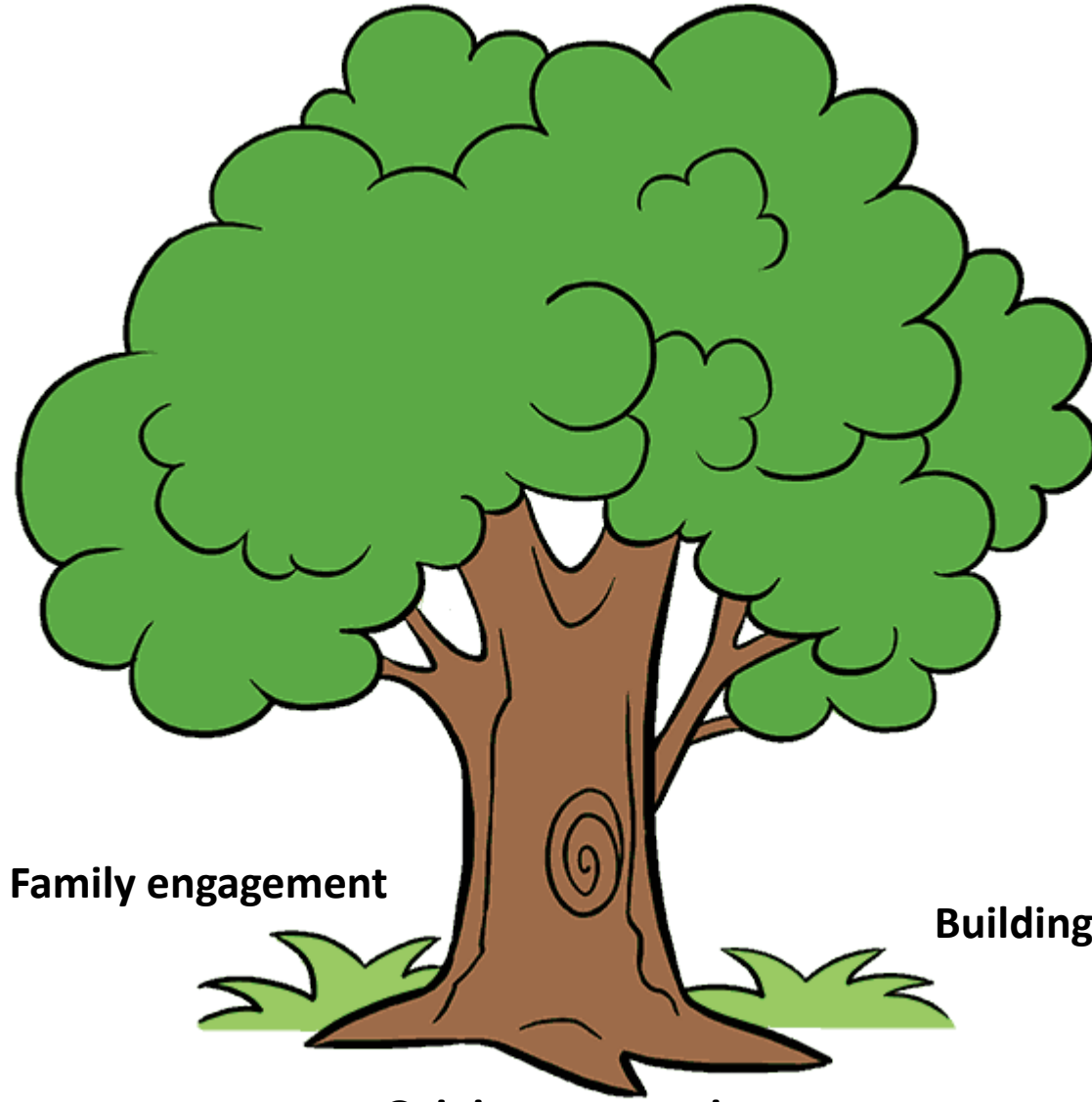


Approaching a Difficult Conversation

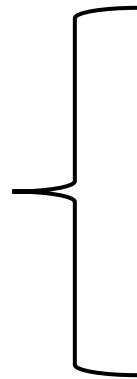
The importance of relationships



Approaching Difficult Conversations



**Foundational
Practices**



Family engagement

Building relationships

Gaining perspective

Foundational Practices - Gaining Perspective

Perspective

- A particular attitude toward or way of seeing something; a point of view

Perspective Taking

- The ability to look beyond your own point of view so that you can consider how someone else may think or feel about something

We don't see things
as they are,
we see them as we are.

— Anais Nin

Your personal experiences, your upbringing, the place where you live, your culture, etc., all impact how you see and react to the world around you

Foundational Practices

- Gaining Perspective

If your feeling unregulated (e.g., didn't sleep well, stressed out, feeling sick, etc.), it's difficult not to let that impact how we perceive or react to a situation.

Stressed Out Perspective	Regulated Perspective
The child is doing this on purpose! They just don't like me.	It might seem like it, but it's not about you. The child may be having their own difficult day (not enough sleep, no breakfast, etc.). What can you do to help them? Have you asked them?
That parent is so difficult; I dread having to meet with them.	It may be a difficult <i>situation</i> , but it's important that we refrain from seeing the parent or child as difficult.
There is no end in sight. I'll going to be dealing with this all year.	Step back from the situation and try seeing things from an outsider's point of view. Maybe ask another teacher to observe the situation.
When we meet it's like they aren't even paying attention. Their phone is more important than their child.	We never know what is going on in someone else's life and therefore we shouldn't assume as though we do. They may be dealing with another situation at the same time.

Foundational Practices - Building Relationships



Take a Moment

Does your program have practices or policies in place to promote the building of strong relationships with families/parents? How can they help you and your staff gain a more diverse perspective?

Write down some of the things your program does to promote relationships, as well as those things that might get in the way of this happening.

Foundational Practices

- Relationships = Family Engagement

Do the practices you listed

- Focus on a collaborative/shared understanding where the emphasis is on ***building authentic, honest relationships***
- ***Intentionally engage families*** in meaningful ways in order to actively support the well-being, development and success of the child
- Show respect for the ***strengths*** that each person has to offer

Foundational Practices

- Relationships = Family Engagement

Key Words

1. **Authentic** – genuine, real
2. **Intentional** – done on purpose, deliberate
3. **Honest** – truthful, sincere
4. **Relationship** – the way in which people are connected

In order to promote authentic (real) family engagement, you must intentionally (purposefully) build an honest (truthful) relationship (connection) with the families in your program.

