

WHEN YOU TEACH A CHILD WITH INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES

Chad Kordt-Thomas, LCSW
 Infant-Family and Early Childhood
 Mental Health Specialist, California

CHAD KORDT-THOMAS, LCSW

- ▶ A little about me:
- ▶ Infant-parent psychotherapist
- ▶ Treats very young children with individual differences and their families
- ▶ Helps teachers understand those differences

THERE IS A WIDE RANGE OF DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE TEMPERAMENTAL STYLES

- ▶ The Easy Child
- ▶ The Difficult Child
- ▶ The Slow-to-Warm-Up Child
- ▶ The Active Child
- ▶ The Child with a Combination of Traits

▶ Lieberman, A. (1993)

GOODNESS OF FIT

- ▶ Between a child’s temperament and ours.
- ▶ Does it match?
- ▶ Does it create tension?

BUT WHAT ABOUT WHEN THERE’S MORE THAN TEMPERAMENT AT PLAY?

- ▶ When the child has behavior that is worrisome, perplexing, or frustrating.
- ▶ Understanding where the behavior is coming from can help us know what to do.

UNDERSTANDING A CHILD WHO’S DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND

- ▶ Partner with parents.
- ▶ Even when parents describe very different behaviors at home, we can wonder **what it means** that the child can behave such different ways in different places.

UNDERSTANDING A CHILD WHO'S DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND

- ▶ Use your observations
- ▶ Even though initially the child may seem to behave the same way all day...
- ▶ Your observations can pinpoint what **supports** and what **derails** a child's behavior.

OBSERVING

- ▶ What is this child like:
 - ▶ Right before feeding?
 - ▶ Having her diaper changed?
 - ▶ Being picked up?
 - ▶ Going from being asleep to being awake?
 - ▶ Responding to a variety of sounds?
 - ▶ When there are lots of children in the room?

SENSORY-MOTOR-REGULATORY PROFILE

- The **sensory system** enables us to take in information from the world
- The **processing aspect** of that system enables us to interpret that information
- The **motor system** is what enables us to respond.

Greenspan & Wieder (2009)

CAPACITY TO BE REGULATED

- ▶ Arousal Level (The Four As)
- ▶ Activity Level
- ▶ Attention Capacities
- ▶ Affect (Emotion)

Williamson, G. & Anzalone, M. (2001)

ENGAGEMENT IS HARD FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE A LOT TO MANAGE.

"I'll pause for a moment so you can let this information sink in."

PART II - WHAT TO DO

- ▶ Use a developmental framework for thinking about **what this child can manage** at any given point during the day.
- ▶ Combined with your observations of the child.
- ▶ Combined with information about the child you are gathering from other sources (parents, family advocate, etc).

DEVELOPMENTAL LADDER

- ▶ VI. Building Bridges Between Ideas
- ▶ V. Emotional Ideas
- ▶ IV. Social Problem Solving
- ▶ III. Two-Way Communication
- ▶ II. Engagement
- ▶ I. Regulation and Interest in the World

DEVELOPMENT PROVIDES A ROADMAP

- ▶ If a child doesn't have the capacity to be regulated
 - ▶ She can't be **engaged**
- ▶ If a child doesn't have the capacity to be regulated and engaged
 - ▶ She can't be **available for learning**

ALERTING THE CHILD

- ▶ **Affect**: Using our emotional cues to woo child into interaction.
- ▶ **Motivation**: Using the child's interest to entice him or her into enjoyable interactions with us.

STRATEGIES TO TRY

- Using lots of **facial expressions** to convey information.
- Using lots of **gestures** to convey information.
- Experimenting with **pacing, volume, and tone of voice.**

STRATEGIES TO TRY

- Avoid a **flurry of words.**
- Avoid **lots of questions.**
- Keep your language connected to what the child can **see, hear, and feel.**
- Think: Here and Now.

REFERENCES

- ▶ Greenspan, S. & Wieder, S. The Child with Special Needs. 1998
- ▶ Lieberman, A. The Emotional Life of the Toddler. 1993.
- ▶ Williamson, G. & Anzalone, M. Sensory Integration and Self-Regulation in Infants and Toddlers: Helping Very Young Children Interact with Their Environment. Zero to Three. 2001

CHAD KORDT-THOMAS, LCSW

- ▶ Contact Information
- ▶ Website: www.chadkordt-thomas.com
- ▶ Email: chad@kordt-thomas.com
- ▶ Tel: 415-596-0293
