parents showing any tendency toward goal
  - Parent asks for/needs information (DOSAGE)
  - Parents ready to try new way
  - Fussy Baby/Angel Moments
- When to consider moving away
  - Emotions emerge, parent confused/unsure, parent feels sense of accomplishment/pleasure



# Vignette: Listen and Learn



# Mindful Self-Regulation

**Helps us stay in balance so we can be fully present for the family**



To bring calm, first you have to possess it.



# Use Mindful Self-Regulation When the Balance Tips



# Dysregulated Triad

- Hard to stay with strong affect
- Hard to tolerate frustration especially with those we care about or are trying to help
- We can become part of the dysregulation
- FAN conceptual framework and structure will ground us, help us stay with the moment and adapt as needed



# Disperse Feelings

- When intense emotion/uncertainty is present, most of us have the tendency to “disperse affect” into:
  - activity: do something
  - emotional reactions: rev up or tune out
  - explanations: talk



# ABCs of Mindful Self-Regulation

- **Awareness**

- Become aware of your own reactions: thoughts, feelings, body tensions

- **Balance**

- Use your strategies to come back to balance

- **Connection**

- Connect with new awareness

Adapted from Saakvitne, K. & Pearlman, L. (1996)





# Video Practice with the FAN



# Reflective Posture

- Be fully present and available
- Monitor affect and engagement
- Moving according to parent's needs
- Continually assessing: Is this working?
- Watch baby's state and capacities
- Embrace mismatch/repair
- Trust the process



# Integration



- Message:
  - There is time for you to decide the meaning of the visit and for you to reflect on your child
- Stance:
  - *Patient*
  - *Respectful*
  - *Open*
  - *Containing*



# Integration: REFLECTION

Create a coherent narrative around stressful experience

- Affirm parent's insights/see baby/self in new way
- Give parent's opportunity to reflect before they leave
  - about their view of the baby
  - about their own experience of the visit
- *If you were to describe your baby in three words, what would you say?*
- *We have talked about a lot together on this visit. Is there anything that you would like to remember or hold onto that would be helpful to you?"*



“There’s real power in being on the same page with the person you’re serving. When people feel truly understood, their own capacity is released. And that’s what the FAN helps professionals do.”

*~ Linda Gilkerson, Erikson Institute*



# Reflections

- What do you most want to remember about today's session?
- What is one thing you may do differently in your practice within the next week?



# References

- Heffron, MC, Gilkerson, L, et. al. (2016) Using the FAN Approach to Deepen Trauma-Informed Care for Infants, Toddlers, and Families. ZERO TO THREE Journal, 36(6), 27-34.
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