



SUMMER = OPPORTUNITY

Make It Work for You

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We all recognize that the past 4 months have been extremely difficult for most families. With trying to negotiate home bound schooling AND daily living tasks AND jobs, families are finding themselves frequently at a “breaking point”. But finally, summer is here, and although some states have relaxed face to face restrictions so that live sessions can occur, the challenge of maintaining intentional effort to guide families through the change process is high regardless of whether the sessions are or virtual. You are needed!

During these summer months it can become easier to set up practice experiences in our work with families with children than it is during the school year months. However this change of less structure for families that are not having to wrestle with home school pressures can also bring about additional needs as they struggle to find ways to effectively regulate and co-regulate their emotions and behaviors stemming from their trauma experiences. This trauma treatment need creates a prime opportunity for the use of practicing new behaviors in that area of family functioning of most concern in the treatment phases of Family Centered Treatment® (phases 2-4).

Keep the following guidelines in mind as you plan your treatment strategies with your families throughout the summer:

- Close the deal with the family as you finish the FCE..... Make an intentional effort to get agreement in what the FCE process has helped them understand about what has not been working well for them as a family system (the Area of Family Functioning).
- Transition into the making changes process (restructuring) by defining your role. Let the family know that you will be providing specific practice activities and experiences for them in that area in which they need to develop skills in order to move forward. Reframe this as a time to practice individually first with you, then come together to practice new ways of this AFF as a family. (Avoid bringing members together without having first practice (roleplayed) new behaviors with members individually).
- Interview each family member to find out their hopes and fears for the summer months. Explore what past summers lacked; what worked and what didn't. Identify ways to turn hopes and fears into goals that are "do-able". Redoing the Ecomaps and FLC and Solution Cards as treatment tools can permit them to own what they want to change in relationships, activities, or in their own regulation of emotions or behaviors. Identify with them how the things that have worked well for them in summer's past are reflective of the AFF that are their strengths and the things that have not worked well are connected to that AFF that needs some work.

- Role-play with the parental and care-giver system changes in their behavior in that AFF that are needed to achieve the desired response from the children. Use as examples the activities or directions given in times past that "blew apart" or failed. This becomes an intervention enactment as you roleplay both what happened in past and roleplay how to handle the same episodes differently. Be the parent in the initial role-play and permit the parent to role-play the child/children. Then switch roles when they are ready to try the new behaviors on. Tie this to their leadership role as they model new ways of making that AFF work better for them as a family.
- Vary your times of day and days of week to better assess the troublesome and difficult times. The holistic treatment aspect of FCT requires us to observe and interact with the family system at their "point of need" regardless of what part of daily living is the precipitant. To do so we must "flex" to be there and catch the opportunity.
- Define the "crisis" as an opportunity. Share with the parental system that progress is being made when they permit /allow us to experience with them what life is "really like". Our attitude during the "trouble" time is key to success. Remember: any problem is workable except the hidden one. When the problem is "out there" for us to experience with them, then THAT is progress! Make sure the collateral system understands that when families show us the behaviors for which they were referred; THIS IS PROGRESS! Connect the incident or crisis to the AFF of most concern. Obtain supervision or clinical consult when you need assistance with connecting the situations to an AFF.
- Celebrate small steps and changes. For example, the family outing (to the mall or anywhere) may require many starts and stops before the family or dyad can effectively get through an hour or two without a major explosion or "meltdown". In fact, it may take many efforts (different days) to even make it to the outing location. Once some success occurs, explore with the parental system what part of the process they want to replicate or continue.
- Adjust your style to move from high directive to coaching as progress is made. Let them know and experience the changes as "their success".

Let's make this summer the best one ever for our families!

