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Parent Encouragement + Education = Effective Engagement

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>> Okay, everyone, we're going to go ahead and get started. There are evals on the table if you wouldn't mind filling those out. I'll be standing at the back and you can hand them to me before you leave. This session is titled Parent Encouragement + Education = Effective Engagement. I'll hand it over to Anne now.

>> Good morning.

>> Good morning.

>> I'm happy to see you all, thank you for coming. Happy spring to you, today is the first day of spring. You might not know that being inside in this room, but I'm happy to share that day with you.

My name is Anne McNally. I'm the director of Worldwide Parent Education at John Tracy Clinic. I think I have the best job in the world. What I do is I design parent information, design parent support, and... I have the honor of meeting and learning from families all around the world.

So... what I want to do today is very quickly, tell you some of what we've learned from them. So... instead of asking you this morning, are you a parent or service provider, are you a student? I want to ask you this. Are you a learner? How many of you here are learners? Exactly. So... we're all the same in that we are all learning from each other. From ourselves. And from our experiences.

So... John Tracy is 75 years old. And we all want to be old ‑‑ we don't want to be old and old fashioned. Every year we have most make it new for us and new for the families. That'd be different for each of you in terms of how you make it new and then we'll show you what we do and how we think about that. We're going to talk about the art of encouragement. The science of parent education, how you apply that, and strategies for engagement.

Engagement is a stuffy word. I think it means connections. Connections with each other, connections with your own hopes, connections with your children... connections with the system. To me, that's engagement. Would you agree? Yes? Okay. Maybe I'll convince you in the end. There's lots of chairs up here if anybody wants to come in and move up. So what we're doing really quickly here, I want to talk about ‑‑ the theories that we use to base our parent education on so that if you go back home and say... I think this is a good idea and somebody says... why? You can say because there's research that supports this. We'll name those for you. It's also listed on the handout on the website that you can download. You have some proof, you're not just coming back with fun ideas you came up when you were here. You came up with something that's scientifically validating, that you can input codes to tailor it to your group and your families.

You want to identify and measure and evaluate what you're doing. We want to talk about that in a way that all of us can relate to. Some of you may know that American Idol is coming back soon and some of you may have been fans of that in the past. Some of you may have seen the Olympics last month. Some of you may have seen March madness in the past couple weeks. All of those things, there's an element of competition. I want to ask you, what are three things those people need to succeed in American Idol, The Voice, whatever you watch? In the Olympics, March Madness. What are three things you think those people need to get there? Confidence. Oh my goodness! She can do my presentation. What did you say?

>> [Too far from mic].

>> Yes... and... anything else? One more. Over there. Yes! You guys have all the ingredients right there. Just a question of mixing them together, but... people need practice, they need skill and they need confidence to do what they want to do to accomplish it. Some of us may want ‑‑ Amy was talking earlier about wanting to be a gymnast, but she wasn't going to get there. We all have dreams we may not get to, might not have that level of skill, but we have a skill that we can practice, that we can get better at, that we can apply.

What are you seeing on these pictures here? One of my favorite pictures. I have lots of reasons for liking it. It's not the greatest path in the middle, but... look at those two families in the front. And... think about what you see there. I see... that they are connecting with each other. I see they're communicating with each other. And I see the child and parent look confident. Would you agree? Yes. They didn't come that way, but of these families came to us when their children were little. Uses [indiscernible] at school. Uses Spanish at home, and English at school. Look at what their parents ‑‑ look how proud they are, what they're doing and how proud the parents are of their children. That is all about communication. So... the confidence you see there is what we're looking for. Now... as you go through the rest of this presentation, I want you to be thinking about a ‑‑ a strategy you do now. You have them. I want you to leave with "yes, I know what I'm doing, I'm going to use this strategy!" Or a new idea you might try.

Parents tell us they come from many places. You can see the pathway isn't linear. They come to us searching for meeting their child's needs. We have few parents that come in looking for support for themselves.

No. That's not what we start with when we're offering families services, because... that's not what they're asking for. They tell us later, as they begin to learn about what to do for their child, they want to learn more. Then they tell us they realize, wow! That support we're getting makes a big difference in terms of them feeling confident that they know where they're going. And as they gain that confidence, they become more empowered to take on more roles. Usually, in the beginning, just for their own children, then later, they're in the system. And people use all kinds of analogies that are so humbling to us, that we say we didn't do this, you did it. But they'll say "I was in the desert and I found an oasis when I came to this program." "I was in a boat that had no oars and now I have them." "I was in a forest and... now I can see light through the darkness of the trees."