Foundational Practices

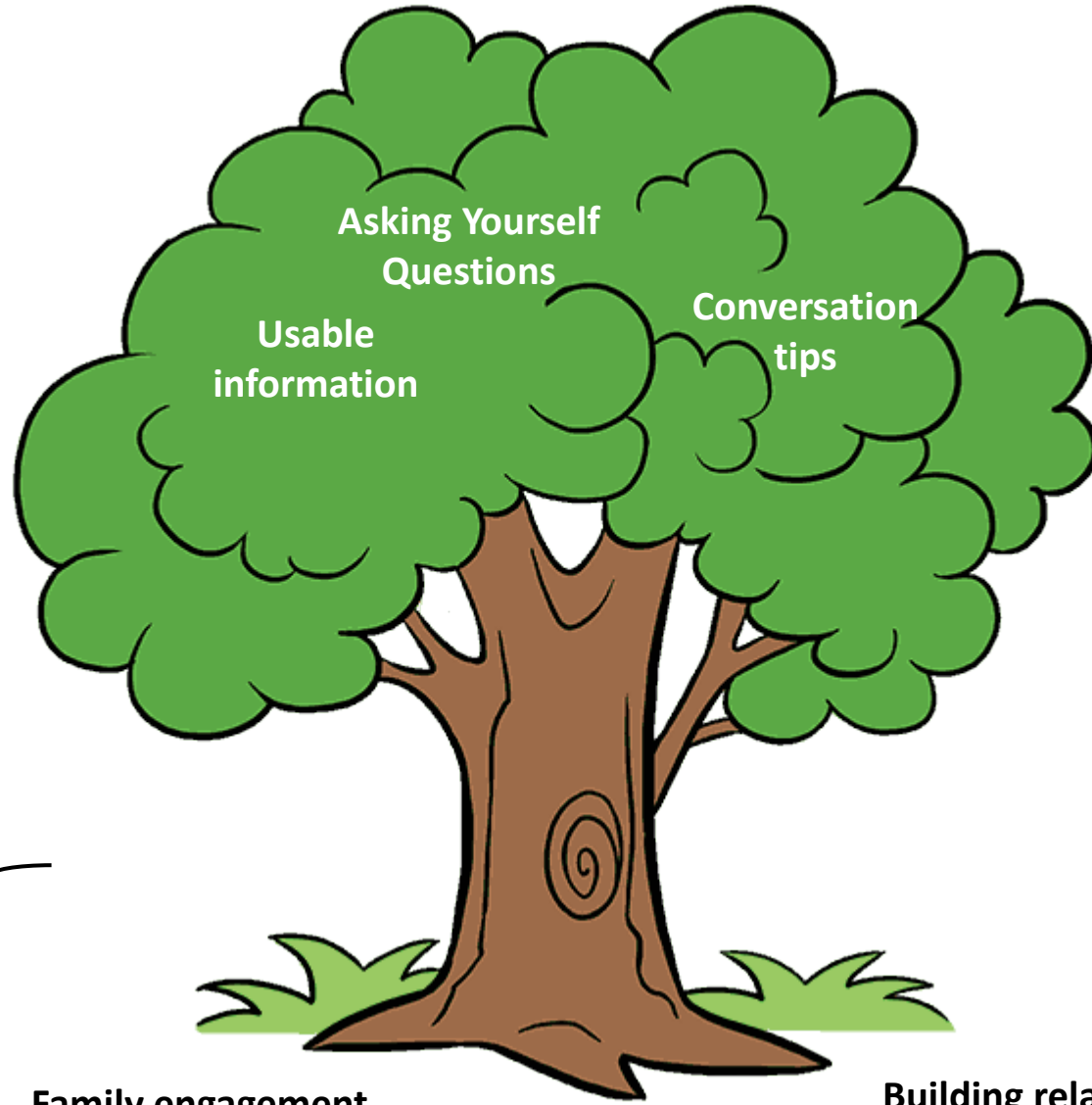
- Intentional, Authentic Family Engagement

How can I make this a central part of my program?

- Make family engagement a key part of your mission and policies
- Make sure everyone in your program is committed to building strong relationships with families
- Take time to listen to and notice the families in your program (what are their needs, preferences, interests, experiences, etc.)
- Regularly discuss a child's development with parents
- Engage parents in meaningful, honest conversations
- Go out of your way to make a connection



