

Building Relationships and Resilience for Emotional Wellbeing

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Summary of findings from my research

- Lack of progress in child and family mental health appears to go hand in hand with increased rates of medical and pathology-based diagnoses
- Situating the problem within the child ignores the family and social context
- Pathological identities lead to poor outcomes
- Fragmentation of services – lack of prevention
- Blaming discourse
 - blaming parents
 - Silencing children
 - Demoralising professionals

What can we do?

- We cannot do more of the same and we cannot go it alone
- Parents and professionals must work together in a partnership
- Expanding evidence base connects emotional and social wellbeing with the valuing and nurturing of ALL the relationships that surround the child. These include parents, family, caregivers, teachers and professionals.
- The importance of attachment is central to these key relationships and the impact on the emotional, social and cognitive development of the child

Promoting psychological child and family wellness: an ecological and empowering approach for professionals and service users

Basic premises:

- Intersection between development of community capacity, professional capacity and relational capacity
- Putting service users inside the frame: from dependency to capacity building – working in partnership with parents
- Professionals are people too
- Improving services for clients is inextricably linked with improving the professional and organisational environment in which these services are delivered
- Parallel between the well-being of professional and the well-being of their clients

The five building blocks of successful practice for service users and professionals

- Reframing current professional practice
- Reframing our vision of childhood
- Providing a clinical scaffold for professionals
- Attending to the relational capacity of the work force
- Introducing reflective practice

Reframing our vision of childhood – hearing the voice of the child

- The child as person not problem
- Validating the child's experience and communication
- Promoting advocacy for the child through an open and consultative process
- Hearing directly from children about their views and concerns with regard to important relationships and their immediate environment

Providing a clinical scaffold for professionals

- A life cycle developmental conceptual framework to address complex psycho-social and intergenerational problem
- Being meaning-centered rather than pathology-centered
- Providing appropriate containment for professionals to enable them to help children and families find appropriate solutions
- The professional environment as a ongoing learning environment

Introducing reflective practice

- The double-task – taking time out to examine our practice
- Minimizing fragmentation and an instrumental approach
- Avoiding a self-referential trap
- Understanding organisational culture – how family problems become “reproduced” in the organisation
- A core philosophy tasks and objectives informed by vision and values

Professionals are parents and people too

- Professionals as well as clients are part of the change process
- Reconciling work and family demands and personal challenges and changes
- Working towards professionals' wellness in the delivery of optimum services

The child and family wellness consultancy

- Supports wellness promotion within the organisation
- Runs tailor-made programs for all levels of staff on child and family development and skills building
- Assists professionals to develop pilot projects to identify appropriate collaboration with service users and parent/professional partnerships
- Helps professionals develop consultative dialogues with children and adolescents
- Builds community capacity
- Provides evaluation in relation to specific health and wellness indicators