Unit title: Building Relationships

Time needed to complete unit: 3 hours

Why is this important to know:
Our cultural background influences our values, beliefs, priorities and behaviors. Culture plays a major role in how we interact with those who have similar and those who have different cultural backgrounds from ourselves. Thus, culture influences the development of relationships between people. In order to effectively design and deliver extension programs and services to families whose cultural backgrounds are different than our own, it is critical we are aware of how culture background influences how we design and deliver programs, as well as the relationships we develop with others.

Objectives/Purpose:
Learners will…
- Increase their awareness of how their beliefs, values and attitudes influence their relationships with others.
- Increase their understanding of how personal interactions help them challenge assumptions they have about different families.
- Increase their awareness of how collaborative relationships between families and professionals take time to develop and are built on trust, mutual respect, and shared goals.

How to use this information:
"When we adapt or modify the current way we collaborate with families, we become major contributors in changing the status quo. We must take the risk of exploring and sharing our own values and beliefs, so that we may better understand the values and beliefs of others." (Corso, Santos and Roof, 2002)

Culture can influence the family-professional relationship in many ways. Aspects of the relationship that may be influenced include:
- Communication between families and professionals
- How family members and the professional think about education, health care, caregiving, family roles, disability, promoting independence, parenting, disciplining, intervention services, etc.
- Identifying acceptable goals for children and the family
- Planning, implementing and evaluating appropriate intervention strategies (Santos, 2003)

Factors that influence the family-professional relationship include:
- Age of professional and the family member(s) who is receiving help
- Formal educational level of both the professional and family member(s)
- Household composition
- Academic training, professional and life experiences of the professional
- Cultural and linguistic background of both the professional and the family member(s)
- Social and economic status of the professional and the family member(s)
- Prior experience with social, medical, educational and legal institutions of family member(s)

(Chen et al, 2002; Santos, 2003)

Intercultural competence has been described as "the ability to relate and communicate effectively when individuals involved in the interaction do not share the same culture, ethnicity, language, or other salient variables" (Hains, Lynch & Winton, 1997). Developing intercultural competence is a lifelong journey. It is a process, not an outcome. It requires continual learning of one's own culture, as well as the cultures of others.

To really make a difference in families' lives, one needs to be able to:
- Anticipate and accept families' feelings.
- Be compassionate and respectful of families.
- Bridge support between families and the larger community by becoming a model.
- Provide assistance, knowledge and resources to families about their family members' needs.
- Acknowledge and celebrate the big and small milestones and accomplishments of the children and other family members.
- Know when to back off.
    Fialka (1997)

6.3.1 Activity 1: View the videostream: Building Relationships
http://realserver.ait.iastate.edu:8080/ramgen/parented/Relationships.rm
After viewing the videostream, ask yourself the questions below.
- What strategies have you used to build relationships with families? How have you adapted these strategies to be culturally responsive to different families?
- How do we develop trust? How can you lay the foundation for a trusting relationship given time and legal pressures?
- What challenges have you experienced as you work with individuals and families who speak a language different than your own?
- As you think about working with individuals and families of cultural backgrounds different than your own, what challenges have you experienced?
- What strategies have you used to overcome these challenges?

6.3.2 Activity 2: View the videostream: Sharing a Family's Story
http://realserver.ait.iastate.edu:8080/ramgen/parented/FamilyStory.rm
As you watch the videostream, think about the questions below.
- What is most important to the families in the video? (values, priorities)
- What strengths do you see displayed in the parent, as well as in the family as the parent describes his/her family?
- What do the parents say they need from service providers?
- What are some barriers the parents have faced in getting what they need and want for their families?
- What strategies do they use to cope?
- What are some sources of social support they access?

6.3.3 Activity 3: Review the publication "Sharing a Family's Story"
http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/SP215.pdf

Think about how you can implement ideas shared in this publication with families you know, agency professionals you partner with, and local officials (including governing bodies of Extension e.g., board of supervisors, extension council members).

6.3.4 Activity 4: Family Scenarios

Review the National Extension Parent Education Model (NEPEM) of Critical Parenting Practices (Smith, C. et al, 1994) http://www.cyfernet.org/parenting_practices/model.html)
A brief overview of NEPEM can be found by downloading document NEPEM 4-21-04.

After you have familiarized yourself with NEPEM, read one or more of the following family scenarios and use the questions associated with each scenario to identify how the six categories of core parenting practices in the National Extension Parenting Education Model (NEPEM) are expressed in different cultures. Sample answers are provided for you with each scenario.

NEPEM is a model of parent education that provides common ground for extension professionals throughout the Cooperative Extension System. NEPEM is not a parent education program. It is a compilation of priority parent practices (Care for Self, Understand, Guide, Nurture, Motivate, and Advocate) and supporting material to be used as a basis for parenting education efforts. NEPEM was developed by extension human development specialists across the country and validated by professionals from a variety of cultural backgrounds to ensure that it was as free as possible from cultural bias for its intended U.S. audience. A belief behind the model is that the practices identified are critical for all U.S. children regardless of the culture that nurtures their growth. The practices are stated at a level of abstraction that allows individuals to create more specific objectives appropriate for the families they work with.

Supporting materials:

Project CRAFT: Culturally Responsive and Family Focused Training (1997)
 http://www.childdevelopmentmedia.com/searchresults2.cfm?product_id=170

This video (60 minutes) explores the subtleties of working with culturally diverse children and families. The tape examines, in depth, stereotypes and the media, family values, relationship building, communication styles, and language acquisition. Families from various backgrounds and the early childhood professionals who work with them share their experiences and feelings about cultural differences, living with a child with disabilities, and negotiating the special education system. Suggestions for improving service delivery and multicultural family support are included. The accompanying booklet--with topical headers, scenarios, key points, and handouts--offers questions and activities to facilitate group discussions.

Sharing a Family's Story publication and video
http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/SP215.pdf
This video and publication shares information and ideas for helping families learn to share their stories so they can better advocate for their needs and wants. These resources focus on the importance of identifying strengths of families and identifying families' values, beliefs and priorities as a means to developing effective programs and services for families. To order a copy of the videotape, download the order from at
http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/SP217.pdf

National Extension Parent Education Model (NEPEM) of Critical Parenting Practices
www.cyfernet.org/parenting_practices/foundations.html
This publication provides an overview of the six critical parenting practices identified in the National Extension Parent Education Model.

Additional resources:
Principles and Premises of Family Support Practice (download). This handout outlines key principles and assumptions that promote a strengths-based approach to working with families.

What is Cultural Reciprocity? Tips for Practitioners from Zero to Three
http://www.zerotothree.org/cpe/tip_2002_12.html
This article focuses on how family professionals who work with very young children can better design and deliver services to families if they respect and honor families' values and beliefs in the development of programs and services.

Helping Youth Succeed: Bicultural Parenting for Southeast Asian Families
http://www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/familydevelopment/DE7240.html
Helping Youth Succeed is a culturally sensitive program developed by Southeast Asians for Southeast Asian Families. Through stories presented both on video and in writing, families learn about other Southeast Asian parents and youth in familiar and current

situations. The issues are common, developed from the real experiences for Southeast Asian families. The stories are designed to prompt discussion and facilitate problem solving, and allow families to participate without revealing their personal family information.

References

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Corso, R. M., Santos, R. M., & Roof, V. (2002). Adapting and evaluating early childhood education and early childhood special education materials at the community level. TEACHING Exceptional Children, 34(3), 30-36.

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