Approaching Difficult Conversations



**Additional
Skills**

**Foundational
Practices**

Family engagement

Gaining perspective

Building relationships

Difficult Conversations

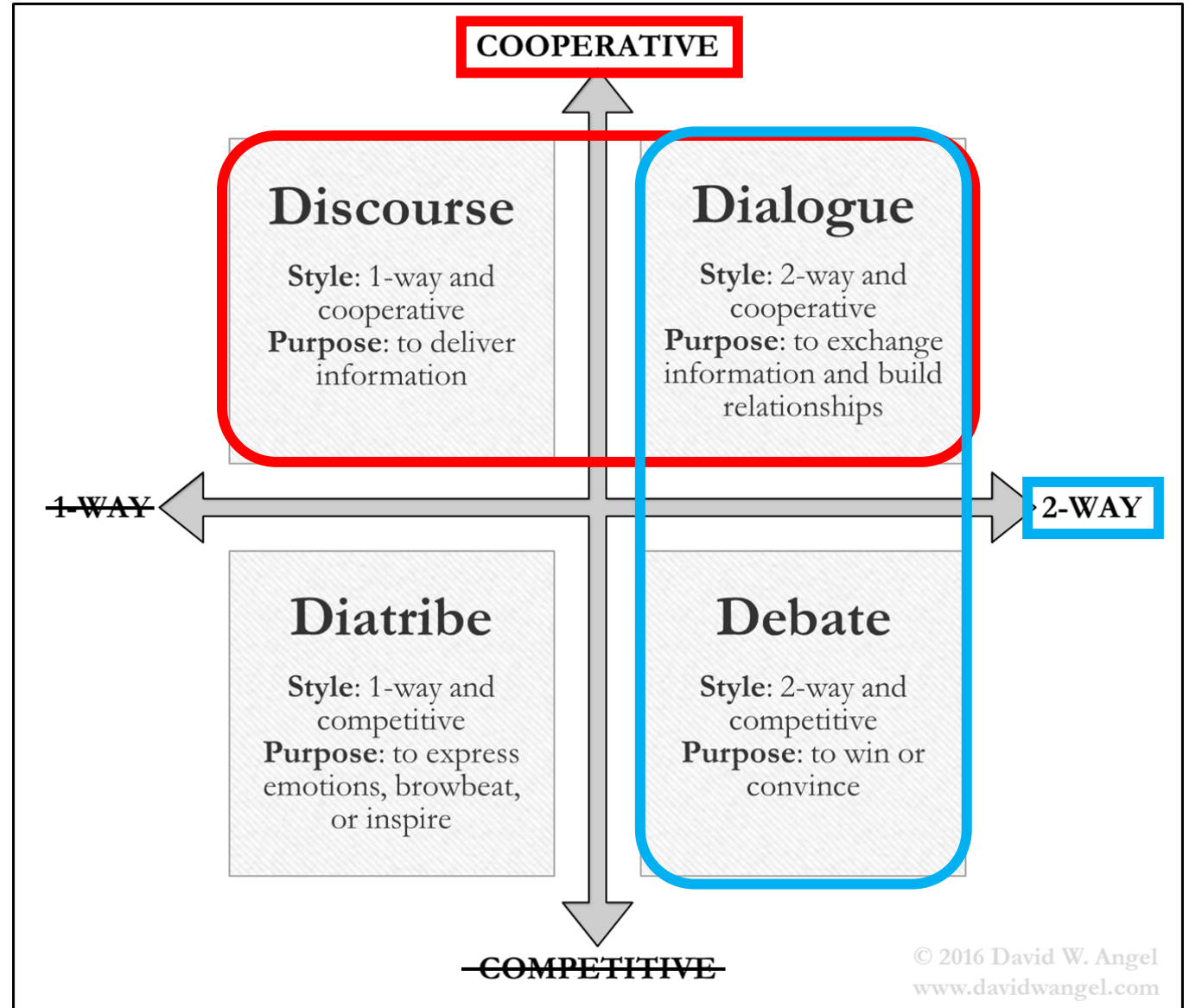
- Asking Yourself Questions



Three important questions **YOU** should answer **BEFORE** talking with a parent about a concern you have:

- 1) **Why** are you having the conversation?
- 2) **How** are you going to share the information/concerns you have?
- 3) **What** information are you going to share?

Types of Conversations



Your purpose (WHY) for having a conversation will determine what type of conversation you have

Talking With Parents

- **WHY** are you having the conversation

It's important to know the “why” behind any conversation

What is the **purpose** of the meeting or conversation?