All of those things are, that people write and tell us and so, again... we're honored they told us that, but... we didn't give that to them. We didn't build this oasis, we didn't build the oars, we didn't put the light at the end of the forest. They found out, themselves, through a little bit of support and information that we gave to them.

So... when we have new staff or families that are going to be parent mentors or parents who come back and say "I'd like to assist in your education program," we say "there's lots of support for that, we want to make sure you understand what we're aiming for so we can work on those together."

So... we talk about the art of encouragement. You all know people who say "you can do it." But they don't even know what you're doing. They just say "you can do it!" We want to make it more individualized on what it is they're looking for and provide them with the skills they need to feel they can get there.

So... one of the philosophies we followed is called Enough by Ken Moses and that talks about empathy, being nonjudgmental, unconditional and feeling focused. There are a lot of parts to that. I'm not going to explain them, we explain those in staff training for parents and again, references to learn more about this particular philosophy. We want you to go home with actions and you can read more about the beliefs.

But... what we are doing is, I think, all of this has to do with connections, connection to how families are feeling, connections to them feeling welcomed, and connections to focusing on the feelings, so we can go from concern to confidence.

So... how do you turn that mumbly jumbly into real action for yourselves, your families, your system? There are lots of ways to do that. Families tell us that being listened to, the time someone gives them to validate where they're coming from is a huge first step. The, sometimes it's not even the actual information or the data, but it's the time to hear what somebody is worried about right that minute. Over and over again, they say this person took all this time to tell us this. This person took all this time to hear what we were saying. So... we know the time is important.

If you work with [indiscernible], the IFSP in most states is a big driving force behind services and one of those things is supposed to be about strength. I don't know if you've been in meetings where people turn to families and say, so... what's a strength we should put on this document? And families look like... if I asked you, what's your strength? Many times you feel, um... intimidated, even if you have one, to be able to share that with someone.

So... that's a [indiscernible] that you, as a mentor, provider, support person, you as a peer parent can help with and say "you know... I know that your grandfather reads to the baby every night at night." What an amazing strength that is that your family has. Or sometimes, if the family has older traditions, same thing. I know there's an aunt that comes over every Sunday and she tells family story and makes sure your child has access to that story. That's a strength your family has. We need to write that down so the rest of the people on the team know that's a strength you have. You're validating the family. You're providing them with an opportunity. Yeah... we also do this. But... you're focusing on the strengths.

We also work, building on shared observations, in our program, we have a parent/infant program, a toddler program, a pre‑school program, all those programs start with families and children together. Regardless of what the rest of the [indiscernible] has, that's where we start. They play and then the other people helping in the program, parents and professionals will rotate around and sit down and say... "wow, I just saw you using a thought word with him, so you build on what he was thinking. You added to his words."

So... what else can we do? What language can we add to that? Or asking them to problem‑solve with you about what's next? Doing this, we see a strength that you and your child have. What's next?

So... there's many ways to do encouragement. Think of one way, what's one strategy you use, individually to encourage people? Everybody have one? Think. What's a specific strategy you sit down and say "I can use this to encourage my families." I'm not going to make you share that, you're looking at me like... eh... but I want you to think about that. That's where it starts. It starts with encouragement. It starts with specific, individualized encouragement. That'll be individual for you and what your role is. But, that's where we begin. Our actions start with encouragement. When we feel encouraged, we feel we are moving along.

So... education has a science to it. We offer a rationale for why we're doing something. Why am I talking about this today? EHDI talks about engagement being important. You have to identify student expectations. What do you think people expect to learn? Do you recognize adult experience. You all have wonderful expertise and I wish I had an hour and a half for each one of you to stand up and tell us something you've learned. Able to do self‑directed learning. You're listening, you're not in your head, yes I do that, of course I do that, I know what I'm doing.

So what are actions for education? There's lots of them, but you want to highlight priorities. We ask families to rate topics that are important to them. We have a curriculum, but as the previous speaker said, we move around based on group. We aim to increase their understanding. What are your questions about that topic? We try to build them in. We can try to address those. We look for stuff that happening in the future? Yes. The goal is what the child's going to do in the end, but they have to feel like we're moving to this next. This is what we do next. We don't want a gap, we want to start there. We want to explore those concerns, we might do that in small groups, through workshops, homework people choose. They're going to do and how they're going to be involved. What's your action for education? How do you do that?

Is that an answer? Write one down. What's an action you're doing for education that you're going to do next? Those are the parts you already have.

