

MAKING THE PARENT/PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIP WORK

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Overview of Presentation

- Understanding the parent and the professional perspective; what each brings to the relationship
- The best qualities of professionals and parents
- Parents' Hot Buttons
- How to prevent problems
- Strategies to improve relationships

Why I'm Here



What the Parent Brings to the Relationship

- Changes after the diagnosis
 - Day to day life
 - Dreams
 - Priorities
 - Relationships
 - The way they think of themselves and their child

What the Parent Brings to the Relationship

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| ■ Fear | ■ Confusion |
| ■ Sadness | ■ Desperation |
| ■ Inadequacy | ■ Isolation |
| ■ Guilt | ■ Hopefulness |
| ■ Protectiveness | ■ Anger |

What the Parent Brings to the Relationship

- Past history with professionals
 - Negative experiences- misdiagnosis, rejection of concerns, rejection of child
 - Positive experiences- "savior" at critical time, knowledge and caring when feeling overwhelmed
- Physical impact of parenting
 - Sleep deprivation and physical exhaustion
 - No time to relax, always on alert
 - Cumulative effect of stress

What the Professional Brings to the Relationship

- Previous experience with ASD
 - Limited experience- lack of confidence
 - Veteran- set in their ways, tired, “burned out”
- Previous history with parents
 - Positive- high expectations
 - Negative- defensive, non-communicative
- Controversies about causes/treatment
- Nature of American society- litigations and blaming

What the Professional Brings to the Relationship

- System demands- documentation, testing, federal standards
- Juggling needs of all
- Limitations on the system-increased numbers, funding issues
- Lack of administrative support
- Home demands and economic demands

The Best Professionals...

- Listened.
- Saw my child, not just the diagnosis.
- Were willing to think “outside of the box”.
- Believed in me, as well as my child.
- Connected me with resources.

The Best Parents...

- Appreciated what I did to help their child.
- Supported my methods and strategies for working with their child.
- Were responsive and helpful when needed.
- Followed through with home strategies that reinforced classroom strategies.
- Understood the limitations on the system.
- Believed in me and my work.

Parents’ Hot Buttons

- Parents can’t be objective
- Parents are overprotective
- Not understanding the uniqueness of each student on the spectrum
- Too little communication between school and home

Parents’ Hot Buttons

- Not taking the parent’s fears seriously
- Not being listened to
- Not understanding the relationship of the behavior to the autism

Prevent Problems by...

- Getting to know the family
 - Step into the family's world
 - Ask about family's experience with "system"
 - Put family behavior in context
 - Use information you learn to prevent problems and set goals
 - Connect the family with resources
 - Listen

Prevent Problems by...

- Developing a foundation of trust
 - Show that you see the individual, not just the diagnosis
 - Help parents appreciate their strengths
 - Keep family information confidential
 - Respect professional/parent boundaries
 - Accept that conflicts are inevitable

Strategies to Improve Relationships

- Prepare
- LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN
- Acknowledge their point of view
- Use "I" statements instead of "You" statements
- Respect each person as a member of the "team"
- Agree where you can

Strategies to Improve Relationships

- Beware of e-mails; have face to face meetings or phone calls.
- Try parent/teacher conference first before calling an IEP meeting.
- Refuse to react.
- Keep the focus on the child.



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