

## An Introduction to the Guide on Engaging & Supporting Parents Affected by Domestic Violence

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## National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health

We are a national resource center supported by the US DHHS, ACYF, Family Violence Prevention & Services Program since 2005.

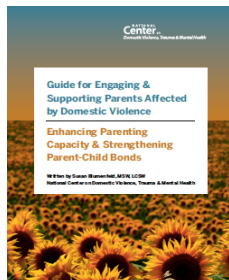
• **Our mission** is to develop and promote accessible, culturally responsive, trauma-informed approaches to domestic violence, so that survivors and their children can access the resources that are essential to their safety and well-being.

• **We provide training and support** to improve the ways that services and systems respond to the complex needs of survivors and their children.

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## About the Guide



- Intro and Core Beliefs
- Framework
- Guiding Principles
- 6 Strategies for Supportive Engagement
- Applying the Principles & Strategies: A Vignette
- Conclusion/Appendix

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**Framework:** How we think about engaging & supporting parents

- Relationship-Based
- Family-Centered
- Strengths-Oriented
- Trauma-Informed

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**Relationship-Based**

*How you are...*  
is as important as what you do.

~ Jeree Pawl

Blumenfeld, NCDVTMH, 2013 5

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**Family-Centered**

How can I use this task to better support the parent-child relationship?

~ Ann Brickson

Blumenfeld, NCDVTMH, 2013 6

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## Strengths-Oriented

We are able to see the strengths and resilience in each of us, including our ways of coping and surviving.

Blumenfeld, NCDVTMH, 2013

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## Trauma-Informed

We understand how traumatic experiences affect us and what might be helpful in supporting our natural resilience and healing.

Blumenfeld, NCDVTMH, 2013

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**Guiding Principles:** Getting ready to engage with parents

1. "Start with where the parent is at"
2. "Start with where we, ourselves, are at"

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## 6 Strategies: What we do when engaging & supporting parents

1. Use Empathic Inquiry
2. Practice Mindful Awareness and Self-Regulation
3. Be With the Parent
4. Engage in Collaborative Exploration
5. Strengthen Attunement and Responsive Parenting
6. Enhance Reflective Parenting Capacity

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## How Several Chicago Area Domestic Violence Programs are Using the Guide: Reflections, Insights and Impact

- **Meg Hefty**, Associate Director, Sarah's Inn
- **Maryam Mirza**, Domestic Violence Program Director, Hamdard Center for Health and Human Services

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Take a **closer** look!

### Applying the 6 Strategies of Supportive Engagement

1. Use Empathic Inquiry
2. Practice Mindful Awareness and Self-Regulation
3. Be With the Parent
4. Engage in Collaborative Exploration
5. Strengthen Attunement and Responsive Parenting
6. Enhance Reflective Parenting Capacity

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### 1. Use Empathic Inquiry

- Helps us follow the parent's lead
- Can deepen conversation
- Is fluid
- Conveys acceptance
  - **“Where you are is okay to be”**  
(L. Gilkerson)

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### 2. Practice Mindful Awareness and Self-Regulation

- Bring our own thoughts and feelings into mindful awareness
- **Pause**...to re-regulate ourselves when feeling stressed or having strong reactions
- Internally explore...without judging ourselves

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## Enhancing mindful awareness and self-regulation takes practice

- Start small
- Build in regular opportunities for practice during each day
- Remember we can't will ourselves to feel or think differently in the moment. We *can* reflect on what's coming up and be curious about it.



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## Reflect to re-connect!



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## 3. Be With the Parent: Holding Strong Feelings Together

- When we are open and present, it can deepen our connection
- Feelings can be acknowledged, safely expressed, and held in our relationship
- Diminishes feelings of isolation
- Engenders hope



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#### 4. Engage in Collaborative Exploration

- Joining together in mutual exploration, when both of us are ready to engage
- This is NOT about giving advice
- Working through different perspectives with curiosity, openness, and empathy



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#### 5. Strengthen Attunement and Responsive Parenting

- Begin with what the parent or caregiver does well
- Highlight the parent's positive efforts
- Resist the urge to "do for" the parent



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#### 6. Enhance Capacity for Reflective Parenting

- It's the capacity to step back and reflect on the needs of our children
  - Separate from our own needs, in any given moment
- Remind ourselves that all parents' capacity for reflective parenting varies at any hour or day



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## How We Can Support Parents to Enhance their own Capacity for Reflective Parenting

- Asking questions that help parents observe and reflect on their children's behavior (week-week and over time)
- Framing open-ended questions
  - "What do you think she's telling us?"
  - "How does he usually...?"
  - "How does she let you know...?"



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When parents increase their capacity for reflective parenting, it allows their children to feel known, understood, appreciated, and held in mind.

~ Susan Blumenfeld



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## How the 6 Strategies are Applied in Program Settings: Insights from the Field

- **Anita Tekriwal**, Domestic Violence Counselor, Hamdard Center for Health and Human Services
- **Regan Murphy**, Children's Program Supervisor, Sarah's Inn

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## In summary

- It's important to “start with where the parent is at” and to continually practice our own mindful awareness and self-regulation
- Strategies for deepening engagement are most effective when coupled with an open mind, curiosity, attunement, and pacing
- Having sensitive conversations is a dynamic process
- Enhancing capacities for responsive parenting is supported through our relationships with parents and caregivers



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## NATIONAL Center on *Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health*

For more information, questions, comments about the Guide, please contact:

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You can download the Guide @ <http://www.nationalcenterfortraumamh.org/2016/04/new-resource-guide-for-engaging-and-supporting-parents-affected-by-domestic-violence/>

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