Then we go to engagement which means connections. This is based on family‑centered models that there's lots of research on, talk about the priorities, resources, respecting choices for support, and guiding awareness of strengths. To me, that brings us back to confidence, when you have strength, you have confidence. We also know that families come from many cultures where we're all in L.A., we serve people all over the world. You have to be aware of cultures and support. We love coaching, we do that through telepractice. The reason we like it, we can't do anything if they're on the other side of the screen, they have to do it. We can say things, but it's happening on the family's end. We are helping make that happen, but... we are not [indiscernible]. When we act on family ideas and suggestions, we have to be really vulnerable. Somebody said that yesterday, what would you like? They might tell you something you weren't planning on doing at all. But that helps to address individual needs and promote engagement between each other.

The connections between parents are the strongest things we have. We ask parents throughout the world ‑‑ they're our best ambassadors ‑‑ we don't want to brag about ourselves. We want them to tell you what they learned and what's worked for them. We continue to improve what we know. We ask parents to share, to show, and to summarize what they know and what they do. We might not have thought of it that way. I want a strategy for encouragement, education and engagement. It's all about connecting.

How do we know this works? Because we asked families if it works. This is a model that we use with our staff, not with families, what I like about it is there's a way of keeping going. It'd a way of telling staff it's okay. You don't have to get to an endpoint immediately. It's a process. Process is growth. Growth is change and you don't see that in the beginning. We request program satisfaction surveys, many of you require those in your program, but they're not always, they don't always give you the information you need, but we talked to families about the importance of self‑evaluation. Where are you, where are you going? What has worked for you? That's a really key point. So, we know that what they can tell us, the change, we've done something.

So... when we get our surveys back, they tell us in the past five years, 87 to 99% of the families have told us they changed the knowledge of hearing loss and changed the skills to help their children. What we're really excited about is in the past five years, 100% of our families have said they will increase their confidence and that is what we thought was happening, but we didn't know. So... we had to do a survey and ask people if this was working. That's why we're telling you about it. We know it works and we want you to be able to make it work for you.

So... there are many ways to accent education. There are accents for engagement. Here are some parent‑friendly, we hope, questions, open‑ended questions and open‑ended statements you can use. This is the other part of the handout that's online that you can download. It's also up here if you'd like it. These are things we've found that work for us.

One question I have is that families for many cultures, when they start out early, they say "I don't want to be on the team, I don't want to be a partner, I don't want to be engaged, I just want what my child needs."

We have to go with that. What do they tell us as we move along, once they acknowledge their power, they start to assist service providers, then they change and advise local resources, eventually they start assuming mentoring roles with other families and assert their leadership over time.

This is feedback we got from families in terms of where they've gone. Again... this is where they start, where their goal is, we start with them and their child. We move along building confidence to get to these parts so families are engaged with the system and themselves.

This is what parents tell us. I didn't imagine this would actually change my life, change my perception and make me feel so powerful and knowledgeable. We didn't really understand until now, the parents are most important. We feel empowered to make significant changes and to expect the best of our child or becoming the values we created.

Wow! How amazing is that? They aren't as varied as other people, but they know they can get there. Here's my favorite other picture, we saw them, they were just in our program for two weeks. I see, again, connections, communication, confidence in this family. They came from India, they told us we wouldn't be accepted by the United States. We were afraid we hadn't done enough for our child and... at the end of each one of our parent sessions, whether they were two weeks, two months, two years, we have a celebration at the end, where the parents ‑‑ what we call a farewell ceremony. They're moving on to something else. We serve [indiscernible] ‑‑ birth to 5, at graduation it's a farewell. The families do all the talking. We do instructions and they stand up and share what they learned, what changed for them. This family said, the staff cries at all these things. We cry, yes, it's working.

This mother and father said... I know I'm in charge now. I know that I can do it. I have the knowledge to go home and make this change for my child. So... yes, we tell families when they come, is this going to work for my child? Are we in the right program? It's not about your child, it's about you. It's about you. We're not changing your child, we're going to make changes in you that you can then do amazing things for your child when you go back home.

So... as you get ready to go back home, most of you have probably seen the Wizard of Oz. One of my favorite movies. At the end, it's like, there's no place like home. You had it inside you all along. Those magic shoes. Families need to see they have those shoes on their feet and they will get there, on their own, and we try to provide them with a little bit of tools to help them reach that. We are so honored to be part of that and I'm honored to be part of this today and talk to you. I have handouts out here and descriptions of our program that you're welcome to take because we have a distance program that could apply to wherever you live. I'm available if you have any questions, but I'm done. Thank you.  
[applause]

[Presentation concluded at 12:40 p.m. ET/10:40 a.m. MT].

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