- To share (deliver) information?
 - Explain concerns you are having with the child's development/behavior?
- To gather (exchange) information?
 - Find out what the parents are seeing or how they are feeling? Do they have concerns?
- To ask for something? (convince)
 - Do you think the child needs to have a developmental or behavioral assessment done?
- Before you talk with a parent, be clear about your purpose

Know your WHY!

Talking With Parents

- **HOW** you share information

When sharing information/concerns with parents, keep in mind:

- Your **attitude** - How are you feeling about the conversation?
 - Are you upset with the child's actions?
 - Are you concerned about the child?
 - Are you feeling anxious about the conversation?
- Your **delivery** - How are you going to present the information?
 - What kind of meeting is it? (Formal or informal, in-person, phone call)
 - Can you be casual, or should you be more professional?
 - Think about the words you use
 - Are they accusatory, empathetic, neutral?

Talking With Parents

- **WHAT** information will you share

In order to continuously learn about a child's growth and development it is imperative that you collect and share **USABLE information** on an ongoing basis

What is **USABLE information**?

- It's factual (what you see and know), relevant (current), and functional (useful) information that is specific to the child
 - No generalizations, assumptions, or "I think.." statements
 - Should be things you see happening now or recently (within a couple of weeks)
- It helps answer the question, "Who is this child?"
 - More specifically, "Who is this child when they are in your program?"
- It provides information so a parent knows **how their child acts and interacts while in your program**

Difficult Conversations

- Conversation Tips

Difficult conversations are called that for a reason
They often center around difficult topics
(e.g., delays in development, challenging behaviors, etc.)

- What can you do to prepare?
 - Gaining Perspective (review the first few slides)
 - The parents may not see the things you do; or may not see them the way you do
 - The parents may not place the same importance on the things you do
 - Different cultures prioritize things differently (it's important to understand and discuss these differences)
 - Consider your words – they may contain more power than you're aware of
 - A parent may hear your words and take them in a different way than you intended
 - Your words may impact how the family sees their child's future (e.g., the hopes and dreams they have for their child)
 - Your words can provide much needed support and empathy for the family (Relationships Matter)

Difficult Conversations

- Conversation Tips

- Some beginning questions or statements can help get things going:
 - I have been observing Brian's _____ (behavior, development, etc.) for a while now and I'd like to talk to you about a few things I've noticed.
 - I'd like to talk with you about _____, but first I'd like to hear your perspective. Do you see similar things at home?
 - I'd like your help figuring out what we can do concerning a few things that I have observed Brian doing.

Difficult Conversations

- Conversation Tips

- Approach the conversation as a caring reporter
 - Be truthful, understanding, and compassionate
- Think about how the parent might feel after receiving the information
- Ask for and listen to the parent's perspective
 - What USABLE information are **they** sharing?
- If things become heated or defensive, take a moment (and offer a moment) to take a break and BREATH!
- Remember to return to your purpose (Your Why)

Resources

- Connect with Parents - Illinois Early Learning Tip sheets
 - <https://illinoisearlylearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/connect.pdf>
- Tips for talking with parents about developmental delays - CDC
 - https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/tipstalkingparents.pdf
- How to talk to parents about their child's development – CDC Module
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/watchmetraining/module4.html>
- How to communicate with parents – Zero to Three
 - <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/92-how-to-communicate-with-parents>
- Caregiver Parent Communication Tool – Zero to Three
 - <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/93-caregiver-parent-communication-tools>
- Talking to parents about behavior – Extension Alliance
 - <https://childcare.extension.org/how-can-i-approach-parents-when-i-have-concerns-about-their-childs-aggressive-behavior/>
- A Thinking Guide to Inclusive Childcare (pg. 36) – Mark Sweet
 - <http://www.disabilityrightswi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/A-Thinking-Guide-to-Inclusive-Childcare.pdf>
- Tips for child care providers to communicate with parents
 - <https://childcare.extension.org/tips-for-child-care-providers-to-communicate-with-parents-their-concerns-about-a-childs-development/>