



## The Influence of Culture in Building Partnerships with Parents

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Presented by:  
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### Translating What We Know Into What We Do



EARLY EXPERIENCES MATTER



ZERO TO THREE is a national, nonprofit organization that informs, trains and supports professionals, policy makers and parents in their efforts to improve the lives of infants and toddlers.

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### Learning Objectives



1. Define concepts of culture, values, beliefs and assumptions.
2. Explore how culture plays a role in caregiving practices.
3. Identify ways participants own culture influences their relationship with families.

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## Definition of Culture



Culture is the set of values, beliefs, and assumptions that families share and transmit across generations. These are brought to life through the daily behavior and interactions of people within a group.

—Christensen, Emde, & Fleming, 2004

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## What is Culture?



### Values, Beliefs, Assumptions

- Values: How important something is
- Beliefs: Ideas that we accept as true
- Assumptions: Ideas based on our past experiences

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## Culture as Context



- We interpret the meaning of an interaction or behavior from the perspective of our own culture.
- Sometimes these interpretations are correct (and sometimes they're not).



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## What is Caregiving?



The different ways in which parents and other important adults respond and support children's efforts to



Photo: Stephen Balch

- Communicate
- Experience, express, and regulate emotions
- Form close and secure relationships
- Explore and learn from the environment

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## Emotions and Culture



Photo: Debbie Rappaport

Culture influences how we express emotion, what emotions we express, and how we manage (regulate) our emotions when they become too strong.

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## Our Culture is Our Context



Cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions shape our

- Goals and expectations for children
- Expression of love and nurturing
- Approach to discipline and limit-setting



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## Ways That Culture Influences Caregiving



- Sleeping
- Eating
- Playing (who with, how frequently)
- Holding (how often/how long)
- Soothing techniques
- Discipline techniques
- Potty training (how and when)
- Expectations about development (e.g., when toddlers should start walking)



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## Culture and Caregiving



Photo: Corstock

- Different cultural beliefs lead to different caregiving practices.
  - a. In many countries, sleeping with your baby is either a standard practice or recommended as healthy.
  - b. In the U.S., sleeping with your baby is *not* recommended and is *not* the norm.

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## Thinking About Parent Requests



If parents ask, it's important to them.

- **Self-awareness:** Check your own reaction before responding. Decide if you need more information.
- **Careful observation:** What do you know about this family, its culture, and its caregiving style?
- **Flexible response:** Partner with parents to integrate this request into the daily routine.

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## Culture is Invisible



- Even questions or issues that aren't apparently "about" culture often turn out to be.
- Our own reactions are a clue: Be alert for that feeling of having the "right" answer.

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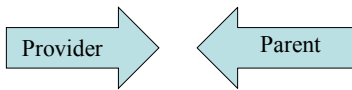
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## Cultural Reciprocity



Cultural reciprocity is a two-way process of information sharing and understanding initiated by the service provider.



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## Four Steps of Cultural Reciprocity



1. Learning about our own culture
2. Learning about another person's culture
3. Explaining the basis of our recommendations to others
4. Collaborating with families to resolve any culturally based differences

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## Step 1: Learning About Our Own Culture



- Identify the cultural values, beliefs, assumptions that influence your interpretation of an issue or situation.
- Self-awareness is critical in Step 1.
- Awareness of our cultural perspective enables us to explain our recommendations more effectively to families.

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## Step 2: Learning About Another Person's Culture



- Find out whether the family shares your cultural beliefs, values, and assumptions. If not, learn how its beliefs differ from yours.



Photo: Stephen Balk

There are many paths to the same goal.

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## Step 2: Learning About Another Person's Culture



### TO LEARN MORE

- Discuss these issues with parents
- Observe families together
- Refer to other resources: books, the Web, friends, colleagues
- Reflect: think about your beliefs and practices, and note how they are the same or different from those of the families you work with

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### Step 3: Explaining the Basis of Our Recommendations to Others



- Acknowledge and respect any cultural differences that have emerged in your work with families.
- Fully explain the cultural basis of your suggested approach or response.

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### Step 4: Collaborating with Families to Resolve Any Culturally Based Differences



- Through discussion and collaboration, determine the most effective way of adapting your approach or recommendations to the *family's value system*.



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### Step 4: Collaborating with Families to Resolve Any Culturally Based Differences



- **Self-awareness:** What is my cultural perspective?
- **Careful observation:** What is the parent's cultural perspective?
- **Flexible response:** How can we come together to accommodate the family's cultural beliefs in a way that works for parent, child, and provider?

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## Wrapping Up



- Everyone has a culture.
- Culture influences caregiving practices in a range of ways.
- Cultural reciprocity can be used to resolve culturally based dilemmas that arise in our work.



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## Wrapping Up



- One idea I will use in my work is...
- One thing that struck me today...
- One thing I will do differently at work after this training is...

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## Contact Us



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